

Are You Ready to Die

Psalm 90

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, July 21, 2019

With my busy schedule this week at Youth Camp, I wasn't able to prepare something new for you today like I wanted to (not new for me anyway). I wasn't able to write a new sermon. So I had to go back to the vault and dig up a sermon I preached six years ago in Indiana. Next week, we are going to start the Book of Jonah and that will be new for us. We are going to begin our study of this amazing Book, which is something I have never preached on before and you have never heard before, not here anyway. But this is something that I have preached on many years ago and it is found in the Book of Psalms. So if you would turn there with me in your Bibles, that is the Book we are in this morning. Turn to the Book of Psalms.

And as you are turning there, I want to ask a question to get you thinking about our passage for this morning: are you ready to die? That is a big question, isn't it? That is pretty deep. It is possibly the deepest question there is. Are you ready to die? Are you ready to meet God? I ask you that because studies have shown that the death rate on this planet is 100%. The mortality rate is 100%. Just as the earth turns around the sun and the laws of gravity hold (what goes up must come down), so death is appointed to all men and after that the judgement. Every living creature dies. Everything that has breath dies. It is inevitable – you can't stop it. So the question I have for you this morning is, are you ready? Are you prepared to die? As a pastor, I can't promise you a lot of things. I can't give you a lot of guarantees. I can't promise you that you are going to meet your financial goals, and I can't promise you that you are going to find satisfaction in your jobs. Some of you will like it and some won't, that is just the way it is. And I can't promise you that you are going to make the team and get a degree and live in a two-story home and have beautiful children who will be healthy and who will make you proud and never let you down. I can't promise you that your spouse will always be Mr. Right or Mrs. Wonderful, and I can't promise you that you will always have a good marriage. There are no guarantees with that, although I wish there were. But I can promise you that one you will die. I promise you that one day, your heart will stop working and your lungs will stop breathing air and your brain will stop thinking and that will be it. Your life will be no more. It may not be today, it may not be tomorrow, but it will be someday. So are you ready for that?

We don't like to think about death, do we? It is one of those things that we don't want to talk about. Socrates the philosopher said just before being executed that philosophy is the practice of death because it prepared him for it. It got him ready, but I think he was wrong, because Christianity is the practice of death. Christianity is a religion of death and self-denial. But the way some Christians act, I don't think they get this because they don't want to talk about death. The way some Christians act, they don't even want to bring it up. They want to push it as far away from their minds as possible. They say it is "morbid" as if it is a bad thing, as if our mortality were a bad thing.

Just a few examples of this, just a few examples of how we avoid death today, we move our elderly into nursing homes. Sometimes because we can't take care of them, which is fine. Sometimes we do that because we don't have the resources available to take care of them at home, but sometimes we do that because we don't want to watch them die. We don't want to watch them grow old; it scares it, it unravels us. We move our cemeteries to the outskirts of town for the same reason so we don't have to remember that people are buried there and we

don't have to think about our own burial. We don't have to remember that one day, we will be in there; one day we will be joining them. We prize youth as the chief virtue above all others because young people are supposed to be a long way from death. Young people are a long way from the grave, and we complain when we get older because we are one step closer to death. We complain when we see a grey hair.

Some people even refuse to have a funeral today. This isn't so much a Christian thing, but it may be someday. Some unbelievers refuse to even have a funeral. They don't even want a ceremony. They just tell their family to come together and throw a party at their death, "Just put me in the ground and have a celebration of life and go on as if I never left. Go on as if I just went out of town for the week" or something like that.

To really point this out, to show you how much of a problem this is...just out of curiosity, how many of you have watched someone die? I don't mean you have known someone who has died, but you have actually watched someone die in real life, how many? I know our doctors have, but that is about it. On the flip side, how many of you have watched someone die on TV? How many of you have watched someone die in a movie? All of us. You see, for most of us, death is just make-believe. For most of us, death is something that happens to people in fantasy, but never in real life. We think it can't happen to us, because we have never seen it happen to us or to one of our own. Which is why our topic for us this morning is so important.

