

## What Is Your Expiration Date?

Today is the second to the last Sunday in the Church year, and as the Church year ends we turn our attention to the end of our lives. Next Sunday will focus on Jesus' coming again in power and glory to end life here as we know it.

When you look in your fridge or pantry you'll find most of the food we buy has an expiration date. Some of the foods will keep a long time. But milk has a pretty short time that it's good. Wouldn't it be great to have dates on milk like this gallon jug on the screen? "Best Before:," "Still Pretty Good:," and "Why is this still in your fridge?" That might take the guess work out of how long milk *really* lasts.

Why are there expiration dates on food? Because it's easy for us to forget about it, and soon we have not only a stinky rotten mess that will taste awful, but it has become a biohazard that if released on the world could be worse than COVID 19.

Did you know that we all have an expiration date? There is a date that will be your last day on this earth. It could be today, tomorrow, ten years from now, or with a lot of Botox, sixty years from now. I do not know my expiration date, but I know for sure it is coming.

Psalms 90 talks about this. The author is Moses. God guided – or inspired – him to write about God saying: ***"You turn people back to dust, saying, "Return to dust, you mortals."*** Psalm 90:3

God returns us to dust. That's what will happen when you die. No matter how you die, or when or where, no matter if you are embalmed or cremated, you will become dust. And a Swiffer will not solve this problem.

Why dust? Why not jello? Or silly putty? Or dynamite? Why dust? Have you ever wondered by God chose dust for your body's destiny? Well, let's go back to the beginning. The first man, Adam, God created from the earth: ***"...the Lord formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being."*** Genesis 2:7

God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden and gave them one rule. They were told not to eat ***“from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”*** *Genesis 2:17* They did not even know what the word “die” meant. The snake tempted, Eve questioned, Adam blamed, and the fall into sin was complete.

The world, and people, were no longer holy like God created them to be. They were ruined. Next, God pronounced what the results of sin would bring. In Genesis chapter 3 God said to Adam, ***“By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”*** *Genesis 3:17*

These sad words are often read at graveside funeral rites. Adam rebelled against God and the consequence was his body will die. Everyone of us inherited this sin condition. Your body will die.

As rock band, Kansas, put it in a 1970s hit song, “Dust in the wind. All we are is dust in the wind.” We are dust and we will return to dust. When our lives are compared to the God who is from “everlasting to everlasting” we realize that our lives are short, temporary, like dust blown away in the wind.

First, Moses describes us as dust. Next, in Psalm 90, he says: ***“You sweep them away as with a flood;”*** *Psalm 90:5* Some Bible experts believe these words refer back to the flood in Genesis chapters six and seven. During Noah’s time, the people of the world were strong, ingenious, proud of their technical achievements and rebellious against God. They were just like people today. Noah watched that entire generation be swept away in judgment because of their rejection of God. Because of their sin, God fairly, gave them justice – they were swept away in the flood.

Some thousand years later, Moses watched in horror as an entire generation died in the wilderness. They rejected God’s direction to go into the Promised Land. They rebelled. God fairly pronounced that the people would wander in the desert for 40 years until all of them died off. Not one of them would get to experience God’s gift of going into the Promised Land. Only their

children would receive it. Like grass that springs up new in the morning, but then withers under the desert sun, the people died for their sinful rejecting God. So Moses writes for us: ***“they are like ... grass that is renewed in the morning: in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers.”*** *Psalm 90:6*

This is a common idea in the Bible. Other places and other writers tell us that our lives come and go. We have an expiration date. Isaiah tells us: ***“All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers ....”*** *Isaiah 40:6*

Psalm 103 backs it up by writing: ***“As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place is remembered no more.”*** *Psalm 103:15*

Psalm 90 was written by Moses during a very disturbing time in Hebrew history. Moses was commissioned by God to lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. After going through the parted waters of the Red Sea, Moses leads them toward the Promised Land, a land flowing with milk and honey. It was at a place called Kadesh Barnea, a beautiful oasis, that Moses sent twelve spies into the Promised Land ahead to check out the people. Ten of the spies came back shaking in their boots. They reported that the people were too big and too strong for the Israelites to take. But two of the twelve, Joshua and Caleb, encouraged the people. They trusted in God. They knew God had promised them this land and they told the people to trust God and do what He had said to do. God had already shown them amazing miracles of His power, and God said, “Go!” But the people said “No!” The result of this disobedience was the death of an entire generation. The Hebrews wandered in the desert for 40 years. Over those years, over one million people died. If you do the math, that comes to about eight-seven funerals a day. 87 funerals every day! The people visually saw death that resulted from sin each and every day. It was absolutely vivid to them! Their whole generation was swept away like in flood. All of them withered and died like grass – here today; gone tomorrow.

