

## “We Have This Moment Today”

*How long have you been alive?* I don't mean: How old are you? Rather, how much of your time on earth have you truly been *alive* – and lived life to fullest? The Gaithers wrote a song called “We Have This Moment Today”. The refrain in that song goes like this:

“We have this moment to hold in our hand,  
And to touch as it slips through our fingers like sand;  
Yesterday's gone, and tomorrow may never come,  
But we have this moment today.”

*Each moment is a gift from God, pregnant with the miracle of life!* But much of the time we just *exist* – caught on a treadmill of dull routine, predictable habit – so the moments of life slip through our fingers like sand. *But sometimes it happens* – we're able to experience life with heightened awareness. It might be casually glancing at a sleeping baby, and suddenly we becoming aware of the wonder of that tiny little form...or perhaps we're working outdoors, engrossed in some task, and all of a sudden we notice the scent of lilacs, or the deep blue hue of the sky, or delicate pattern of the flowers in our garden.

All of us, no doubt, can point to experiences when it seemed we became *alive* and *aware* – and really *lived* those moments. Some of the moments growing up when I felt most alive to the wonder of life was when I went flying with my dad. He had a private pilot's license, and we spent many hours together in the air. I still vividly recall climbing into the cabin of a Piper Cub the smell of the leather seats, the odor of fuel – the feel of the aircraft taxiing, then the engine roaring, and the thrill of lifting off the ground. Or on a hot summer day flying occasionally in an open cockpit, double-winged Stearman, an old military training aircraft from World War II.

There are those moments when we drink in the exhilaration of just being alive! The song expresses this:

“Hold tight to the sound of the *music of living*,  
Happy songs from the laughter of children at play;  
Hold my hand as we run through the sweet fragrant meadows,  
Making memories of what was today.”

“We have this moment to hold in our hand,  
And to touch as it slips through our fingers like sand;  
Yesterday's gone and tomorrow may never come,  
But we have this moment today.”

The writer of Psalm 90 was aware of how life slips through our fingers so quickly. He meditates on the eternal nature of God: "Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God" (Psalm 90:1-2).

Then he reflects on how rapidly the moments...and days...and *years* pass by: "You turn

us back to dust, and say, 'Turn back, you mortals.' For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past, or like a watch in the night. You sweep them away; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning; in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers" (Psalm 90:3-6).

Later in the psalm, he cries out: "So teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart" (verse 12). The New Living Translation has it: "Teach us to realize the brevity of life, so that we may grow in wisdom." Those of us who are older can appreciate what the psalm writer is saying, can't we? How quickly the years have passed! The psalmist hopes that the fleeting years make us all wiser!

The years of our lives pass so quickly. What a difference it can make if we can savor each moment as a gift of God. *Some of us miss appreciating the present moment because we're living in the past.* We think our best days are behind us. It was so much better back then. Perhaps we're saddled with the mindset of regret – forever looking back at our mistakes and the bad choices we made. The *present* is darkened by *past failures*. We just can't get away from being stuck in the past! It's like we're living life *facing backwards!* *Some churches are like that!* As result, we miss wonderful things God is opening up for us *this moment*.

*Others of us miss out on the present because we're living in the future.* We're focused on that day out there when we'll be out of school...or making more money...or when the kids are older...or when we'll be able to retire. Or, we spend a lot of energy worrying about and fretting over the future. And so, since we're so preoccupied with *tomorrow or next week, or next year*, the richness of *today* slips by us.

The good news is Jesus can help free us from guilt over the past and worry about the future so we can more fully embrace the present moment as God's gift to us!

*We can also let much of life slip by without being fully alive because we overlook the importance of the simple things.* In Thornton Wilder's play *Our Town*, Emily, the main character, discovers too late the simple joy of just being alive. After her death, Emily is allowed to watch herself relive one day of her life. She's warned that she won't enjoy what she experiences – but she welcomes the chance and chooses to relive her 12<sup>th</sup> birthday.

But as she relives that day, she sees family members taking each other for granted and living with so little passion. It's so painful that she finally pleads to be delivered from it all. Looking back on her family and her life one last time, Emily cries out, "Good-bye, good-bye, world. Good-bye Grover's Corners...Mama and Papa... Good-by two clocks ticking...and Mama's sunflowers; and food and coffee; and even ironed dresses and hot baths...and sleeping and waking up. Oh earth, you're too wonderful for anybody to realize you." She stops, hesitates, and then with tears in her eyes, asks the audience, "Do any human beings realize life while they live it? Every minute?"

There are wonders at our fingertips moment by moment – all from the hand of a good God. How

sad if we think we've got to run all over the place, spend loads of money, when in reality the most satisfying things in life might just be the simple things.

