

Sermon Series: “Strengthening Your Grip”----Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—6/23/2002

Title: “Strengthening Your Grip on Aging”

Text: Psalm 90 and Joshua 14: 6-14

Intro.: *Ills.: Living in the presence of death*

Theme: Aging is something that all of us are experiencing; yet by the grace of God we can turn what could be a curse of sin into a redeemed and powerful way of fully living out every day of life which God gives us.

A perspective on aging through the looking glass of Psalm 90

- Various attitudes toward aging lived out in our society
 1. **Uselessness** (PRINT AND READ VSS. 3-6) —all headed to the grave—either become a cynic or a hedonist
 - **Ills.: purpose in life**
 2. **Guilt** (PRINT/READ vss7-8)—aging, weakness, death are all reminders of the great tragedy of sin in our life
 - Sin is a reality in our lives but so can grace be
 - “There is no comparison between God's gift and Adam's failure. If humanity died as the result of one person's failure, it is certainly true that God's kindness and the gift given through the kindness of one person, Jesus Christ, have been showered on humanity.” Romans 5:15
 3. **Self-pity** (PRINT/READ vss9-10)—moaning and complaining about our aches, pains, losses (*common to all people*)
 4. **Fear** (PRINT/READ vs11)—we fear change which puts our life at risk and pushes us outside of comfort zone of life
 - “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.” 1 John 4:18
- A redeemed child of God’s attitude toward aging gracefully through Jesus
 5. **Awestruck** (PRINT/READ vss 1-2)—view what God has/is doing—wonder of creation lifts cloud of life’s failings
 6. **Humble** (PRINT/READ vss12-13) – realizing our mortality takes self-centeredness and false pride away
 7. **Dependent** (PRINT/READ vss 14-15)—we need God—for forgiveness/grace, for mercy/care, for purpose/guidance
 8. **Expectant** (PRINT/READ vs. 16)—with eternal life a reality in Jesus, still a lot of life to live; so live it expectantly
 - **Ills.: the analogy of an expectant mother—still living the present but hoping in the future**

An example of aging gracefully to mimic (PRINT AND READ JOSHUA 14: 6-14)

- Who was Caleb?
 1. One of the twelve spies sent out by Moses to the Promised land
 2. One of only two spies who focused on what God could do rather than what Israel couldn’t do
 3. An eighty-five year old believer who didn’t know the word “retirement” from God’s work or anything else
- What is valuable to imitate in Caleb’s model of graceful
 4. Living **with the convictions of faith** within rather than **under the pressure from peers** without (vss. 6-7)
 - **Ills.: Go, Granny, Go!**
 5. Living **by faith** not **in fear** (vs. 8)
 - Caleb looked at life from the God-possibility ahead rather than the pessimism of mortal failure behind
 - “Finally, brothers and sisters, keep your thoughts on whatever is right or deserves praise: things that are true, honorable, fair, pure, acceptable, or commendable.” Philip. 4:8
 - Are you motivated by love and good cheer or driven by panic and fear—only Jesus makes the difference
 6. Living **fully** for the Lord (vs. 9, 14 “**whole-heartedly**”)
 - Are you living fully devoted to the Lord or to something else in your life?

- “As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been.” 1 Kings 11:4
7. Living **in God’s strength** not handicapped **by your weakness** (vs. 10, 11)
- Too often we tire of living because we are living by our own strength
 - “Your shoes shall be iron and brass; and as your days, so shall your strength be.” Deut. 33:25
 - Not wishing away the present because we are stuck in the past or pining for the future because we are selfishly wanting release from the present challenge of life God has given us
8. Living **for the present and the future** rather **with regret or fear from the past** (vs. 12-14)
- Caleb didn’t settle for the “Palm Beach” of Israel but took the next hill for the Lord without others’ fear
 - Story ends with words “Hebron has belonged to Caleb. . .ever since”--God blesses us spiritually and physically with a lasting inheritance which no one can take from us when we live for Him and in Him the rest of our lives

