**God Calling: Our Highest Calling**

**9-6-20**

I thought it was so much fun to go way back into the Old Testament last week, that this week we would go back even farther.

* Turn with me back to the book of Genesis, chapter 5.
  + In Gen. 5, we have just a scintillating passage of Scripture that most people, if they were honest, would say they would skip over if they were reading through.
    - Genesis 5 is a genealogy of the first 10 generations of the Bible. Let’s read:

*5 This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. 2 Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man[a] when they were created. 3 When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth. 4 The days of Adam after he fathered Seth were 800 years; and he had other sons and daughters. 5 Thus all the days that Adam lived were 930 years, and he died.*

*6 When Seth had lived 105 years, he fathered Enosh. 7 Seth lived after he fathered Enosh 807 years and had other sons and daughters. 8 Thus all the days of Seth were 912 years, and he died.*

*9 When Enosh had lived 90 years, he fathered Kenan. 10 Enosh lived after he fathered Kenan 815 years and had other sons and daughters. 11 Thus all the days of Enosh were 905 years, and he died.*

* + OK, what have we learned so far:
    - Well, one thing that seems to stand out are the advanced ages of the men mentioned in this genealogy.
      * Adam lived to 930, Seth to 912, Enosh to 905.
      * And so it goes throughout these 10 generations.
        + In fact, its kind of sad when we get to Lamech, the father of Noah.
        + Vs. 31 tells us that he died at the tender age of 777.
        + You know what they were saying at his funeral: why do the good die so young?
      * Now I know that these ages raise all kinds of questions in our minds, for which we only have theories and conjectures for answers.
        + Of course, there are those who would dismiss the passage altogether as being mythological.

Yet there are other cultures that also have a flood account and before that flood, just as in the days before Noah, longevity was significantly longer than after the flood.

* + - * + But if we take the passages seriously, then some ask if the passages were meant to be interpreted literally?

Well, it seems that the New Testament authors took them that way as has Judaism and the Church up until this last century.

And its not like any of them had ever met 900 year old people either.

* + - * + Others have questioned is these numbers could be referring to the length of tribal dynasties rather than individual lives – so that the name actually represents the tribe rather than the person (like the tribe of Judah)?

There is an outside possibility of this, but the way the text is written, referencing not only the next in line but that other children were born to the person seems to make it a personal reference, not tribal.

* + - * + Is it possible that they dated years differently – like using the lunar calendar rather than our solar calendar?

In fact, they did use a lunar calendar rather than the solar calendar we use today, but it was only 11 days shorter than our calendar.

So, translating the age of Methuselah from the lunar calendar to a solar calendar would mean that he didn’t live 969 of our years.

But instead, a mere 940. (which really doesn’t solve the problem, does it).

* + - * + No, as difficult as it might be, the Scriptures, it seems, would have us believe that these people actually lived that long – which then leads to a whole new set of questions as to HOW?

Again, all we can do is theorize, and it seems that the best theories have to do with the fact that these are the first generations of a people that had originally been created to live forever (before the fall).

Their environment would have not yet have had the genetic breakdown, cellular mutations and viral infestations that have developed over the centuries that we face today.

And given time, and especially after the flood, life-spans begin to shorten dramatically.

Though Noah lives to 950, but Noah’s son Shem lives to be only 500 years old.

His son lives to only 403, his grandson to 430, and his great grandson to only 209.

By the time we get to Abraham’s grandfather, Nahor, we are down to 119 years.

This gradual decline in age is also seen in the literature of other ancient cultures and would seem to support the notion of ever increasing dangers in the environment.

* + - * + Then there is the theological – and I would contend, scientific – explanation found in Genesis 6:3. There we read:

*3 Then the Lord said, “My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years.”*

You may remember that I referenced the second law of thermodynamics a while back.

In a nutshell, that law states that in any closed system (where no new energy is added) that system will eventually break down.

Technically called “entropy”, but when where it refers to a human body, we call it death.

Well, it seems that prior to the flood, there was a source of external energy at play in human beings.

Genesis 6:3 indicates that the Holy Spirit was a constant presence in in the lives of human beings prior to the flood.

And the verse implies that His presence impacted human longevity.

But now, due to the sinfulness of humanity, that Spirit is going to be withdrawn and the length of a human life would rarely surpass 120 years.

In other words, God was closing the system, and natural entropy would take its course.

