

Psalms For All Seasons: The Song of Moses

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Date: 27 August 2023

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[0 : 0 0] Welcome here for this Sunday, August 27th. My name is Kent Dixon and I am blessed to be the pastor here. And welcome to each of you this morning. We have folks who are visiting, we have folks who come every week.

And so it's great to see people's faces. And we also have a podcast and we have our website. So people do listen to our sermons without necessarily being here in person and that's awesome as well.

So welcome to each of you this morning in person as well as welcome to people who are listening and in the days ahead. So I have a note in my notes to talk about Connor, but I'm not going to do that because at the beginning of this sermon, we'll all lose it and that'll be bad for all of us.

But I did say to Michelle this morning, the interesting and challenging thing for me is going to be saying goodbye to him next weekend when we take him down to Rosebud. He's my son, which is obvious. He is my good friend.

We share a lot of common interests. We challenge and sharpen each other. I get to be his mentor and there's some eye rolling that goes with that. He is a good and godly young man who I'm honored to be friends with to see rats.

[1 : 2 0] So, as Eldon said to us a few weeks ago, the first part of letting them go is hard.

And then he said, and then it's awesome. So, yeah, it won't be completely awesome at the beginning, I'm sure, but thank you as well for loving on us and for loving on him.

That means a lot. So, this morning we're concluding our sermon series that we've been in for the last few weeks called Psalms for All Seasons. And in this series, we've been looking at the book of Psalms and considering that it is a book that is applicable to all seasons of our lives.

The Song of Moses. Over the last five weeks, we've looked at Psalms and we've looked at them as they walk with us through different seasons of our lives.

And so, we're concluding this series this morning with a psalm by the most seasoned writer in the Bible, Moses. Moses is one of the most impressive men in history, there's no question.

[2 : 2 4] Born a Hebrew, raised as an Egyptian prince in the house of Pharaoh, Moses lived to 120. Have you ever thought of that before?

Makes my hip hurt and I'm only 54. But Moses likely wrote Psalm 90 towards the end of his life, towards the latter part of his life.

And I want to tell you his story today because I want to show you this psalm. And so, you probably know the story of Moses, so I'll give you the Reader's Digest version.

The story of Moses reads like a movie. Shockingly, it has been made into movies. I was thinking this morning, one of my favorite adaptations of the story of Moses is the DreamWorks animated film, Prince of Egypt.

So, it tells, I've heard a few, mm-hmms. It tells a particular chunk of Moses' younger life, which is awesome and it's so powerful. So, animated movie, you're going, yuck, how scriptural is that?

[3 : 23] It's still awesome, so see it. So, I want to tell you this story today. And the story reads like a movie and that's why so many adaptations have been done. It's a powerful story and it's a rags, literally a rags to riches story.

And back to rags. Born into a family of Hebrew slaves, Moses was in danger from the moment he drew his first breath. He was hidden by his family to prevent him from being killed.

He was ultimately adopted into the family of the most powerful empire in human history at that time. He was born into the family, adopted into the family of the Pharaoh of Egypt, the man who wanted him dead.

He lived the privileged life of royalty for approximately 40 years. It's interesting that his life is somewhat chunked into 40 years, but 40 is a theme in the Bible, as you know.

Before he became humbled after that first 40 years. And then for the next 40 years, Moses tended sheep in the desert area of Midian, Scripture tells us.

[4 : 30] So, he's a refugee. He's in exile. But then finally, I don't know if this is a cause for celebration, but Pharaoh, Moses' arch enemy, dies.

And God comes to Moses with a message. And you've heard this part too, haven't you? The burning bush. The bush is on fire, we read in Scripture, but it does not burn.

It's not consumed. And Moses walks over to it. He's braver than I am. Walks over to this bush because he's curious, right? And God manifests himself in this bush.

Moses, he says. Moses, I want you to go to the new Pharaoh and tell him to let my people go.

Well, as we know, Moses is not super keen on this idea. But God convinces him to go. And along with that, God promises Moses, you know what?

[5 : 30] You go, and I'll be right there with you. So Moses spends the next 90 days convincing Pharaoh that it's in his best interest to release his labor force.

It's hard to convince him. And naturally, Pharaoh is not easily convinced. So God, who is always creative, gives Pharaoh 10 significant reasons God sends plagues.

And finally, Pharaoh relents. All right, already. All right. All right. Okay, okay. I get it. And so with that, the Israelites spend the next 40 years.