I ran across a few interesting facts. Did you know that ...

- **Ave. age of Copper Wire = 20 yrs.**
- **Oldest Chicken = 18 yrs.**
- **Ave. age of cat = 15 yrs.**
- **Ave. life of dollar bill = 18 months**
- **Ave. life pro basketball player's shoes = 2 wks.**
- **Ave. life of human = 25,550 days**

Yes, you have an expiration date.

When it comes to the food in your fridge or pantry closet, It's common for us to not pay attention to expiration dates. I mean, really, how many of us mark down in our calendars when to throw out food the salami because the date on the package says so? No, we usually forget about expiration dates until its too late.

I knew a man whose father stock-piled food in hopes of surviving that crisis. He was kind of a doomsday survivalist type. The old man died and left lots and lots of canned goods. The family couldn't even give the food away, because the expiration dates had passed. They got a dumpster to throw it all away.

We tend to ignore our own expiration date. No one likes to talk about death in polite company. We have changed many words to sound not so serious and morbid. We don't have cemeteries but "memorial gardens." We don't have "hearses" anymore, but funeral "coaches." These days kids' dolls, like Barbie, only show young people having active fun. Did you know that 100 years ago, death was much more visible to people so you could buy the "funeral doll," that came in black clothes, with a toy coffin.

But why? WHY do we have to die? Why does life on earth end with a grave? Moses gives us the answer in verses 7 & 8. He writes: ***"For we are brought to an end by Your anger; by Your wrath we are dismayed. You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of your presence."*** *Psalm 90:7 - 8*

What's the reason we expire? He says its "Our iniquities" set before Him. God even sees all secret sins. There's no hiding from the all-knowing, present-everywhere God! God knows everything about you. There is no hiding from Him. No pretending that you're

a good person. You're a sinner. We all are. God is a holy God. The judgement of death is one you deserve. We all do. This is true. There is nothing we can do to fix it.

This truth is one we should face squarely. Its best to acknowledge the facts. But some people refuse to admit the truth. Some turn away from God. Some get angry as if God is being unfair. Other people become fearful. Many try to put it out of their minds. Pretend it's not coming.

This bad, bad news of impending death, can, friends, serve a good, good purpose. Your coming end *CAN* bring you to be sorry for your sin that caused this mess. That you can do nothing to stop its approach, *CAN* move you to turn to God for help now and for saving you in the end.

Moses talks about this too. He gives great news when in verse 1 & 2 he writes: ***“Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.”***

Has a child ever asked you, “When was God born?” How did you answer? Did you say something like, “God wasn’t born. He has always been.” How did you handle the absolute blank look you received after explaining this? Eternity is a very hard concept to grasp, but it is a reality that can change the way you look at life.

Who is God? God is a “dwelling place.” The Hebrew word for this phrase means a protective shelter. God is portrayed as sheltering, comforting, protecting, and cherishing His own. This was important for the Israelites to understand. They were a people without a country. At least back in Egypt they had a roof over their heads and the protection of the walls and armies of Egypt. Now they were living in tents in the middle of nowhere. They were insecure and afraid, fair game for wild animals, or enemy nations that wanted to attack them. But Moses reminds them no matter how insecure and temporary their lives are at the moment, they are protected by

the eternal God. Moses knew that ultimately man's safe place is not in a place at all, but in the Person of God Himself.

God's protection is for every generation. Each generation, every life-span is short, short, short. We are alive just a blip of time in human history. Compared to God who is everlasting, our lives are super short.

God is forever. He is eternal. He has no expiration date! God is the opposite of us, and God is what – I mean, WHO – we really need. God is your eternal dwelling place.

Moses begins this Psalm with the forever-ness of God. God's infinity contrasts with the finiteness of man. He is eternal. You are not. So you need eternal protection and rescuing!