“Here’s a recipe for a lovely today.  
God’s given us the ingredients.  
Take the blue of the sky and the green of the forest,  
and the gold and the brown of freshly mown hay;  
Then add the pale shades of spring and the circus of autumn  
And weave yourself a lovely today.”

“Tender words and a gentle touch and a good cup of coffee,  
and someone who loves you and wants you to stay;  
Hold them near while they’re here – don’t wait for tomorrow  
To look back and wish for today.”

Perhaps our generation – so obsessed with *expensive gifts and hi-tech things* – could relearn that the greatest joys and satisfactions often come from the simplest of things: rolling on the floor and playing with our kids or grandkids...sniffing the aroma of freshly washed linen or a scented candle...the gentle smile of a longtime or newfound friend.

“We have this moment to hold in our hand, and to touch as it slips through our fingers like sand. Yesterday's gone, and tomorrow may never come, but we have this moment today.” A lady named Ann Wells tells this story: “My brother-in-law opened the bottom drawer of my sister’s bureau and lifted out a tissue-wrapped package. ‘This’ he said, ‘is not a slip. This is lingerie.’ He discarded the tissue and handed me the slip. It was exquisite: silk, handmade and trimmed with a cobweb of lace... ‘Jan bought this the first time we went to New York, at least eight or nine years ago. She never wore it. She was saving it for a special occasion. Well, I guess this is the occasion.’

“He took the slip from me and put it on the bed with the other clothes we were taking to the (funeral director). His hands lingered on the soft material for a moment, then he slammed the drawer shut and turned to me. ‘Don’t ever save anything for a special occasion. Every day you’re alive is a special occasion.’ I remembered those words through the funeral and the days that followed when I helped him and my niece attend to all the sad chores that followed an unexpected death. I thought about them on the plane returning to California from the Midwestern town where my sister’s family lives. I thought about all the things that she hadn’t seen or heard or done. I thought about the things she had done without realizing that they were special.

"I’m still thinking about his words, and they’ve changed my life. I’m reading more and dusting less. I’m sitting on the deck and admiring the view without fussing about the weeds in the garden. I’m spending time with my family and friends and less time in committee meetings. Whenever possible, life should be a pattern of experience to savor, not endure. I’m trying to recognize those moments now and cherish them. I’m not “saving” anything; we use our good

china and crystal for every special event – such as losing a pound, getting the sink unstopped, the first camellia blossom. I wear my blazer to the market if I feel like it...I'm not saving my good perfume for special parties; clerks in hardware stores and tellers in banks have noses that function as well as (those of) my party-going friends.

“‘Someday’ and ‘one of these days’ are losing their grip on my vocabulary. If it’s worth seeing or hearing or doing, I want to see and hear and do it now. I’m not sure what my sister would have done had she known that she wouldn’t be here for the tomorrow we all take for granted. I think she would have called family members and a few close friends. She might have called a few former friends to apologize and mend fences for past squabbles...I’m guessing – I’ll never know.

“It’s those little things left undone that would make me angry if I knew that my hours were limited. Angry because I put off seeing good friends whom I was going to get in touch with – some day. Angry because I hadn’t written certain letters that I intended to write – one of these days. Angry and sorry that I didn’t tell my husband and daughter often enough how much I truly love them. I’m trying very hard not to put off, hold back, or save anything that would add laughter and luster to our lives. And every morning when I open my eyes, I tell myself that this is special. Every day, every minute, every breath truly is...a gift from God.”

The writer of Psalm 90 expresses this heartfelt plea: “Teach us to realize the brevity of life, so that we may grow in wisdom” (Psalm 90:12). He goes on further: “Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days...let your work be manifest to your servants, and your glorious power to their children. Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and prosper for us the work of our hands – O prosper the work of our hands” (Psalm 90:14, 16-17).

*He wants God to be a part of his life...to see God’s hand in his efforts.* There are people who aren’t Christians, maybe not even religious people, who might agree with this sermon: “Yeah, you gotta savor the moment; live life with gusto”. That could represent a very self-centered attitude: Yeah, I’m going to grab for myself all I can out of life. It could even reflect a very sensual or immoral approach to living: I’m going to “live it up” because you only go around once! But the writer of Psalm 90 isn’t advocating grabbing each moment *for yourself* – or living it in a *decadent, lustful* way. He wants his life to have meaning, and to count in the eyes of God. He longs to have God look with favor on what he does. Psalm 90:17 in *The Message* paraphrase renders this verse, “Let the loveliness of the Lord, our God, rest on us, confirming the work that we do. Oh yes! Affirm the work that we do.” *Yes: savor each moment. Yes: live life with passion. But also do it in way that will honor and please the God who created us and redeemed us in Christ!*

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