A pastor friend of mine tells the story of the time he was travelling in a hearse with an undertaker after a funeral. And he was trying to find something to say, he was trying to strike up a conversation. (I don't know if you have ever travelled in a hearse with an undertaker after a funeral. I don't know if you have had that experience, but it can get real quiet. It can get as silent as the grave – pun intended.) So he said the first thing that came to his mind was "Do you ever think about death?" He thought that would be a good place to start, "Do you ever think about death?" to which the undertaker replied, "Only my own." You see, even undertakers don't like to think about death that much. Even undertakers try to avoid it, but you can't avoid it. You have to talk about it. Like it or not, believe it or not, ready or not, one day, you will die. There is a 100% chance of it. You can be absolutely certain of it. Benjamin Franklin said, "There are two things that are certain in this world: death and taxes" and I don't know about taxes, they seem pretty certain, but I know about death. Everyone who has lived before us in history (with the exception of two, Enoch and Elijah) has died.

And the question I have for you today is this: are you ready for that? Maybe a better question is: how do you get ready? Maybe a better thing to talk about is "How do you prepare?" If I am going to die, how do I settle my accounts and put my house in order? And to answer that, I want to look at our passage for today. Turn to Psalm 90. If you are not there already, that is the passage we are looking at today, Psalm 90. In Psalm 90, Moses is wrestling with this important question. He is wrestling with an important issue: "How do I get ready to die?" He is wrestling with his humanity. He is wrestling with his mortality and how it affects us all.

Just to give you some background for that, the subscription to the Psalm starts out, "A prayer of Moses, the man of God." Because this is the only Psalm that was written by Moses, the man of God. This is the only chapter in this Book written by him. As far as I know, outside of the five Books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy), it is the only thing written by him. Which means that it is one of the oldest poems in the world. It may be the oldest. Before the anonymous author of Beowulf (that really old poem) and Homer

wrote the Iliad and the Odyssey, Moses wrote this. He wrote about an age-old problem, the problem of death. It also means that Moses wrote it while watching a lot of people die.

This is interesting, it is quite telling for the Psalm. Numbers 14 says that as a result of their sin, the Israelites had to wander in the wilderness for 40 years until an entire generation of them died off. To put that in perspective, Numbers 1 says that there were 603,550 fighting men in Israel at the time of the Exodus. If you include women and children and all of the non-fighting men in that number, that comes to around 2-3 million people, which is the population of Vancouver. So Moses took the city of Vancouver with him into the wilderness, or thereabouts, and there he watched them die. He watched the adults perish. If you do the math, that means that he watched 41 people die every day for 40 years – 41 people a day. And if you break that down even further, it means that he saw 15,000 of them die every year and he saw two of them die every hour. And we know he saw all of this, or we know it was on his mind, because this Psalm talks about it.

It talks about the judgment of God. Verse 7 talks about being consumed by God's anger and dismayed by His wrath. Verse 8 talks about our iniquities and our secret sins. Verse 9 talks about God's fury. Verse 11 mentions "the power of Your anger and Your fury." Verse 15 mentions God "afflicting us and making us see evil or trouble." So in Psalm 90, Moses is essentially saying, "God, we see what our sin has cost us. We feel the full weight of it. We feel the full weight of Your anger. So we are asking You, humbly, desperately, help us get ready to die. We are surrounded by death constantly. We see it every day, every hour. Our friends are dead. Our family members are dead. Many of our leaders are dead and we know that we are next. So, Lord, please help us get ready to die." One commentator said that everywhere Israel stopped in the wilderness they left behind a graveyard. And you can imagine Moses sitting down in one of these graveyards, sitting down on a tombstone and pulling out his pen and writing Psalm 90, thinking, "Lord, I am going to end up here one day. This will one day be me, and I want to be ready." And what does he say as he writes that, as he is sitting on this tombstone and pondering the subject of death, what does he ask for? He asks the Lord to give him three things, three perspectives to prepare for death. So if you are taking notes, that is our outline for today. That is what it is all about in Psalm 90, Moses asks God to give him three perspectives to prepare for death.

This is some deep stuff this morning, isn't it? This is sobering, but to be honest, I just spend three days in the woods this week with our young people pondering stuff like this, talking about life and death, heaven and hell and they can handle it. They could take it. It didn't go over their heads, and it won't go over yours. You will be fine. If they could take it, so can you. You can ponder the deep stuff too.