There's that next 40-year chunk in the desert. And Moses spends the next 40 years as their shepherd, their provider, their prophet, their caregiver, their liberator, and their nation builder.

And also, ultimately, most importantly, their intermediary between them and God. God shows these former slaves multiple manifestations of power every day of his power.

[6 : 39] And God sustains them with water from rocks. When was the last time he got water out of a rock? Me, zero times.

He gives them manna to feed them, bread from heaven. And when they get sick and complain about the manna, he gives them quail. He gives them protein. Who doesn't like protein?

The children of Israel witness miracle after miracle from God. And they still lack faith, as we see in scripture. These folks are frail and finite and fallen.

And they are afraid. And Moses watches. And he cares. And he scolds. And he encourages. And over these 40 years, Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible.

Have you read them? That's a pretty big accomplishment. I haven't even written a tract. I've written a few academic papers. But certainly not a book. Certainly not five books of the impact that his have had.

[7 : 51] That's prolific. After 40 years of writing, Moses writes one last project. One last page, even. And this one isn't about Israel's history or their genealogy.

It's not about the commandments or the law. Moses' final writing is a song. And we call it a psalm. Some believe this song is the first of its kind.

The foundational psalm that formed the blueprint for all psalms that follow. Moses wrote Psalm 90 during the time of the book of Numbers, scholars suggest.

When God's people were wandering in the desert, somehow Moses, in his process of parenting and shepherding, managed to pen a few things.

But this psalm comes from Moses' decades of observation and experience, both with God and with God's people. In all kinds of circumstances. And people call this psalm simply the Song of Moses.

[8 : 54] Psalm 90, as you see on the screen. So please open your Bible or your app or whatever you have. And I'm reading from the CSB translation.

Because I've used it a few times in this series. And I like some of the wording that is used. It's very poetic and appropriate. So I'll read this to you. It's 17 verses.

It begins a prayer of Moses, the man of God. Lord, you have been our refuge in every generation. Before the mountains were born.

Before you gave birth to the earth and the world. From eternity to eternity, you are God. You return mankind to the dust, saying, Return, descendants of Adam.

For in your sight, a thousand years are like yesterday. That passes by like a few hours of the night. You and their lives, they sleep.

[9 : 53] They are like grass that grows in the morning. In the morning it sprouts and grows. By evening it withers and dries up. For we are consumed by your anger.

We are terrified by your wrath. You've set our iniquities before you. Our secret sins in the light of your presence. For all our days ebb away under your wrath.

We end our years like a sigh. Our lives last 70 years or, if we are strong, 80 years. Even the best of them are struggle and sorrow.

Indeed, they pass quickly and we fly away. Who understands the power of your anger? Your wrath matches the fear that is due you. Teach us to number our days carefully.

So that we may develop wisdom in our hearts. Lord, how long? Turn and have compassion on your servants. Satisfy us in the morning with your faithful love.

[10 : 56] So that we may shout with joy and be glad all our days. Make us rejoice for as many days as you have humbled us. For as many years as we have seen adversity.

Let your work be seen by your servants. And your splendor by their children. Let the favor of the Lord our God be on us. Establish for us the work of our hands.

Establish the work of our hands. Establish for us the work of our hands. Now that's a long psalm. So did you memorize it? Oh, I forgot to ask you. So that's a long psalm, but we're going to walk through it together.

So fear not. The first thing Moses learned is that God is great. We read in verse 1, Moses says, God is our refuge.

He is our fortress. He's the one who protects us from our enemies. Verse 2, the first part, He is our creator. Moses says in the psalm, Before the mountains were born, Before you gave birth to the earth, In verse 2, Moses says, He is forever.

[12 : 03] From eternity to eternity, As I read, You are God. Moses grew up around greatness in Pharaoh's palace. He would have seen it all around him.

So the first 40 years of his life, The palace staff would have bowed to him, Would have told Moses himself that he was great.

But then after 40 days on Mount Sinai, Moses learned who was truly great, And who wasn't. After they left Egypt, The Israelites arrived at the foot of Mount Sinai.

And God summoned Moses to the mountaintop. And as we read there, God showed up. In Exodus 19, verses 16 to 19, We learn, we read there in Exodus, That God came down on Mount Sinai, With thunder and lightning and fire.

And the entire mountain was engulfed in smoke, And it shook violently, we read. Can you picture that happening? This is God. He is big and he is powerful.

