***ALL IN GOD’S GOOD TIME***

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Texts: Psalm 90 and Revelation 1:8

As some of you know who know him, our son Dan is a deep thinker and likes nothing more than to engage in mutual reflection on deep things. I recall taking him back to college at Swarthmore one year and having a five-hour conversation on the nature of time and whether it really existed or was simply a human construct to explain the relationship of events to one another. So, it was not really a surprise when Dan’s first published article that he co-authored with a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Maryland addressed the relationship among time, space, and reality from a philosophical and scientific point of view. An abstract of the article lays out their thesis:

*Utilizing an argument based on the relativity of simultaneity in the tradition of Putnam and Rietdijk and novel but reasonable assumptions as to the nature of “reality”, we will show that the past, present, and future are equally real, thus ruling out presentism and other theories of time that bestow special ontological status to the past, present or future as untenable*.*[[1]](#footnote-1)*

This is not exactly beach reading, even for a parent of the author, but each time that I read Psalm 90, I am reminded that the psalmist is addressing questions akin to those Daniel was addressing. The psalmist is wrestling with issues of time, space, and reality without the benefit of Einstein’s theory of relativity, quantum theory, or thirty centuries of subsequent philosophical musings. He wrestles with those issues from the perspective of faith with a view toward discerning God’s role in all of it. His conclusion is that all those times – past, present, and future – those times Dan describes in his paper as equally real – are not only real, but are held firmly and faithfully in the hands of a God who is supremely real.

“*I am the alpha and the omega, the one who is and who was and who is to come*,” says the Lord God. From before the beginning until after the end, the Lord is – is present, is loving, is creating, is being who God is. The name God revealed to Moses at the Burning Bush embraces that expanse of time, space, and reality. “*Who shall I say is sending me?*” asks Moses. “*Tell them YHWH sent you*,” says God. “*Tell them I AM sent you*.” After thirty centuries no one has been able to unpack that name fully; the divine name remains a divine mystery that might be translated I AM WHO I AM or I AM WHO I WILL BE or I WILL BE WHO I AM or I WILL BE WHO I WILL BE, but as I have said before, is perhaps best translated: I AM GOD AND YOU ARE NOT.

It is that God with whom we have a dwelling place, says the psalmist. It is that God with whom we have a home – today, yesterday, and forever. While the days of humans come and go like the grass, while generations are born and die, God continues on, transcending time and space with divine power that leaves us quaking in our crocs; but that same God walks with us in this time – in this space – and loves us always. Our lives are no more than a blink of the divine eye in the stretch of eternity, and yet says the psalmist, our home is with God; our place is with God, as it was for the generations who preceded us. The God to whom Abraham and Sarah lifted their prayers is the same God who hears our prayers. The God who persevered with the Israelites in the wilderness is the same God who perseveres with us. The Christ who invited twelve clueless disciples to follow him is the same Christ who invites us to follow, and the Christ who will return in glory at the end of time is the same Christ who invites us to this Table. The Spirit by whom Christians were baptized in the first century is the same Spirit by whom we baptize children today. The God whom saints trusted with their very lives is the same God we trust with our lives. Our home is with the God of our ancestors and with the God of our great-great-grandchildren, for God is equally real in the past, present, and future – one and the same yesterday, today and forever. God has claimed us, each and every one, as God’s own, as God’s children, so that our home is indeed with the divine parent who is very real, who is our God.

It is that home, that dwelling place, that God, who is our shelter from the storms of life and death. The psalmist casts this psalm as a prayer of Moses, a man who experienced more than his share of such storms. Abandoned in the Nile in a basket among the crocodiles as a baby,

forced to flee for his life upon killing an Egyptian taskmaster,

awed to be standing in the presence of a bush that burned but was

not consumed,

sent back to the very palace from which he had fled with a message

for mighty Pharaoh to let God’s people go,

trapped at the edge of the Red Sea with water before him and

Egyptian chariots closing in behind him,

stuck with a bunch of whiny, ungrateful, unfaithful, frightened

Israelites for forty years in the desert wilderness,

stunned to find them worshiping a golden calf while he was on the

mountain alone with the Lord, and

destined never to enter the Promised Land to which he spent most of

his life journeying,

Moses endured more storms than we can imagine and persevered only because he trusted that God was with him every step of the way. His home, his dwelling place, was not in the desert, not in any tent, but with the Lord God who spoke to him from the Burning Bush saying: I AM!