And not only that, you need a sermon like this, we all do. This may be the most important thing we talk about this year because some of you may die. I pray that you don't because we love you and we want you to stay with us. We don't want you to go, but the chances are that you are going to die sometime. You won't live forever. And it may be this year, who knows? It may be soon, so this is a very important thing to discuss for you. It may be the most important thing that we talk about, how do you prepare for death? Moses says that you prepare with three requests. He asks the Lord to give him three perspectives to prepare for death.

And the first one is an eternal perspective. Moses asks the Lord to give him an eternal perspective. Most of the time, the reason we forget about death and push it to the side is

because we lose our eternal perspective. We forget about eternity altogether. We forget that one day we are going to die and face God. And Moses begins by talking about that. That is where he starts this Psalm. If you would read verses 1-2, “Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were born or You gave birth to the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.”

The word “Hebrew” means “wanderer”. The Jews were a people who wandered. For much of their history they had no fixed dwelling place. If you remember your Bible history for a moment, Abraham wandered, Isaac wandered, Jacob wandered, Joseph wandered. They would get comfortable in one place and move to another. They would set up shop in a town and then have to leave it and go somewhere else. They were nomads, Bedouins, wanderers. And here Moses is wandering in the wilderness and he says, “Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.” He says that, “Even though we don’t have a home of this earth, we have a home in You. Even though we are wanderers in this life, we have a dwelling place in the next life, because we belong with You. You are our home and You are eternal. Before the mountains were born or You gave birth to the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.”

The Hebrew language did not have a word for our “eternal” so they just used the word “everlasting”, and “God”, Moses says, “is from everlasting to everlasting.” He is from eternity to eternity. He is from forever to forever; He is timeless. At our Youth Camp this week, Pastor David Corrente talked about God being eternal, and he said that means that God is endless. You can never get to the bottom of Him. Think as far back as you can and God goes further. Think as far forward as you can and God goes further. There is no end to His existence. And one way to prepare for death is to remember that you need an eternal perspective. You need to look at life in light of eternity. You need to come to grips with the fact that one day, your soul will meet God like that. One day, you will die and either go to heaven or hell.

I have heard this illustrated several ways, but one way is with the dot and the line analogy. Anybody ever heard of the dot and line analogy? If I had a white board up here on stage, I could draw a dot on it to represent your life. You will live for 70-80 years and then you will die. Your life on earth is short. In the grand scheme of things, it is like a dot - very quick. I could then draw a line on the board to represent eternity. It goes from one side to the other; it never ends. It keeps on going and going and going; it keeps travelling and travelling. That is your life in eternity. It goes on forever. In the grand scheme of things, it is like a line - very long.

And the question you need to ask yourself is, which one am I living for? Which one I prioritizing, the dot or the line, the short one of the long one, the thing that lasts forever or the thing that doesn’t? Am I living for this life or am I living for eternity? I know a lot of you are suffering right now. As I talked to different people in our congregation, it is clear that you are going through a lot, and one way to get through that is to live for the line, right? You need to live for eternity. This life isn’t all that great anyway. It isn’t all it is cracked up to be, but that is okay because you have another life coming, amen? You have another world to live for, and that thought can get you through this one. Some of you aren’t suffering, but you have been disappointed lately. This life has let you down, but that is okay for the same reason – you have another life coming. This life is not the end for you. You don’t place all your hopes here.

Corrie Ten Boom was a Dutch Christian during World War II whose family saved Jews from the Nazis by hiding them. Some said they saved as many as 800 of them, which is incredible. But eventually, her family was found out and they were arrested and Corrie and her sister, Betsie, were sent to Ravensbrück Concentration Camp in Germany. Corrie said that she really struggled with that. She said, "We did all this work for God, saving Jews, putting our neck on the line, suffering, suffering, suffering, and what do we get for it? More suffering, more problems." And one day she was complaining about all of the lice in her sleeping quarters. The Nazis crammed as many prisoners as they could into small rooms and they never allowed them to clean the rooms, so they were full of lice. And Corrie was complaining about this to her sister, Betsie when her sister said, "Corrie, don't you see? These are God's lice. They keep the Nazis away. The only reason they don't come in here is because of the lice. God sent them to protect us." When you have an eternal perspective, you see God's hand in everything, don't you? You even see the lice as "God's lice". You can see the pests as God's pests. Some of you need to remember that this morning. Some of you need to see that some of your trials are no more than God's lice. You whine and you gripe and you complain when you suffer because you can't think past the dot, but if you would pause for a minute and think about God, you would realize that all of the trials are His. He is only trying to help you. He is only doing it for your good. And just as importantly, there is more to come; this world is not your home. He is your dwelling place. He is your final destination. Don't get too comfortable here; this is life is just a dot.

