

Sermon preached by Pastor Ben on Psalm 90 at Victory of the Lamb on December 31, 2017.

**Series: What the World Needs
Today's Focus: Eternal Perspective**

"There's No Dwelling Place Like the Lord"

The last couple weeks we've been looking at what the world needs now. And we've seen in every case without exception that what the world needs...actually, every single one of us also needs. We need truth. We need humility. We need deliverance. We need good news. We need God himself! And today on this New Year's Eve...what the world needs...and what we need...is an eternal perspective.

Our sermon text today comes from Psalm 90 in the Old Testament. Fun fact...it's the only Psalm out of 150 that was written by Moses. Remember him? The man God called from within a burning bush to lead the Israelites up from slavery in Egypt and into the Promised Land of Canaan...except they never quite made it there in his lifetime. They had to wander in the wilderness. An entire generation had to live in tents. Ultimately they died in the desert because they didn't trust God to keep his promises. Moses himself grew so frustrated and impatient with the people that God didn't allow him to personally enter the Promised Land either. He only got to see it from a distance before he died. And so it's from this perspective towards the end of Moses' life that he writes Psalm 90.

And as you might expect from a man who'd experienced many of life's hardships and disappointments, it's kind of epic. It's full of emotion. Raw. Honest. Wrestling. Yet... ultimately comforting. Psalm 90 is the text that formed the basis for the hymn we sang earlier in the service, "O God, our Help in Ages Past." Psalm 90 describes the eternal nature of God, the brevity of human life, the sinfulness of our human race, and it concludes with a prayer for wisdom and for God's grace. I'm not going to read all of it. I would encourage you to do so later on your own and to spend some time meditating on it tonight as you ring in the new year and then close your eyes for sleep. But for our time together here I want to highlight especially the first four verses:

¹ Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. ² Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

³ You turn people back to dust, saying, "Return to dust, you mortals." ⁴ A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night.

How many of you have seen the movie The Wizard of Oz? Dorothy of course is a country girl from Kansas who, along with her dog, Toto, gets whisked away to the mysterious land of Oz where they experience a perilous adventure and meet some unlikely friends. At the end when Dorothy wants to go home, the good witch of the north, Glinda, tells her to click her ruby red slippers together three times saying... (you remember the phrase?) ... "There's no place like home." She does so and then she wakes up in her bedroom in Kansas as if from a dream. Perhaps some of you might wish the same thing could happen to you...because of what happened over this past year.

For example, when I was praying through all the prayer requests we received over the holidays I came across this one from Christmas Eve that said, "2017 has been a trying year. Loss of loved ones. Sickness. Injuries. Let's ask for a blessed 2018. Lift the weight off our shoulders." And you know what this prayer

request sounds like to me? It sounds a lot like Psalm 90. Much of the Psalm is a prayer request like just like this one.

Because as we go through life and the years go by...more and more we get a front row seat for just how much misfortune, sorrow and pain there is to see and experience in this world. It can feel overwhelming at times because so much of life is full of changing circumstances, usually beyond our control, right? And because in the end we are so frail and flighty—not just emotionally, but physically...susceptible to things outside the framework of our life plans. And finally like we sang in the hymn earlier... “Time like an ever-rolling stream soon bears us all away. We fly, forgotten, as a dream dies at the op’ning day.”

Yet you know what? In a sense, it’s actually good to start with this perspective on our lives. It is wise to recognize how short our lives are. It’s important to recognize the wages of sin is death. It is healthy to recognize that this world, this planet, this place, no matter how pleasant it is...is not our true and permanent home so we shouldn’t get too comfortable here. Nothing and no one here can ever satisfy our deepest desires. Everything and everyone is subject to change. Everything and everyone that is...except God.

That’s why right off the bat like you heard, Moses says, ¹**Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations.** ²**Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.** In other words, “There’s no dwelling place like the Lord.” Lord, you are our true dwelling place—our refuge, our shelter. You are our unchanging home.

Friends, where’s your home? According to the Old Testament book of Numbers, the number of men age 20 and over who left Egypt under Moses’ leadership was roughly 600,000 (cf. Nu. 1:45-46). That sounds like a lot, doesn’t it? But do you know many refugees and displaced people there are in the world today—people removed from their earthly homes because of war or disaster? According to the United Nations...there are over 65 million. One in every 113 people on the planet is now a refugee. Around the world, someone is displaced every three seconds.