Our houses may be in Staunton, Augusta County, Waynesboro, Harrisonburg, Pittsburgh, or Timbuktu, but our dwelling place, our home, is with the God who says, I AM. When the storms roll in – when the stock market quakes, when not just the economy but our personal economy seems shaky, when wars and rumors of wars and terrorist threats hit the headlines, when cancer rears its ugly head in our friends or in our families or inside our own bodies, when we are sick or heartsick or sinsick, when hurricanes or floods or smoky wildfires strike, God says I AM, and your home is with me. WE NEED NOT FEAR whatever life may bring, for our dwelling place is with God,

the God who brought us into the world,

the God who is with us with every breath that we take,

the God who will be with us when we leave this world,

however we leave it,

the God who is the Alpha and the Omega,

our beginning and end, the Almighty One!

We may be unsheltered, but we are never homeless, for our home is with God, now and always. Past, present, and future are in God’s hands. Each day is precious, not only to us but also to God. How we use each day, each hour, is a measure of our faithfulness and gratitude to God for the gift of that day. Alice Walker suggests that it ticks off God when we don’t notice the color purple, when we are so busy, preoccupied, worried, or in a hurry that we fail to notice the purple beauty in our midst. The same might be said for the gold and russet of the leaves, the blue of the Blue Ridge Mountains, or any other colors with which God paints creation. We are given time to appreciate the beauty of this world God has made and to participate in God’s good work in it.

In their recent book, *Leading Faithful Innovation: Following God into a Hopeful Future*, three writers from Luther Seminary in Minnesota suggest:

*Simplicity is about being wise stewards of our time so God can better utilize us for God’s mission in the world… We let God’s priorities determine how we spend our days.[[2]](#endnote-1)*

Are you so simple? Do you view the time you have as a gift from God to be used for God’s good purposes, to follow God’s priorities? Or do you view time as your own, to be used for your wants, your desires, your priorities alone? The time we have is limited, for we are finite beings. We have little time to waste, and too little time to do all that we hope to do, all that we need to do, all that God asks us to do. So, we should value each day. “*Teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart*,” sings the psalmist. Instead of procrastinating or worrying or rushing through life, we should use this gift of time for things that really matter – glorifying God, enjoying God’s good gifts, and pursuing God’s priorities. Instead of wishing your child or grandchild were a little older or younger, appreciate her at this age. Instead of pining for what was or rushing toward what will yet be, enjoy this time, this day, for past, present, and future are equally real. That is easier to say than to do, for God works in God’s own time, not ours.

I remember trying to decide whether God wanted me to stay in law or head off to seminary; all I wanted was clarity in my call – but I wanted it NOW! I set several reasonable deadlines for God to make this clear to me, all of which God missed. I was sure that my timeline was more reasonable than God’s timeline for me. I needed an answer and God was late! I finally came to the realization that God would make it clear in God’s time, not mine, for part of being open to God’s call is being open to God’s time rather than setting the schedule for God. That is not to say that we can’t ask, plead, beg, even rail at God to hurry up and answer our prayers; God invites us to do just that. But the answer will come in God’s time, and we might as well accept that.

*A thousand years in God’s sight are like yesterday*, says the psalmist, but God knows we don’t have a thousand years. So, we wait and trust that God will answer us in God’s good time. And while we wait, we are called to seize the day, to make the most of the time we have been given: time to appreciate the past, to hope in the future, to serve the Lord now. Past, present, and future are equally real and all belong to God with whom we make our home. Rest secure in that home! Enjoy this day that is God’s gift to you! Savor this moment at home with the God who holds all of time and all of you in strong divine hands – this day and all days, from everlasting to everlasting! Amen

1. <http://philsci-archive.pitt.edu/archive/00003696/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Dwight Zscheile, Michale Binder, Tessa Pinkstaff, *Leading Faithful Innovation: Following God into a Hopeful Future*, Fortress Press:2023, p.56 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)