Some of you might be having a hard time remembering this because you are lost. The next life doesn't sound appealing to you because God is not your dwelling place. You don't know Him. If you knew Him, it would be exciting, but you don't so it isn't - it sounds terrible. My friends, let me remind you that Christianity is the practice of death, which means that if you aren't practicing it now, you won't be ready to do it then. If you aren't dying to yourself and your flesh and your sin, you won't be ready to die tomorrow when you breathe your final breath. It will take you off guard if you are not in Christ. But it doesn't have to. You can trust in Him today. You can begin to practice death right now. Jesus died on the cross so He could die for your sins and help you to die to them too, if you would just believe in Him. If you would give your life over to Him, He will forgive you and give you a new life, and He will be your dwelling place. Which leads us to the second thing Moses asked God for.

The first one is an eternal perspective; when you see death, you have to have this, don't you? You have to have an eternal perspective, because what else is there? Eternity is the only thing to look forward to, it is the only thing that you have. That brings us to the second thing Moses prayed for in Psalm 90, and that is a temporary perspective. A second way to prepare for death is with a temporary perspective. This one is a little bit longer, he spends more time on this. But you balance your eternal perspective with a temporary one, with a momentary one. When you see that your life is short, that it is just a dot, it makes you value your time; it makes you take advantage of it. And if you would read verses 3-11 with me, this is what he says,

You turn man back into dust and say, "Return, O children of men." For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it passes by, or as a watch in the night. You have swept them away like a flood, they fall asleep; in the morning they are like grass which sprouts anew. In the morning it flourishes and sprouts anew; toward evening it fades and withers away. For we have been consumed by Your anger and by Your wrath we have been dismayed. You have placed our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your presence. For all our days have declined in Your fury;

we have finished our years like a sigh. As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, or if due to strength, eighty years, yet their pride is but labor and sorrow; for soon it is gone and we fly away. Who understands the power of Your anger and Your fury, according to the fear that is due You?

Now there is a lot in here, and we can't get to everything, but just to look at the highlights, Moses gives us several word pictures here to describe the temporality of life. In verse 3 he says that life is like dust. How many of you have ever measured the dust in your yard? Anybody? What about the dust in your home? What about the dust at the office or at your school? You don't do that, do you? Why? Because dust weighs nothing, because dust is fleeting. It is of no significance whatsoever. It is so small that you can't weigh it. Dust blows away with the wind, you blow it and it is gone. Moses says life is like that. It blows away with the wind; you blow it and it is gone.

In verse 4 he says that life is like a watch in the night because the ancients divided the night into four watches that were three hours each. They were three quick periods of time that you would just sleep right through if you weren't paying attention. They would go by like that! And Moses says that life is also like that too. Life is so short, it is so quick that if you are not careful, you will sleep right through it. I have talked to so many people who have said, "Where did the time go? What happened to the last 50 years?" That is what Moses says here.

Verse 5 says that life like a flood; the waters go by in an instant. Verses 5-6 say that life is like grass. In Israel, there was no grass in the summertime because it didn't rain. But if rain did come, grass would spring up over night and die the next day. It would be gone as soon as it was there. Moses says that life is like that. "In the morning it flourishes and sprouts anew; towards evening it fades and withers away." Verse 9 says that life is like a sigh - you breathe and it's gone. Verse 10 says that life flies away. But do you get the picture? Do you get the point? Life is short, isn't it? It is temporary; it is fleeting. It doesn't last very long; it is like a dot. A famous boxer once said that money was like sand in his hands, because he couldn't hold onto it. Life is like that; you can't hold onto it. It slips through your fingers; it gets away from you before you can catch it. It is like dust in the wind, it is like a watch in the night, it is like a flood that rushes by.

