

PSALM 90.12: FOUR WISE STEPS

[Chelmsford 30 December 2012]

Chester occupies a special place in my memory bank. For Chester is the nearest city to Wrexham, the town in North Wales where Caroline grew up

- It was in the Blossoms Hotel, Chester, that Caroline celebrated her 21st birthday
- It was in the Queens' Hotel, Chester, where my parents first met Caroline's parents
- It was in Chester that I first saw horse-racing
- It was to Chester that Caroline's father used to take me on Christmas Eve, so that we could do our Christmas shopping

When we were in Chester, we often visited the ancient cathedral.

And there in the Cathedral was an old clock

And on this old clock was the following inscription:

*“When as a child I laughed and wept, time crept
When as a youth I dreamed and talked, time walked
When I became a full grown man, time ran
And later as I older grew, time flew
Soon I shall find while travelling on, time gone
Will Christ have saved my soul by then?”*

With these words in mind let me turn your attention to Psalm 90.12 where the Psalmist says: **“Teach us how short our life is, so that we may become wise”** (GNB).

Yes, life is short.

The Psalmist in the preceding verses likens our lives to a **“dream”** (v5), which at the time may seem very real, but by the morning it is all over, forgotten, gone.

He says that in the light of eternity **“We are like weeds that sprout in the morning, that grow and burst into bloom, then dry up and die in the evening”** (v5c,6).

Today is December 30 – a year is almost gone; another year is about to begin.

On a day when we are particularly conscious of the passing of time, all of us – and not just those over 50 – need to take seriously the fact that life is short

None of us will live forever - one day we shall die.

How, none of us knows. We may die quickly - perhaps in a car accident or through a major heart-attack. Alternatively we may die a slow & painful death.

But one thing for sure: death is the ultimate statistic; one of out one people die. .

The Psalmist says: **“Teach us how short our life is, so that we may become wise”**

This morning I want to suggest that we take the following four wise actions

1. Put your affairs into order

Yes put your affairs into order and write your will, while there is still time

According to a BBC report last year, two out of three of Britons do not have a will.

This is not fair to loved ones – think of all the trouble you will create for them if you die intestate.

While there is time, put your affairs in order and write a will.

True, the Scriptures say nothing about wills. But the Bible does say that as Christians we have a duty of care to our loved ones. The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy: **“If anyone does not take care of his relatives, especially the members of his own family, he has denied the faith and is worse than unbeliever”** (1 Tim 5.7)
What’s more, you don’t have to wait until you are old – I wrote my will when I was 25 – I needed to, because I had a wife and a child.

And when you put your affairs in order, remember not only the needs of your family, but also the needs of your church family.
It would revolutionise our finances if people remembered the church in their will.
It really makes a difference to a church when it can draw upon its memorial fund for a special project!

2. Put your relationships in order

For many people Christmas is a great time for deepening family relationships – and yet sadly Christmas is also a time for family rows.
Let me ask you a question: are you happy with your current relationships?
Are you at peace not just with the immediate family, but also with the wider family?
And what about relationships with neighbours or work colleagues, or whoever.
Are there fences that need to be repaired? Is there forgiveness to be exercised?
Is there a letter to be written, a conversation to be had?

Remember, forgiveness is not optional. Jesus said: **“If you forgive others the wrongs they have done to you, your Father in heaven will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive the wrongs you have done”**
(Matt 6.14-15)

Before it is too late, put your relationships in order.

3. Use the time God gives you to the full

Time is a precious commodity. Yet it is all too easy to fritter time away.
So make sure you handle it wisely. In the words of the Apostle Paul, **“Be careful how you live... Make good use of every opportunity you have”** (Eph 5.15,16).

Are you giving your children the time they need?
Are you giving your parents the time they need?
Are you giving your church the time it needs?

Do some sums: how much time are you watching TV?
How much time are you on the net?
How much time are you actively serving God?

Before it is too late, make sure that you have made the most of life.

4. Allow God into your life in the here and now

In the Scriptures wisdom is pre-eminently associated with the fear/knowledge of God. I.e. The wise are those who have opened up their hearts to God, and allowed him to become their Saviour, Lord and Friend.

My mind goes to the words of the Risen Christ to the church of Laodicea: “**Listen! I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him**” (Rev 3.20).

It is the fool who says “**There is no God**”. The wise are those who have opened themselves to receive the forgiveness & love of God in Christ. For only so will we be able to stand before God on the Day of Judgment. It has been said that the way to hell is paved with good intentions – let that not be true of you.