

May 1, 2020

Teach Us to Count Our Days

Of all the things in the world, what is the longest and the shortest, the swiftest and slowest, the most divisible and the most extended, the most neglected and the most regretted, without which nothing can be done, which devours all that is little and ennobles all that is great?

—Voltaire

Voltaire, the French philosopher, posed this question in the form of a riddle. The answer, of course, is “time.” During this pandemic, we are aware of the paradox of time. Some days seem to last forever. Here at church, because we are recording worship services earlier in the week, I often confuse what day it is. In this season of heightened anxiety with the slow-moving days of confinement and urgent statistics of infection and deaths, can we ennoble this gift of time?

Maybe we can find a clue in the Psalms. In Psalm 90:12 we read, “Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” Psalm 90 puts our worry about time into a theological context. The Psalm begins with how God has been our dwelling place for generations from everlasting to everlasting. Theologian Dorothy Bass has written that this Psalm brings about two kinds of time: our short sight and God’s mountainous eternity. So, we number our days, not marking them off on a calendar, but living into the confidence of God’s steadfast love, which endures forever. God is our dwelling place, not a building or location, but a relationship that we can lean into when time seems to stand still.

May we gain wise hearts!

Paula