And here is the question that Moses asks himself, and I want to ask you this morning, what are you doing with it? What are you doing with your precious life? How are you spending this short life that you have to live?

When I was eight years old, I begin playing tennis. And at first, I didn't take it too seriously. I took lessons and I played in a few tournaments, but that was about it. But when I started high school, tennis became an obsession for me. I became a slave to it, it was all I thought about. In my freshman year, I started taking lessons an hour and a half away because there were better coaches there. And I would make that long drive two to three times a week every week throughout the 52 weeks a year. And I started travelling across the state playing in tennis tournaments. Once summer, I was only home for two weeks out of the summer because the rest of the time I was playing somewhere in Nashville, in Memphis, in Chattanooga. During the school year, I would come home from school, play for two hours and then go home and work out, and that was my life. Everything I did, I did for tennis. And right before my senior year of high school, the Lord interrupted all of that and He saved me. Right before I turned 17, the Lord saved me at a Christian sports camp for young people. He turned me away from my idol of tennis and I was born again. And I remember playing in a tournament right after

that and thinking, “Is this all there is to life? Seriously? Is this all I am living for? What am I going to say for myself when I stand before God? How am I going to answer for myself? ‘Hey God, I’m sorry I couldn’t read my Bible more, but I sure had a good backhand.’ What is that? ‘Hi God, I am sorry that I never did more for Your Son, but look at how many tennis tournaments I won?’” That’s stupid, that’s dumb. To prepare for death, you have to have a temporal perspective. You have to see life as short; you have to see life as fleeting. Everyday counts, every second matters, because you blink and it’s gone. You yawn, and it’s past, and you don’t get to do it again. You don’t get to play it over; there is no rewind button. You get one chance, one shot, one opportunity to live your life and that is it.

And the same goes for everybody, rich or poor, white or black, healthy or unhealthy. Some of you are thinking you are going to live forever because you are healthy. You think this doesn’t apply to you because you are young and vibrant and fit. But talk to the older people in this room and they will tell you that it doesn’t last. You won’t always be that way. Talk to the doctors in this room and they will tell you that young people die as well as old people. They bury young people as well as old at times. This applies to all of us, and this helps put this in perspective, doesn’t it? This determines what’s really important. I had a professor in seminary who was at his niece’s wedding, and he was watching her dance with her father at the reception when he started wondering, “What is going through her father’s mind right now? What is he thinking? I bet he is thinking, ‘I don’t get to do it over again.’ I bet he is saying to himself that ‘I don’t get to raise my daughter a second time. She is grown now. She is her own woman now.’ I hope I did it right.” Any parents relate to that? And at the time he was thinking this, my professor was considering going back to school to get another degree. He was considering getting a doctorate, and he said, “You know, but the time I get through with that, my kids will be out of the home and all they will remember about their father is that his nose was in a book. All they will remember is my studying. Maybe I don’t need that degree after all. Maybe I can put that on hold for now.”

You see, life is short, and realizing that changes things. Life is fleeting and realizing that will reset your priorities. Moses understands that in Psalm 90. As he is sitting on a tombstone, as Moses is sitting in a graveyard in the middle of nowhere, he is reminded that life is too short to waste it on trivial things. Life is too short to waste it on stuff you don’t need. I doubt very seriously that Moses had a set of golf clubs with him in the wilderness. Not to knock golf, but I hope you get my point. I doubt that he had the latest model car or the most up-to-date gadget or gizmo. He didn’t have the coolest shoes or clothes or anything like that. Why? Because he knew that life was too short for anything like that. He knew that our life is like dust and it is like a watch in the night and a flood and grass and a sigh.

Maybe it would do some of us a world of good to attend a funeral this week like he did to remember that. You don’t even have to know the person. Just walk in and sit in the back row and tell them your pastor sent you; tell them it was my idea, so you can take all of this in, so you can meditate on the fact that you will have a funeral one day too. Maybe it would do some of us a world of good to read the obituaries in the newspaper this week and put your own name in there. Visualize the fact that someone will be writing about your life one day and telling what you left behind. Leave something good, make sure you spend your life on what matters. Which leads us to one more thing Moses says here, one more perspective to prepare for death.

