



water from rock

Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – April 27, 2023

The Lord be with you.

This morning as I was making coffee, I thought of the instant coffee theory of life that's put forward by Rabbi Harold Kushner. And with the instant coffee theory of life, you open a new jar of instant coffee and you dole out generous heaping spoon fulls because, well, you have a whole jar of it, but then by the time you start getting towards the bottom of the jar, you realize that that you don't have that much coffee left, and so you carefully go after every grain of coffee in the jar. And Rabbi Kushner says that that's a lot like we tend to treat the days of our lives that when we're young, we're usually not so mindful of our days, how much time we have left, but as we get older, we treat our days, at least we ought to treat our days a little more carefully. Making coffee this morning and the instant coffee theory of life takes me to a little prayer that I like to pray. It's found in Psalm 90 verse 12, teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

This prayer is by Moses who is writing the oldest Psalm in the Salter, it is a Psalm in which Moses is reflecting on the shortness of life and the eternity of God, for whom Moses says, a thousand years in God's sight are like yesterday when it's passed. And all of this then leads Moses to pray. Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom. Moses is like the other Hebrews and that he is devoted to the pursuit of wisdom. In fact, there was a whole section of the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, that is called wisdom literature, and that includes the books of Job, Proverbs Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs. The ancient Hebrews wanted wisdom. The Hebrew word for wisdom is hokmah and hokmah means to have a skill. Hokmah is used for the skill of working with gold, silver and precious stones, hokmah is used with a skill of designing and constructing beautiful buildings, hokmah is used for the skill of navigating a ship on the high seas. And in this prayer of Psalm 90, verse 12, Moses is praying for hokmah to live life with skill. And notice that Moses connects, he connects living life skillfully with hokmah, that he connects that to numbering our days. Any teacher can teach us to count, but only God can teach us to number. To number our days. Only God can teach us true wisdom to number, to see how quickly life passes, to see how precious each day is to make the most of it, that we really do need the Holy Spirit to make right use of the brief uncertain time that we have to do the skill to live with meaning and beauty.



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When I was a chaplain for hospice, our patients were counting time, not in years, months or even weeks, but often days. They were truly numbering their days, trying to make the best of the time left to them. And it was from these hospice patients that I learned some of the wisdom of living life skillfully. Learning to live life skillfully in learning to say five things we need to say before we die. Well, and five things we need to say as we live... Here are the five things that I learned to say.

Forgive me. I forgive you. I love you. Thank you. Goodbye. How often we let our days pass by without saying these words, forgive me. I forgive you; I love you. Thank you. Goodbye. And then it occurred to me that as these are five things we need to say before we die, that those are five things what we need to say every day of our lives, saying those five things can help make for living life skillfully wisely. And then it occurred to me that there's really a six thing that we need to say. We need to say, I forgive me. That is to know and experience God's great forgiveness of us in Jesus Christ, so that we can then say, I forgive me. Today, today is the day that we can live with wisdom with skill, we can start today making sure that everything that really needs to be said... It said, Forgive me. I forgive you; I love you. Thank you. Goodbye. And yes, I forgive me. Today's the day. Seize it.

And Lord, teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom. Amen. I am Tim Smith, a fellow traveler. Thanks for listening. Until next time.