[13 : 14] He shakes mountains, And scripture tells us he speaks like thunder. What Moses found out on the mountaintop Is that God is great. And what Moses learned in the valley Is that we are not.

The second thing Moses learned Is that we are not great. We are frail, As we read in verses 3 to 6. We are fallen, As you can read in verses 7 to 8.

And we are finite. We have a beginning, a middle, And definitely an end. As we learn in verses 9 and 10. For 40 years, Moses lived with upper class Egyptians.

That's what he knew. For 40 years, He lived with middle and lower class And working class Midianites. And for 40 years, He lived with lower class Israelites Who used to be slaves.

Talk about a change. God is great, And we are not. That's the theme of the song of Moses, Psalm 90.

[14 : 27] Following along from verse 3, You return mankind to the dust, Saying, Return, descendants of Adam. For in your sight, A thousand years are like yesterday That passes by, Like a few hours of the night.

You end their lives, They sleep. They are like grass that grows In the morning, In the morning it sprouts and grows. By evening, It withers and dries up.

God is great, friends, And we are finite. Time doesn't age God, But I don't know about you. Sometimes I catch my reflection And gasp.

We age overnight. For we are consumed by your anger, The psalm says. We are terrified by your wrath. You have set our iniquities before you, Our secret sins, In the light of your presence.

God is great, And we are fallen. Nothing we do Goes unnoticed by God. And we considered that a bit last week.

[15 : 33] God knows everything We have either said or done. He also knows What we don't know yet, That we will say and do in the future.

Maybe that makes you nervous. Maybe it makes you feel guilty, Perpetually guilty. That's not the intention. When you consider some of the really unpleasant stuff, Do you feel anxious about it?

It's called conviction, And that's not a bad thing. But here's the good news. God is our creator. God is the giver of life to us.

He is our eternal refuge. Scripture says all of these things. God knows us, And he knows that we're not perfect. He also knows, Who, That we're not capable of being perfect, In and of ourselves.

Does that make you feel better? It does me. We are frail and fallen and finite, But my friends, That is precisely why he sent his son.

[16 : 38] That's the whole reason. We're all the same, Moses says. We are frail and fallen and finite. The playing field for human beings is level, Regardless of what we perceive our status or value to be, In and of ourselves.

The psalm says, Our lives last 70 years or so, If we are strong 80 years. They pass quickly, And we fly away. Moses is saying here, That God is big and strong, And we are essentially small and weak.

Which isn't meant to be an insult. I've been called small and weak in my life. And it's mean. But that's not what's meant here. It's only meant to anchor us in the reality of our circumstances as they currently are.

Because sometimes, I believe we deceive ourselves. Maybe you can relate. We begin to think that we're a big deal. Right? We begin to think, In and of ourselves, We have accomplished a lot.

We are worthy of attention and praise and accolades. We puff ourselves up, When it's not really the right choice. Moses came to the conclusion that we need perspective.

[17 : 54] Have you ever felt that way in your life? Verses 11 and 12 of this psalm, He kind of focuses on that. We need perspective. And that's what he's saying in verse 12, When he says, Teach us to number our days carefully, So that we may develop wisdom in our hearts.

He's not just saying this randomly out to an audience. He's asking God specifically, For God to give us his perspective on our value.

Help me to see my life the way it really is. What it was really meant for. So that I can live the life that you intended me to live. And I believe that plants the proper perspective and wisdom in our hearts.

So if Moses' conclusion is we need perspective, Sometimes it's helpful to have an application. So once we get perspective, We need to recognize that only God can truly help us.

Only God can help us course correct our perceptions. And since he can really help us, Should we not ask him to really help us?

[19 : 02] Once we get perspective, We can only recognize that God is our source. Moses' application for God's greatness and our smallness Was to ask God for really big things.

I think we tend to pray small. Have you ever thought of that? Lord bless this food to my body. That's good. It's a good prayer. But why are we afraid to pray big?

So let's look at a bit of that. In this final paragraph of Psalm 90, Moses begins to really lean into prayer. And he actually prays five prayers that we'll identify here.

And they are really big prayers. Big prayer number one. It's in verse 13. Turn and have compassion on me. He asks of God.

And on the people. It's the most important prayer that he or we can ever pray. And it's the first prayer that we must pray if we want God to hear us.

[20 : 08] It's the prayer he wants to hear from every person so that he can grant us compassion. It's a prayer that helps us reorient our relationship with him.

Refocus our priorities back on him. So follow this for a moment. We are frail, which means we are not strong. We are finite, which means we don't last long.

