

Later tonight, a door with 2022 painted on it slams shut. About that same time, another door with 2023 painted on it swings open. What's ahead for you in this brand new year? What will you make of it? What will it make of you? The psalmist does a bit of reflection himself when he says: "**Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations.**" Lord you have been our home at every stage of life, in every chapter of life.

With a New Year, you're turning the page on "**A New Chapter**" in your life. By the way, Psalm 90 isn't written by who we'd expect. These aren't David's words. These are Moses' words. And Moses, well, let's just say he knew a thing or two about chapters in life.

- He started as a Jewish baby, who got scooped up from the Nile River by Pharaoh's daughter.
- That would become his prince of Egypt chapter.
- After he killed an Egyptian, he had his outlaw chapter.
- Followed by his herdsman for his father-in-law Jethro chapter.
- Then came the 10 plagues, parting the Red Sea and Exodus from Egypt chapter.
- Up on Mt. Sinai with God was a 40-day chapter of its own.
- Wilderness wandering was a long chapter, lasting 40 years.
- He did see the Promised Land, but never got to go in.
- His final chapter was a gravesite chosen by God himself.

As we start a new chapter in our lives, what does Moses say to us?

First, the psalm tells us that God is God, and we are not. It is God who gives life to every person, **you brought forth the whole world**, including you and me. And it is God who decides on an end to life: **You turn people back to dust, saying, "Return to dust, you mortals."** For us, the New Year reminds us that we are created beings, mere mortals with an expiration date.

A New Year also reminds us that while we have time here, time does establish boundaries. We can move around and travel. We just can't be in more than one place at a time. We can't be both "*here*" and "*there*." Time sets boundaries for us. In addition, we can't go back and relive yesterday, nor can we speed ahead and pre-live tomorrow. Time sets boundaries for us.

God, on the other hand, isn't limited by time. **A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by.** God is eternal, or as Moses explains it, **From everlasting to everlasting, you are God.** Before the world began, God was. He is now. And when the world passes away, God will still be. God is God, and we are not.

While time separates us from places, people and things, sin separates us from God. Moses lived it. After his 40-day chapter on Mt. Sinai, he returned with the 10 Commandments only to find Israel on bended knee before a golden calf. It had only been a couple of months since their feet never got wet as they safely walked across the bed of the Red Sea, while the army of Egypt drown in its waves.

God being God, he couldn't stand by and watch this idol-worshipping foolishness. He punished their sinful behavior. Some were struck with the sword (3,000), and others were struck with a plague. Moses got it right: **If only we knew the power of your anger! Your wrath is as great as the fear that is your due.**

We had better know the power of his anger. Moses experienced it the hard way. He didn't get to enter the Promised Land because he failed to trust the Lord. Instead of speaking to the rock so water would come out, like God commanded, he hit it with his staff. In this chapter of his life, his sin separated him from the Promised Land.

Remember back in Egypt when an Egyptian slave driver beat an Israelite? Moses thought no one was watching when he killed the Egyptian. His sin of murder wasn't as secret as he thought. He

covered the body in the sand, but his sin didn't stay covered. An Israelite asked him if he was going to kill him, too? Moses ran away. And later, it pained him to write: **"You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence."**

**Our iniquities, our secret sins**, he confessed, not just his own. He's including yours and mine. What about your secret sins? Bury them in the sand? Give it a try. Deny they ever happened? Sure, why not.

Won't work! God is God and he's everywhere. *Time heals all wounds*, the world tells us. But that's not true, either. We know that we have wounds – maybe a grudge from long ago that still hurts and we can't let go of. We know our words and actions from long ago are still hurting others and haunt us. Rather than time healing all wounds, it's made it worse. And it doesn't fade away from God either, because he's not limited by time.

The world's advice is: *"Let bygones be bygones."* *"Turn over a new leaf."* We know that's not true either. It doesn't work that way.

Our secret sins may not include murder like Moses, but they're just as deadly. Do you listen to your conscience as it talks to you? Do you listen to the Holy Spirit as he talks to you?

He sets our iniquities before himself and us, not to embarrass us, but so that we have to confront them and repent of them.

Turn your sins, even those secret sins over to God. In a few minutes, you'll be able to do just that. Your Lord will come to you with his own body and blood to bring you forgiveness for your sins. Here, your past is washed away. Here, you start with a clean slate.

Moses wraps up his psalm: **Have compassion on your servants. Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.** He supplies everything we need every morning to fix our brokenness with his compassion, and fill our emptiness with his

unfailing love. We familiar with words like mercy and grace.

We don't need to wait until Sunday, or for a New Year sing his praise. Each day we wake up is another day to get a fresh shower of his pardoning grace.

God is God. He is our forgiving God. God brought Israel out of Egypt, out of slavery, and into the Promised Land. He brought you and me out of the slavery of sin in this world and into his kingdom through the water of Baptism. He keeps us as his royal residents through his Supper. He's not some mystical God in the sky. He's our dwelling place for every chapter of our lives.

Leave your sin and your past in the past. Close the book on that chapter of your hurt along with its guilt and pain. It's not done by positive thinking, or wishful thinking. It's done by Jesus. His blood washes it away. Come to the meal he's prepared and receive his promised forgiveness.

While we don't quite know what 2023 will bring – it will be a new chapter written every day. But this we know. Our unchanging and forgiving God gives us a fresh start, a new chapter, every day. Just ask Moses.