David puts it this way in Psalm 4: ***"I will lie down and sleep in peace, for You alone O Lord, make me dwell in safety."*** Psalm 4:8

Its not just that God is eternal that gives David comfort to lie down in peace. Its that the eternal God, has provided a way for you to overcome death, and then to live eternally, as God originally planned. God made a way for you to have everlasting life with Him.

How? The everlasting God, entered temporary human existence.

Timeless God became time-bound. All powerful God became weak. The Creator of all became a creature.

Jesus gave up all He had to become one of us to save us. As a human like you, He lived to do only the right you should have done. As a gift, through your faith in Him, you receive His innocence.

As a human like you, Jesus took on an expiration date. He expired on a cross. His death was the resulting punishment for sin. Only His death was not the deserved punishment for *HIS* sins, but for your sins, and mine, and all people's.

And as God, Jesus rose again so that death does not have the last say. He lives now, and forevermore. And as you trust in Jesus, His victory over death becomes your victory over death and grave too. Even now, people who have trusted in Jesus are alive now. Their souls are in heaven living forevermore.

One day, Jesus will come back. The Last Day all the graves will be opened and all the dead will come out. Then, on that day, that last great day, your body – yes, the body you have now, the body that will go down to the grave, your body will be raised back to life and made perfect. And your body and soul will live forever and ever. This is God's death-busting gift. He offers this to you for free. No strings attached. Just simply say, "thank you, Jesus." Trust in Him alone.

This is why Moses later wrote in the book of Deuteronomy: ***"The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."*** *Deuteronomy 33:27* The eternal God is YOUR refuge. And He's got you now and forever. Underneath are His everlasting arms.

Yes, you have an expiration date. I don't know – it could be tomorrow. It could be 50 or 100 years from now.

So, how should you live now, each day, with this truth?

If you knew your time was short, would you do things differently? In a song written by Tim McGraw for his dying father, he describes how his impending death caused him to reevaluate his life. After learning the bad news, he "went sky divin', went rocky mountain climbing, went 2.7 seconds on a bull named Fu Manchu." (from "Live like you You Were Dying" by Tim McGraw)

Some people face the truth of their impending death by living it up. They seek thrills, take risks, gamble, enjoy luxuries, eat drink and be merry. It's wine, women, and song for them. Is that what God intends for you? Sin it up? What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas. Is that the way to live?

No. Not at all. Moses writes for us: ***"Teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom."*** *Psalms 90:12*

Number your days. Gain a heart of wisdom. I think it looks like this. My oldest daughter, Emily, is expecting her second baby. The doc has given a due date of April 17<sup>th</sup>. Of course, the doc really doesn't know the day or time of the baby's birth. Some children are born very early. Other kids have to be coaxed out of Mom's tummy by inducing labor or performing a C-section operation.

So how do expecting mothers prepare for the certainty of their baby's birth on the one hand, but the uncertainty of the day, time, and manner of the birth? Well, they pack a bag and keep it by the front door or in the car. They map out, time out, and rehearse the route they will drive to the hospital. They keep the obstetrician's number on speed dial. They make a list of emergency numbers and plans for any older children to be taken care of when the big day arrives. Pregnant mothers prepare for the certainty that the day of birth will arrive. But at the same time they live in the uncertainty of knowing when.

The same is true for you in your faith and living with Jesus. Yes, you do indeed have an expiration date. That is certain. And at the same time you prepare by each day living in faith in Jesus. Living to stay close to Jesus. Living to tell others about Jesus. Living to love as Christ loves you. Always ready, and always looking for when the big day will arrive.

There is a story of three demons arguing over how best to destroy Christians. The first demon said, "Let's tell them there is no heaven. Take away their reward and they will collapse." The second demon disagreed. He suggested, "Let's tell them there is no hell. Take away their fear of punishment and they will go wild." The third demon smiled and softly said, "No, my friends, there is a better way. Let's just tell them there is no hurry." They all laughed and knew that would be the best weapon of all.

Do not listen to the voice that says you have plenty of time. The odds are that you don't. Our lives are like a dream. Like grass here today and gone tomorrow. Instead, live prepared. Prepared in faith and hope and God-pleasing living. Your expiration date could be today. We never know. So we keep looking and we pray, Come, Lord Jesus, Come. AMEN.