Now I got this from somewhere else, so don't think, what a lovely poet Pastor Kent has become. I do like poetry, but. So we are frail, which means we are not strong. We are finite, which means we don't last long.

And we are fallen, which means we have all done things that are wrong. All those wrong things sit right before the throne of God.

And all of those things need to be dealt with, need to be accounted for. So here's an example. When someone hurts you, guess what? You have options.

[21 : 11] You can be bitter and hold a grudge, which I can almost guarantee will increase your blood pressure, keep you up at night, give you sweaty palms.

Sometimes, rather than just holding a grudge, we may even take it a step further and seek to make them pay. Or, here's the third option, we can forgive them.

When you recognize you haven't hurt someone, or you have hurt someone else, pardon me, you need to ask for forgiveness. And not just for their sake, but for your own as well.

And I don't know if this has ever happened to you, but have you forgiven someone who seeks no reason, has no perception that they have hurt you? Have you ever done that? That is extremely hard, and it is extremely liberating.

To seek forgiveness for someone who doesn't perceive they've hurt you. So without forgiving others, and being forgiven ourselves, things fester.

[22 : 17] Relationships begin to break down. And those things distort the image of who God has made us to be. So it's one thing to hurt another human being, but what about doing stuff that hurts God?

Well, God's big. He can handle it. He doesn't care if I say mean things to him about him. What about things that disrespect him, after all that he has done for us? If you read about the Israelites in the wilderness, they tended to do things that essentially punched God in the face.

That disrespected or hurt him all the time, didn't they? They built idols to replace him. They complained about his provision for them during their exile.

Don't even get me started on the Ten Commandments. Moses knew he was dealing with a bunch of stubborn, selfish rule breakers. So if they were ever going to be able to pray big prayers, as God would want them to, they needed to begin by asking him to forgive them.

They had to get their relationships right with him. And that's what Moses is doing when he prays in verse 13, Lord, turn and have compassion on your servants.

[23 : 33] Moses is asking for God's forgiveness. That's what he's doing there. And he's admitting that the people need it. He's asking for it humbly.

And that's that first prayer. God, forgive me. Turn and have compassion on me. So once they've done that, they begin to be in right relationship with God.

And they can begin to ask for some big prayers that will make their lives wonderful. And Moses doesn't hold back, as you'll see. He prays big, bold prayers.

Big prayer number two is found in verse 14. And it's for God's love and joy to come to them. Now catch that. That's not give me joy as I would perceive joy.

This is asking for God's love and God's joy. Love and joy. In the New Testament, we've talked about this many times. I'll just go quickly.

[24 : 33] There are four words for love in the New Testament. We've talked about the word agape before, the Greek word that means unconditional love. And there are several words for love in the Old Testament as well.

The Hebrew word for love that is closest to agape is the word, and my pastor, before I became a pastor, used to love to use this word because he would pronounce it in the Hebrew way, which is chesed.

Chesed. It's spelled H-E-S-E-D, and it's pronounced with the ch at the front. So there's love, and then there's chesed love. So when you see that word chesed in the Bible, it's always translated actually into two words in English because English can't handle the one.

So it is translated as faithful love. Other versions include steadfast love, or unfailing love, or loving kindness.

It's a rich kind of love. So God's chesed is a love that will never let you go or leave you. Moses prays, satisfy us in the morning with your chesed love so that we may shout with joy and be glad for all our days.

[25 : 52] That's a really big, really big, really hopeful prayer. Imagine if you could have joy like that, joy that would never leave you.

I guarantee you'll never have it if you don't ask for it. You've heard me say before, if you feel discouraged in life, take a moment and ask God to share with you how he feels about you.

It's pretty cool. Only God can grant us that, though. Only God can grant us that level of, that degree of, that capacity of love and joy.

Big prayer number three. Maybe you caught it as we were reading the passage. Verse 15. To make up for the pain of the past. Feels like a cocky kind of prayer almost, right?

You made me suffer, Lord. I want some payback. I want interest on my pain investment. But it's a big prayer, and every one of Moses' companions had either been a slave all their lives, or if they were younger, they would have been wandering in the wilderness and spent their entire life, their entire existence so far, wandering.

[27 : 07] So Moses' prayer there is, make us rejoice for as many days as you have humbled us. Do you feel humbled right now in your life? Ask God for joy and for perspective.

