Life is short—Knowing God is forever

 Final in the January 2017 series, Finding God

# Scripture: Psalm 61:1-5; 62:11,12

#  Key Thought:  The more fragile life seems, the more valuable is God’s nearness.

#  Intro:

I realized again as I was preparing this message how much we like to use euphemisms for aging and of course for death too. You can’t say “old” or “elderly” or even “senior citizen.” And for heaven’s sake, don’t say “geezer.” People feel insulted beyond words by such terms. In my last denomination, the district committee in charge of a retreat for people of a “certain age” had a terrible time. They called it Keenagers Camp for a while. That seemed too obvious I guess, so they started calling it Best Years Fellowship. There’s a euphemism that didn’t fool anybody either. Anybody over 55 was eligible to attend, but most people that I knew who were under 70 only attended if they were serving in the kitchen. Actually, I’m not sure because I never went, I guess we were never old enough to go, or at least we wouldn’t admit it.

But whether we want people to know our age or not, as we get older, there are some new spiritual challenges that we face. So today I want to talk about how God gives perspective and grace to meet our needs in all seasons of our life.

Three truths to remember that motivate us to draw near to God and stay in close relationship to God no matter our age.

# Realizing the brevity of life motivates us in finding God.

The first truth that we need to remember, a truth that David and other Scripture writers remind us of is a very simple one. Our life is short! Life is also fragile, tenuous.

Most of us tend to live as if we have forever. Especially when we are young, we are quite unaware of how fast time passes. But the Bible repeatedly reminds us that it is wiser to consider life as very short, shorter than one thinks. If we do, our perspectives will be sounder and our decisions better.

Noted some of the words and phrases David uses in Psalm 61, 62 which point to the frailness and brevity of life.

Ps. 61:2 – “my heart grows faint”

Psalm 61:6 “Increase the days of the king’s life”

Psalm 62:9 while speaking of both the “lowborn” and the “highborn” -- “together they are only a breath.”

David in Psalm 39:5 is more definitive about the shortness of our days.

You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before you. Everyone is but a breath, even those who seem secure.

David is very aware that life is short. He is also aware that he has no promise of tomorrow, as none of us do. Pastor Rick Warren in his best-selling book, The Purpose Driven Life wrote:

Realizing that life on earth is just a temporary assignment should radically alter your values. Eternal values, not temporal ones become the deciding factors for your decisions. As C. S. Lewis observed, "All that is not eternal is eternally useless."
 Rick Warren, The Purpose Driven Life p. 50

 We make better decisions from a spiritual point of view when we remember the brevity of life. It helps us prioritize the truly important things, the things that really matter. It reminds us that the day will come sooner than we think when we will give our own account to God.

# Seasoned Christians find that God's presence renews and sustains.

One of the issues that you can read about today that is troubling to all of us is the increase in depression among seniors. About 7 million adults over 65 experience depression each year. In 2004, 16% of suicides were among those over 65 (Healthline.com). As we age, we need God more than ever. But….

Speaking of aging, did you hear about the man who said….

**Aging jokes**

"I've gotten to the age where I need my false teeth and hearing aid before I can ask where I left my glasses."

There is a lot to be thankful for if you take time to look for it. For example, I'm standing here thinking how nice it is that wrinkles don't hurt.

You know you're getting old when you stoop to tie your shoes and wonder what else you can do while you're down there.

Three older ladies were discussing the travails of getting older.

One said, "Sometimes I catch myself in front of the refrigerator with a jar of mayonnaise in my hand, and I can't remember whether I was taking it out or putting it away."

While the second lady said, "Yes, sometimes I find myself on the landing of the stairs, and I can't remember whether I was on my way up, or on my way down."

The third lady chimed in, "Well, I'm glad I don't have those problems – knock on wood." She wrapped her knuckles on the table, then cocked her head and said, "I must be the door. I'll get it."

(Insert humor)

Getting a little more seasoned should help us get perspective but usually we just follow old habits,

## The second truth that David points out that will help us is to remember that God’s presence renews and sustains us.

This is true whatever season of life we are in.