Just to review the other ones, Moses says that you prepare for death with an eternal perspective, you prepare by looking at the line and not the dot. You prepare by seeing life as

an eternal thing. And you prepare for death with a temporal perspective, you prepare by seeing it as short and fleeting; this life will not last forever. It will go by in an instant, it will be gone before you know it. So remember that and take it into account. Which brings us to a third and final thing Moses prays for to help him prepare for death and that is a perspirational perspective. No, I didn't stutter- Moses prays for God to give a perspirational perspective. Which means that he asked God to help him perspire over all of this. He asked God to help him sweat over this, to help him wake up and pay attention. Moses didn't write this Psalm to depress you, he writes it to light a fire under you, and that is how he ends it here. If you read verses 12-17,

So teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom. Do return, O LORD; how long will it be? And be sorry for Your servants. O satisfy us in the morning with Your lovingkindness, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days You have afflicted us, and the years we have seen evil. Let Your work appear to Your servants and Your majesty to their children. Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us; and confirm for us the work of our hands; yes, confirm the work of our hands.

The phrase, "teach us to number our days" in verse 12 is a powerful one because Moses is asking God to help him count his days so he will remember how many he has left. Most of us are more prone to count our dollars than our days, aren't we? We are more apt to count our money or our toys than our time. But which one is more important? Which one is more valuable? You can get your money back, but you can't get your time back. And you can get your toys back, but you can't get your days back. So Moses asks God to help him count his days. Some of us are counting other men's days. We say, "That guy doesn't have too many days left," but we don't say that about ourselves. Moses says that we should. He prays for a perspirational perspective to life. He says, "Teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom."

And He ends the prayer in verse 17 by saying, "Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us; and confirm for us the work of our hands; yes, confirm the work of our hands." Moses repeats "confirm the work of our hands" twice here for emphasis. He wants the Lord to make his life count for something, he wants the Lord to give permanence to his work. As he was leading Israel through the wilderness, Moses had to be wondering if his life would amount to anything, he had to be wondering what it was all about, because as soon as he got comfortable somewhere, he had to move again. As soon as he laid down roots, he had to pack it all up and pull them up. As soon as he made a friend, they died. Everything kept changing, everything was in flux. And in light of that, Moses prays a very logical prayer. He says, "Lord, confirm for us the work of our hands." "Even though my life is short, make it count for something. Even though my days are numbered, make them worthwhile. Please God, I beg You." And I think we all need to be praying that today. I don't know about you, but I need to be praying this.

I need God's help in this because it seems like as soon as I learn something, I forget it. Does anybody know what I am talking about? Can anybody relate? As soon as I fix something, it is broken again. I spend days, weeks, fixing things that I already fixed. That is a product of the Fall by the way. That is a result of the curse on Adam, the first man. After Adam sinned, the Lord said in Genesis 3, "Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you;...and by the sweat of your face you will eat bread." Before Adam sinned, the ground only produced good fruit. Before

he sinned, it only did what it was supposed to do. It was perfect, but after Adam sinned, it didn't. It produced thorns and he had to sweat to get fruit out of it. We all feel the effects of that day. We all suffer as a result of the Fall, but Moses said that there is an answer to that. He said there is a solution.

You need to give it over to God. You need to ask Him to remove the curse. "God confirm for us the work of our hands. Help us raise fruit instead of thorns. Help us produce good things instead of bad. Give us a perspirational perspective and make our lives matter for something."

David Brainerd was a missionary to the Indians in the 1700s and a close friend to Jonathan Edwards. He actually died in Edwards' home. Now the interesting thing about that is that Jonathan Edwards had 11 children and most parents would do anything they could to keep their children from seeing something like that. They would do anything to keep their children from seeing a dying man, but not Jonathan Edwards. In fact, he actually encouraged his children to visit Brainerd every day and let him teach them from his deathbed. And in his journal Brainerd tells us what he said:

I shall die here, and here I shall be buried, and here you will see my grave, and do you remember what I have said to you. I am going into eternity and it is sweet to me to think of eternity: the endlessness of it makes it sweet.