Moses is asking for as many years as we've seen adversity. Lord, I'm asking you to show us joy. Big prayer number four. This one I love.

In verse 16 of Psalm 90. Moses is essentially asking us to let us see how you, God, are at work. You've heard me say before that Michelle has referred to me as need-to-know guy, right?

I'm a researcher. I need background information. Lord help you if you ask me to help you find the best thing to get in a certain category, because I'll research it for you like you could not believe.

But I need to know the background, the context. I still marvel at the fact that my faith is so deeply anchored in God, because ultimately, I don't have a God I can see.

[28 : 16] But I've got no problem with that. So that's God's sense of humor at work in me. I need to know everything except when it comes to my faith. And so even when it comes to pain, I find I can tolerate it more easily as long as I can see that God is doing something in it.

It's helpful to have perspective. So that's what Moses is asking here. Let your work be seen by your servants. We won't see everything.

We won't see every seed that we plant. We have the opportunity and the blessing to plant grow. We have not necessarily the opportunity to see the ultimate play out of every conversation we have about faith.

But that's a big prayer, friends, that you could pray every morning. Let me see you at work today, Lord. I dare you. Let me see you at work today, Lord.

And then there's prayer number five, which is a huge prayer because it's really the prayer for a lifetime. In verse 17, Moses prays that God would establish the work of our hands.

[29 : 29] That's a big prayer. He's asking Lord in big prayer number five, verse 17 again, to make something significant from my life. When we think about Moses' prayer, establish the work of our hands, it's important to recognize that the work of our hands cannot be eternally established unless it involves something with eternal potential.

Do you see what that means? See what I'm getting at there? If you build a cabin, a canoe, a cake, those things will all fade and fail.

They are finite. The only things in this world with eternal potential are people, souls, and God's word. The work of our hands is helping people who don't know God to get into the right relationship with him.

That's the only work that will last for eternity. I guarantee you will come to heaven, you will be in the presence of God, and you will meet people who say, if not for you, I guarantee it.

I do guarantee that will happen to you. If not for something you said or didn't say or how you steered my life in a different direction at a critical moment and you had no idea, I guarantee it.

[30 : 55] Only that work will last for eternity. So slight transition. Just as it's important to remember and be reminded of the things that will truly last, it's also important to be reminded of the things that are truly important in our lives.

And the same goes for our faith. The essential things, the foundation, the roots of our faith are the things that are truly important.

And it helps for us to be reminded of them from time to time. So starting on Sunday, September 10th, I'll be launching into a series called Rooted.

And our fall sermon series for this year, that's it. We'll be exploring some of those things together. The roots of our faith, the things that are truly important, we need to refocus on and be reminded of.

Friends, God is great. And we are not. This is the simple reality that Moses witnessed through the seasons of his life. From the palace to the wilderness, Moses lived really several lifetimes by today's standards and experienced the power and faithfulness of God in a multitude of ways.

[32 : 14] And this same faithfulness and power is still available to you and me in our lives through our Savior, Jesus Christ. So what is one big thing that you want to ask of God today?

Forgiveness? Love? Mercy? Grace? Provision in some way? Guess what?

These are all his areas of expertise. Bring your one big thing to him in prayer today. Be bold with a big prayer.

And if you've never asked Jesus to forgive your sins, today is as good a day as any. Pastor Kent, this feels like an altar call. It is of sorts.

I've been doing that a little lately. And whether you've followed Jesus two months ago or all your life, this reorientation periodically, I think, is critical.

[33 : 14] So for some of you, the first prayer you want to pray is forgive me and live in me. So if you'd like to receive Christ or rededicate your life to him today, and I hope that's all of us, pray these words after me and they'll be on the screen.

Lord Jesus, today I invite you to be more than my Lord and Savior. I invite you to be my everything. And I choose you above everything else.

Today I'm asking you to be in my corner, in my decisions, in my joys and pain, in every challenge of my life. All that I have, all that I am, is yours, Lord.

Amen. Amen. For hundreds of years, the Psalms have provided hope and perspective to the people of God. Their wisdom and insight is still speaking to God, to the people of God, today.

Can you recognize that, that we've been doing that? Regardless of the season of life we find ourselves in, for better or worse, sickness or health, joy or pain, the Psalms have something for everyone.

[34 : 29] My friends, continue to explore the richness of the Psalms. Ask God to continue to speak to you and guide you through their richness, their wisdom, and in the worship of our God. And continue to sing your praise to the maker of all. Amen. Amen.