* + - * But no matter how you understand it, it would seem that we are expected to take these ages at face value.
        + And I have spent some time talking about it because I wanted to acknowledge the elephant in the room so we could then move on to the main point I want to talk about this morning.
    - Because the second thing this passage seems to emphasize is the reality that, no matter how long it might be, LIFE IS TERMINAL. Continue reading:

*11 Thus all the days of Enosh were 905 years,* ***and he died****.*

*12 When Kenan had lived 70 years, he fathered Mahalalel. 13 Kenan lived after he fathered Mahalalel 840 years and had other sons and daughters. 14 Thus all the days of Kenan were 910 years,* ***and he died****.*

*15 When Mahalalel had lived 65 years, he fathered Jared. 16 Mahalalel lived after he fathered Jared 830 years and had other sons and daughters. 17 Thus all the days of Mahalalel were 895 years,* ***and he died****.*

*18 When Jared had lived 162 years, he fathered Enoch.* (And apparently started a really nice jewelry chain) *19 Jared lived after he fathered Enoch 800 years and had other sons and daughters. 20 Thus all the days of Jared were 962 years,* ***and he died.***

*21 When Enoch had lived 65 years, he fathered Methuselah. 22 Enoch walked with God after he fathered Methuselah 300 years and had other sons and daughters. 23 Thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years.* **And he…**

* + - * No, wait. That’s not what it says. Enoch did not die. Vs. 24

*24 Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.*

* + - * What does THAT mean?
        + Theologians say he was “translated”, as if they understood exactly what that was.
        + But we don’t understand it at all – 365 years old, then one day Enoch just “wasn’t”; he was gone.
        + We are told that he “walked with God” and apparently, on one of those walks God took him back to his place.
    - Centuries later, the writer of Hebrews would write in 11:5-6:

*5 By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God. 6 And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.*

I bring up Enoch this morning because he demonstrates the amazing contrast between the way we see our lives and the way God sees them.

* Our desire is to live a long and meaningful life.
  + Full of prosperity, meaningful work, loving family, and many, many days.
* God’s desire is that we walk with Him.
  + Not just drinking from the waters of salvation, like we talked about last week.
  + But rather, connecting our lives to that external source of life, like pipes attached to the well from which we draw our lives continually.
    - In Christ, our closed system is opened up again, and God “regenerates” us – that is he breathes his Spirit into us once again.
    - In John 17, which we read earlier, Jesus said that connecting with God in such as way IS eternal life.

*3 And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.*

* + - * That is not the WAY to eternal life – knowing God IS eternal life, and we can walk in it now.
* Enoch knew this and made a point to “walk with God” every day of his life.
  + Becoming so intimate with Him that in the end there was literally no light – no distance – between this life and the eternal life with the God who so desired to be with him.
    - The number of years he had lived here on earth – a comparatively short 365 – didn’t make any difference.
    - Life with God is eternal life – and God is pleased to call each of us to join Him in it.
      * In fact, it is our highest calling in life.

Over these next three weeks, I want to talk briefly about God’s callings upon our lives.

* The modern idea of Vocation (literally “the calling”) comes from the church’s historical understanding of God’s call upon each of our lives.
  + But while today, the word Vocation is usually related only to our occupation or profession, the Biblical concept of calling is much broader than that.
  + In fact, the Puritans used to speak of three distinct calls of God upon the lives of his people.
    - There is the specific, or particular, calling that relates to the work we do and the life we live.
      * This type of calling is what relates most closely with the modern idea of vocation.
      * But the truth is, this specific calling includes more than just our work.
        + If we have a spouse, God calls us to be a godly husband or wife.
        + If we have children, we are called to be a faithful and loving parent.
        + And then, there is also the task for which we are trained and impassioned about.

Maybe its teaching

Or Nursing

Or Building

Or Commerce

Or Technology

Or Law

Or Government

Or all of that combined into something called managing a home.

* + - * + It is God who impassions you, wires you, gifts you, directs you…

Thus, this calling in your life is sacred and holy.

It is why Paul was able to tell even slave in Colossae Paul:

*23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.*

* + - * But while this is our primary understanding of vocation today, it is actually the third tier of God’s callings for the Christian.
        + We’ll talk more about it in a couple of weeks.
    - The second tier of God’s calls on our lives were called by the Puritans our “Common Callings”.
      * These are the calls God makes upon the life of every believer and, honestly, is what we talk about most in church.
        + The call to Salvation and Transformation:

Calls to Repent, to Submit, to Love to be Holy…

* + - * + As well as calls to carry on the Messianic Mission of Christ by:

Spreading the Good News of God’s Jubliee in Christ Jesus,

By carrying out acts of Sacrificial Service,

By being faithful Stewards of all the gifts and resources we’ve been given,

By pursuing righteousness and justice and love in this world as a sample of what is to come when Christ returns.

* + - * Such things are what were called our Common Calling, and we will focus on that next Sunday.
    - But then there is the first tier of the three callings, as is indicated by the Puritans referring to it as our Highest Calling.
      * It is the highest calling because our ability to know and carry out any of our other callings is dependent upon how well we walk in this first one.
      * This is the call to walk with God – what we have been talking about this morning.
        + And this calling is as much an invitation as it is a responsibility.
* Jesus made this invitation and explained this calling most clearly in John 15 in his teaching concerning the vine and the branches.