There are multiple images of God’s care and protection in Psalm 61, 62. We have already talked about the more military images of fortress and refuge. But there are more. There is a hospitality image. “I long to dwell in your tent forever (Ps. 61:4).” When one came under the tent of an Eastern patriarch, you were under their protection, provision and care. It is a powerful and wide-ranging image of longing for divine hospitality, protection, and care.

Then there are two mentions of a feminine image. The writer expresses himself with a metaphor from the bird world saying he longs to be like a chick tucked under the wing of a protecting mother bird (Ps. 61:4; 63:7). The Mother bird in the image stands for God. This imagery is especially suggestive of the security, nurturing, and abundant provision he finds in God’s care. He compares his satisfaction to a bird singing!

Here is a passage from another Psalm (by an unknown author) that is directed specifically at those of us who are getting more seasoned.

The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the Lord, they will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green, proclaiming, “The Lord is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him.” Ps 92:12-15 NIV 2011

For many years now, I’ve cherished a similar promise given to us in Isaiah as well.

 “Listen to me, you descendants of Jacob, all the remnant of the people of Israel, you whom I have upheld since your birth, and have carried since you were born. Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you. Isa 46:3-4

So the time of getting older is a great time to draw near to God. He particularly promises to help us in our years when we are eligible for Sr. citizen discounts- but he doesn’t have any age-limits on his kindness.

# God's sure rewards give us steadfast hope in life's final transition.

## The third truth that is so important to remember is that God rewards, and he rewards with perfect justice.

As David put it so well in Psalm 62;

 “You reward everyone according to what they have done.” Ps 62:12

Sometimes when we are earning our strips with lots of birthdays, there are uneasy feelings that life has not been fair. Many times it has not. Other times as we look back over our experiences, there is bitter disappointment with some things we remember. One of the challenges of later life, we’re told, is making peace with ourselves about things we wish we hadn’t done and things we wish we had done differently. That’s a subject for another day. But trusting in the truth that David is teaching us will help us to rest the ultimate outcome with God. His rewards are perfect.

Rick Warren comments in his famous book, The Purpose Driven Life,

When life gets tough, when you're overwhelmed with doubt, or when you wonder if living for Christ is worth the effort, remember that you are not home yet. At death you won't leave home – you'll go home.
Rick Warren The Purpose Driven Life p. 51

And when we get home to heaven, God has prepared a place especially for us, perfectly suited for us. He has a perfectly planned reward waiting too. I love this illustration from Max Lucado.

"Some time ago I indulged and ordered two shirts from a tailor. I selected the cloth. The tailor measured my body. And several weeks later, I received two shirts made especially for me. There is a big difference between these two shirts and the other shirts in my closet. The tailored shirts were made with me in mind. The other shirts were made for any hundred thousand or so males my size. But not these two. They were made just for me. As a result, they fit! They don't bulge. They don't choke. They are just right. Such is the promise of heaven. It was made with us in mind. Elsewhere Jesus invites us to "receive the kingdom God has prepared for you since the world was made" (Matthew 25:34).

The problem with this world is that it doesn't fit. Oh, it will do for now, but it isn't tailor-made. We were made to live with God, but on earth we live by faith. We were made to live forever, but on this earth we live but for a moment. We were made to live holy lives, but this world is stained by sin.

This world wears like a borrowed shirt. Heaven, however, will fit like tailor-made." From A Gentle Thunder p. 63

David didn’t know all that we know from the teachings of Jesus about how Jesus has gone before us to prepare a place for us (John 14:2). When I think of the future in heaven for believers that Jesus has prepared, I think of Peter’s words:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. 1 Peter 1:3-5

# Conclusion

Well, I don’t know about you, but when I think of these 3 truths, I am motivates to draw near to God and stay close to him.

* Since life is short, I want to stay close to God so that I can maximize how I use the days I am given.
* Life is difficult so I need to stay close to God because God promises to renew and sustain me.
* I am motivated to serve God because by faith I understand that his rewards will be perfectly tailored to me.

So I am persuaded that to take refuge in God; to come under his sheltering wing now; to enter a deep relationship that only gets richer as I get older. I rejoice that this deep spiritual relationship with God cannot be interrupted by physical death, but will transcends it. By the grace of God I will be ushered into an inheritance that cannot perish, spoil or fade, keep in heaven for me (1Peter 1:4).