When you see my grave, remember what I said to you while I was alive; then think with yourself how the man who lies in that grave counseled and warned me to prepare for death.

According to Jonathan Edwards, that was the last sermon that David Brainerd ever preached, that was one of the last things that he ever said. Now let me ask you, why would he do that? Why would Jonathan Edwards let his children listen to a dying man? He did that because that would make them perspire. He did that because that would make them sweat and prepare for death. To watch a man die is powerful – that sticks with you. To hear a dying man say, "Prepare for death" is even more powerful. All of us need to hear that if we can. All of us need to sweat over this. We need to be reminded that death is coming and that we can only prepare for it with sweat. Charles Spurgeon said, "Do you think you will be carried to heaven on a featherbed? Do you really think you will prepare for eternity by doing nothing?" You can only go to heaven if you are wide awake to the things of God.

And Moses prays for that here in Psalm 90. "Make this life count," he prays. And the Lord answered that prayer because we still remember the life of Moses today. Here we are talking about him thousands of years later.

Let me ask you the question I asked you at the beginning of this sermon. Let me go back to where I started this, are you ready to die? Are you ready for that important day? If you are not, you need to get ready because death is coming. It is the only sure thing in life. If you are not, you need to take these words seriously because death waits for no man.

In preparation for this sermon, I was thinking of some ways to do this, I put together a list of ways to help you get ready to die. Moses didn't go into that here, he didn't have time, but I didn't want to leave you hanging. I want to give you a few practical ways to prepare for death that you could take home with you. And one of the ways is to plug into your local church. That is a great way to prepare to die, that is an excellent way to do this, by plugging into your

local church because you are going to spend eternity with them. You are going to spend eternity with the church, so you need to do it now to see if you would like it. Get a head start. You are going to sing in heaven, so start singing now. Get in the habit of it, get a taste for it now to see if it fits. You are going to fellowship in heaven, so start fellowshipping now. You are going to sit under sound teaching, so do that now – see what that is like.

Another way to get ready for death is to spend time with God. That only makes sense, doesn't it? Spend time with God. Spend time in prayer and in His Word. Spend time living a holy life like He has told you to. Spend time honouring Him with your life, obeying the commandments and repenting of sin. After all, you need to find out what He is like before you meet Him. You need to find out what He is like before you stand before His throne, so spend time with Him now. Nobody goes on a trip without first doing some research on it. Nobody goes to Mexico or Alaska without first looking at a map to see what they are getting into. And it should be the same way with God. You need to look at the map. The worst thing you could do is meet Him for the first time in eternity. You don't want to do that. The worst thing you could do is just get introduced for the first time before His throne. That would be a disaster. You need to meet Him now.

And finally, most important of all is you want to meet His Son. That is the greatest way to prepare for death. That is the most important thing you could do. You need to believe in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. For He is the one who lets you into heaven. He is the one who gets you there and introduces you to God. Heaven is all about Jesus Christ. It is consumed with thoughts of Him, and the greatest way to prepare for it is to be consumed with thoughts of Him yourself. You need to let your mind be fixated on Him. In his book *God is the Gospel*, John Piper writes that,

The critical question for our generation – and for every generation – is this: if you could have heaven, with no sickness, and all the food you ever liked, and all the leisure activities you ever enjoyed, and all the natural beauties you ever saw, all the physical pleasures you ever tasted, and no human conflict or any natural disasters, would you enjoy heaven if Jesus was not in it?

If you can answer “yes” to that question, I want to tell you that you are not ready for Him. If you would enjoy heaven without Jesus being in it, then there is something seriously wrong with your thinking. You are not ready to die yet because you prepare for death through Jesus Christ. We prepare for death by spending time with Him. He is the one who takes us there; He is the one who brings us into heaven. Therefore, we want to be where He is; we want to be close to Him, not just heaven, but Him. He is the delight of our souls.

So will you do that this morning if you haven't? Will you spend time with Him? I pray that you will. I pray that He will capture all your thoughts and affections. That is what our church is all about, that is what Christianity is all about. And I can think of no better way to prepare for death than that. Let's pray.