*4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*

* + Here we have our highest calling, the first order, the top priority, the call on which all other callings rest.
    - Ignore this calling, Jesus says, and you will see and experience emptiness in carrying out your lower order callings.
      * You want to live a life of purity?
        + It won’t happen unless you abide in me.
      * You want to spread the Gospel abroad?
        + Well, you can spread it, but it will not prove fruitful unless you abide in me.
      * You want to be a wise and Godly parent?
        + The spiritual atmosphere of your home is dependent on your abiding in me.
      * You want to be an builder of lives as well as homes, a teacher of truth as well as math, a healer of spirits as well as bodies, an officer of hope as well as governance? Abide in me.
    - Jesus continues:

*7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. 9 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.*

* + - * Rest there, make your home there, make this whole life a walk with God – as Enoch did.
      * Don’t just pray, but carry with you an attitude of prayer and discernment when you get up from your prayers and go about your day.
      * Don’t just go TO worship, but rather go AND worship – remembering and celebrating the One who walks with you in every task and responsibility.
      * Don’t just study the Word, but meditate on it by memorization, by music, by recording, by art, by acknowledging the wonder of God’s works all around you.
* But this isn’t the first time you’ve heard this – its not the first time I’ve preached it.
  + Yet, I have as much trouble walking continually with God – abiding in him – as anybody.
  + And I think it is because we come to it with two faulty assumptions.
    - The first is that abiding in Christ is an activity – a task. Something you do and finish and then move on.
      * So I have my quiet time in the morning… (which is a great start).
        + But then when I get up from it, it is like a task that has been checked off the list.
        + I don’t take anything from there with me.

Nothing to remind me of what God was saying…

No plan to return to the connection of those few moments.

* + - * + We treat our time with God more like a school assignment than an ongoing relationship.

You can’t parent children that way…

You can’t build a marriage that way…

And you can’t abide with Christ that way.

* + - * Our highest calling requires more than just 15 minutes every morning – great as that is.
        + It requires going back to drink, again and again throughout the day.
        + Better than that, it calls for attaching the watermain of our lives to His well of life.

So that His streams of living water are continually flowing in us and over us.

* + - * A standard in TV and Movie cop shows is the when the hero or heroine goes into a dangerous situation “wearing a wire”.
        + With their wire, it seems, they are never alone.

Their colleagues hear everything that’s going on and can give instructions or pass on information as needed in the situation.

* + - * + Abiding in Christ means being wired for life.

You are never alone – God always hears and knows what’s going on.

And He continually whispers in your ear information and instructions as needed by His Holy Spirit.

* + - But I said there were two faulty assumptions that we bring to abiding in Christ – the first is that it is an activity to check of the list – the second is that it is a solitary calling.
      * We often get ourselves into trouble when we believe that our relationship with Jesus is just “Jesus and me”.
        + But its not, at least not exclusively – rather, often its Jesus and us.
        + Look back at John 15 again and you will find that more often than not, when Jesus speaks of abiding in him, he uses the plural.

I am the vine, you all are the branches…

Apart from me, you all can do nothing…

*7 If you all abide in me, and my words abide in you all, ask whatever you all wish, and it will be done for you all.*

* + - * Jesus abides in US as much as he abides in ME – meaning that my “walking with God” is a corporate relationship.
        + It involves my spouse, if he or she is a believer, my children, my believing friends, and my church family.
        + This is why we worship together and why I so long for the days of COVID to be over so that we can enjoy the fellowship of walking with God as a community.
        + It is also why it is so important to make sure that we are continuing to come together in smaller groupings
        + to support one another’s walk with God.

We were not meant to walk this journey alone.

We can become discouraged, we can be deceived, we can lapse into sin.

We need each other to “walk with God” – we are a part of each other’s highest calling.

* + - * So, if you are feeling isolated and alone in your walk with Jesus these days, call a friend, connect with a small group or study.
        + Next week we will let you know how we will be proceeding with groups and studies in this new school year.
        + But do not forsake coming together, even in these days of pandemic.
        + For our highest calling is to walk with God – to abide in Christ – and we are not meant to do this alone.

Alright, let me leave you with this image.

* For three weeks we are talking about our three callings: the Highest Calling; our Common Calling; and our Particular Callings.
  + Taking the image from last week of a sprinkler system, the Highest Calling is to drill deep into the living waters of Jesus.
    - He is the source of our lives and provides the rivers of living water that flow out from us to others.
      * Without that connection – this highest calling – we are a dry well in the desert, that brings a glimmer of hope but then disappointment.
      * Let us be about our highest calling, and with Enoch, let us walk with God.