Living in the presence of death

In the Prado Museum in Spain hangs a painting by Hans Baldung titled "The Stages of Life with Death." On the ground is a newborn baby. The baby is surrounded by three elongated figures. In the left of the painting is a beautiful young woman--nearly nude, alabaster skin, hair flowing down her back, the perfect picture of classical beauty. Next to her in the middle is an old hag, a shriveled old woman with a hard, angular, mean-looking face. With one arm she is reaching out and grabbing the shoulder of the beautiful young girl, and with a sneer she is pulling her toward herself. With her other arm she is interlocked with a third person, a creature--man or woman you cannot tell, for all features have been melted down into a rotting corpse--holding an hourglass. There it is--birth, youth, old age, lived in the presence of death.

Trying to find purpose in life

In *Parade* magazine, actor Richard Dreyfuss spoke candidly of his continuing search for purpose and meaning during his midlife years: ***Some men react to turning 50 by putting on gold chains, open-collar shirts, and bad hair, and they begin chasing 21-year-old girls. I have no interest in that, though I can relate to the terror they're reacting to. It all comes from reaching a point in your life where the things you used to take for granted you're no longer certain about. That includes your ambitions, your relationships—even your sexuality. Men going through this are generally not talked about too much. But there's a lot going on here. It's all about revelations and about regrets about how you've led your life.*** Tom Seligson, "I See Life Differently Now," *Parade* (12-9-01)

Go, Granny, Go!

On a hot summer day I was sitting near an open window sewing and keeping an eye on my three grandsons playing outside.

"Let's play cops and robbers," said Mike. "I'll be a robber!" Terry and Melvin wanted the same role. So they needed another person to play.

"What about Grandma?" Terry suggested.

"Nah," Mike replied, "she can't run fast enough."

"What can we do to make her mad?" asked Melvin. "Old people can run real fast when they get mad!"

Psalm 90:1-17

¹Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. ²Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. ³You turn men back to dust, saying, "Return to dust, O sons of men." ⁴For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night. ⁵You sweep men away in the sleep of death; they are like the new grass of the

morning--⁶ though in the morning it springs up new, by evening it is dry and withered. ⁷ We are consumed by your anger and terrified by your indignation. ⁸ You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence. ⁹ All our days pass away under your wrath; we finish our years with a moan. ¹⁰ The length of our days is seventy years--or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away. ¹¹ Who knows the power of your anger? For your wrath is as great as the fear that is due you. ¹² Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. ¹³ Relent, O LORD! How long will it be? Have compassion on your servants. ¹⁴ Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. ¹⁵ Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, for as many years as we have seen trouble. ¹⁶ May your deeds be shown to your servants, your splendor to their children. ¹⁷ May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us; establish the work of our hands for us--yes, establish the work of our hands. [NIV]

Joshua 14:6-14

Now the men of Judah approached Joshua at Gilgal, and Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, "You know what the LORD said to Moses the man of God at Kadesh Barnea about you and me. ⁷ I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh Barnea to explore the land. And I brought him back a report according to my convictions, ⁸ but my brothers who went up with me made the hearts of the people melt with fear. I, however, followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly. ⁹ So on that day Moses swore to me, 'The land on which your feet have walked will be your inheritance and that of your children forever, because you have followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly.' ¹⁰ Now then, just as the LORD promised, he has kept me alive for forty-five years since the time he said this to Moses, while Israel moved about in the desert. So here I am today, eighty-five years old! ¹¹ I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I'm just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then. ¹² Now give me this hill country that the LORD promised me that day. You yourself heard then that the Anakites were there and their cities were large and fortified, but, the LORD helping me, I will drive them out just as he said." ¹³ Then Joshua blessed Caleb son of Jephunneh and gave him Hebron as his inheritance. ¹⁴ So Hebron has belonged to Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite ever since, because he followed the LORD, the God of Israel, wholeheartedly. [NIV]