Because of sin, this world is full of reminders that it can never be our true and lasting home. In other words if our heart’s desire is located in an earthly person, place, or thing... we’re in trouble because if ever we lose that thing than our heart is shattered. And I understand how strong the pull is to want things to stay the same. We all want to be comfortable. We want to be in control.

But the reality is there’s only one who doesn’t change and who is ultimately in control. And that is the Lord our God. He alone is eternal. In contrast, we are mortal. Things change. People change. We change. But God...he doesn’t change! And because God doesn’t change...you know what that means? God’s promises don’t change either! The very promises of God that you hear at church. *There’s no dwelling place like the Lord.* Our hearts and hopes can make their home in him because only in the Lord our God are they safe.

You see, although Moses was disappointed that he was not going to be able to set foot in land of Canaan, he knew that the land of Canaan was not his real dwelling place. Ultimately even as he looked his own mortality in the eye, Moses reflects, “Lord, you have been our real home. You always have—you who are eternal and independent from time, you who existed before you formed Mt. Sinai or the Himalayas, you who knew me and loved me before I was even born.”

Friends, before the earth was created, as long as it endures, and after it is gone, God is always the same. Since God is eternal, he can be a dwelling place for the hearts of his people throughout all generations. Earthquakes can knock down earthly houses. Fires can burn them to ashes. Hurricanes can wipe them away. But if the Lord is our heart's dwelling place, then ultimately we are safe from the storms of this life and finally even the consequences of sin and death for God will dwell with us and we with him in heaven.

It's with this confidence that a mortal man like Moses, or you or I for that matter, can ask of the Lord, **12 Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. 13 Relent, 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.**

What does it mean that there's no dwelling place like the Lord? It means to recognize that in a changing world, true satisfying peace comes only from the unchanging, unconditional, *unfailing love* of the Lord—his grace. This is the unfailing love of the eternal God who in the person of Jesus Christ, though he himself is independent of time, humbled himself to be born of a human mother on that first Christmas in the fullness of time. Who didn't flinch with fear in going to the cross to obtain forgiveness for your sins and to snatch you from the jaws of death and hell. This is the unfailing love of the eternal God who, long before you or I were even born...before he even created the world, planned to call us to faith. Who now promises to bring us to the dwelling place of heaven through the power of the Holy Spirit who has made our hearts his home.

Friends, each day here on this earth is truly a gift of God's grace—it's our time of grace to come to know the eternal God as our personal Savior and to serve him with our lives. Therefore no matter what 2018 has in store, *there's no dwelling place like the Lord*. He is our refuge, our shelter, our home.

When we pull our family van into the garage of the parsonage we've lived in for the last 11 years, there is something I always say to my family. "Welcome home, to the place where you will always be loved." What do I mean? Well I'm not just talking about the parsonage here in Franklin, WI. Ultimately, I hope my family understands that I'm talking about the unconditional love we find in the arms of the everlasting God as members of his family—the God whose unfailing commitment caused his own Son to willingly come down from heaven to embrace the cross that he might embrace all of us as his dear family members forever in heaven. There's no dwelling place like the Lord wherever you go, whatever you're going through. His mighty arms for you are pure grace in your weakness. Every Sunday as you come here to worship, he's saying to you, "Welcome home." Let's pray.

Lord, life is going by so fast! It frightens me until I remember your eternity. We are as rootless as tumbleweeds and we will be blown about all our lives unless you are our dwelling place—our shelter from the storms of this life. In you we are home. What I have in you I can never lose and will have forever. I praise you for this unfathomable comfort. Lord, give us wisdom to number our days as your servants so we will look forward to dwelling with you from everlasting to everlasting in the true, permanent Promised Land of heaven. In all the days that remain here on this earth, fill them with meaning that we might value our time of grace by using it for eternal purposes. Fill our new year with your blessings. Continue to satisfy us with your unfailing love that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. May your deeds be shown to us, your splendor to our children. May your favor rest upon us. And establish the work of our hands for us and all our plans. Lord Jesus Christ, in your name we pray. Amen.