

“So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.” Psalms 90: 12

September 10, 2001, was an ordinary day in New York City. For those who worked in the World Trade Center, it was business as usual. One day later, nearly 2,800 of them would be gone. For them, September 10th is the last time they will ever walk out at closing time, ride home on the train, eat dinner with the family, fight over the remote. It’s the last bedtime story...the last kiss good night.

September 10th is the first day on the job for disaster insurance specialist Scott Vassel, who is thrilled with the view of the Hudson River from his desk on the 97th floor of the North Tower.

It’s a seemingly lucky day for Greg Clark, who survives layoffs that claim two dozen of his colleagues on the 104th floor.

Telmo Alvear, a dinnertime waiter at Windows on the World, the restaurant atop the North Tower, agrees to cover breakfast the next morning for another waiter.

John Cruz, who works on the 101st floor, sets his wedding date: September 21, 2002. Joseph Romanolo, whose office is four floors above, calls his father to say he’s selling his motorcycle—which he loves and his wife hates—and is buying a camper the family can enjoy.

The sun sets at 7:06 p.m. but no one sees it in New York City. A thunderstorm dumps almost half an inch of rain and floods the field at Yankee Stadium.

In Verona, New Jersey, Bill Erwin stays up late, folding two baskets of freshly laundered clothes. It’s a surprise his wife will discover the next morning, as he is en route to his office high in the North Tower.

Joe Kelly, who works on the 105th floor of the North Tower, is at the Yankees game with his two sons. They wait to see if the field will dry out enough to play the game. In the Kelly family, Joe takes the pictures. As a result, he appeared in only two of 195 pictures from their vacation at Disney World, but tonight, a family friend snaps a shot of father and sons together. At 8:50 p.m., the game is cancelled, and Joe calls his wife on Long Island to say he and the boys are on their way home. This is goodbye. She’ll be asleep before they get back. The next morning he’ll leave to catch the 6:14 from Hicksville to Manhattan before she’s awake.

“So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.” This is the request of Psalms 90: 12. This simple request stands as a small and steady beacon of light. What can we do with the memory of that national tragedy, now years in the past? And much more to the point, what is there to do in the face of so much fear and uncertainty today, in the middle of a pandemic? We can apply Psalms 90:12 to the life we have. “Teach us to number our days...” Why? “...to get a heart of wisdom.” What is the wisdom of numbering our days? It’s that our

days are numbered. It's the awareness that today might be your September 10th. That's reality, whether we like to think about or not, and we usually don't. But what Psalm 90: 12 is trying to tell you is that there is wisdom for living—not just being alive, but really living—and you can have that wisdom. If this is your September 10th, are you satisfied with how things went? Are you happy with who you are and what you've done? If today is your September 10th, do you feel like you've completed your mission? Did you tend to your family relationships the way you had hoped? Are you as close to God as you wanted to be? Your days are numbered. What are you doing with them?

COVID-19 has reminded us all that we may not have the long life we envision for ourselves. So often, the human response to inevitable death is: "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." But you know what? There is so much more to life (especially Christian life) than scratching items off your bucket list. If Jesus has grabbed a hold of you and you of Him, then the fact that your days are numbered is not cause for fear; it's a wake-up call. It's a wake-up call that you receive at the beginning of each day; a day filled with possibility. If you really trust in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, then that means you will live forever with Him. His life is yours. That's the absolute bedrock foundation of the Christian faith! A Christian believes that he or she will live forever with God because Jesus defeated death. That has the power to take the fear of death off the table for a believer. What's left? The fact that our days are numbered, the Bible says. You're going to live forever by the grace and power of Christ. You're only going to be here for a little while. So count your days...and make your days count. That's the point. Count your days and make your days count with Christ as your source, your purpose, your energy for living.

Making your days count begins with making Jesus the center of your day, every day. It means letting Him be your heartbeat. It means He is the well that you draw from; he is the power you plug into, day after day after day. Are you doing that? Do you know how to do that? If we're going to make our days count, we need to have confidence that Jesus goes with us, whispering in our ear, "I am with you always..." "Do not be afraid." We need to hear his Words and to talk to Him. This takes discipline; it takes effort; it takes remembering to do it, but if we try to make our days count without Jesus as the source, we'll burn out. We'll run out of gas. Plug into the power of Jesus every day.

Making your days count also means recognizing your calling. Do you realize what God has called you to be? You may say to yourself, "Well, God hasn't called me, has he? I've never heard a voice telling me what to do. That's for extra-spiritual people." Wrong. Do you recognize and realize your calling? Do you know how to find out? Just ask yourself who you are! Are you a husband or wife? Son or daughter? Parent? Grandparent? Brother? Sister? Are you a friend or mentor to someone? God has given you these relationships, and when you put your heart into them, you are honoring the Lord. When you love and forgive and put your soul into other people, you are making your days count.

Have you been called into a vocation? Teacher? Administrator? Communicator? Are you a manager or counselor? Repairman? Are you an artist? A writer? Are you retired from a position that gave you a whole portfolio of experiences? Realize that God placed you exactly where he wants you, and when you do your work to the best of your abilities, you are glorifying the Lord. When you think of your work as a way to give praise to God, you are making your days count.

You really want to make your days count? Recover a sense of mission in your life. The secret here is that mission and joy go hand in hand. If you have no joy in your life, then chances are you've lost, or never had, a sense of mission pushing you forward. Think of it this way: if you've ever asked, say, a seven-year-old what they want to do when they grow up, you probably found a joyful response. "I want to be an astronaut. I want to be a fireman. I want to play in the big leagues!" They have dreams, they have a mission, and it's joyful. Where does that go? Or think of the great stories, the great books, the great movies. How many of those are about saving the world? We get wrapped up in these heroic stories, the epic tales of good versus evil, because we want to be part of that! We yearn to be tested, to have significance, to have a mission. If you're going to make your days count you need to recover that mission for you, and guess what? If you're a Christian, you have one. Jesus gave it to His Church. That mission is to make more disciples of Jesus Christ. That mission is to let your gospel light shine. Do you see? Right here is where your calling and your mission intertwine, and where your calling and your mission intertwine, there is joy. When you use your abilities to show and tell others about Jesus, you are making your days count.

One more way to make your days count, and I'm just going to mention it quickly, is to take the appropriate time to rest. Rest, after all, is rooted in God. He did it first, after creating the world, and he embedded rest into the routine of humanity. We need rest in order to function. Let's not confuse an overbooked schedule with living out our calling and mission. The beauty of the gospel is that we don't have to kill ourselves with busyness to get God to love us. He loves us already. It's as if Jesus says, "I am your rest, and there is good work for you to do each day until you're home." When you rest in the Lord and take care of yourself so that you are at your best when it's time to serve, you are making your days count.

"So teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart to wisdom." Today we looked back at a terrible tragedy in our nation's history, but let's never forget those who sacrificed their lives in the attempt to save others, who ran into burning buildings when everyone else was running out. Their calling and their mission was clear, and we are right to think of them as heroes.

In the midst of our response to the coronavirus, there are others emerging as heroes as well: Health care professionals—doctors, nurses, technicians, researchers; first responders; and many, many others assuming possible risks in order to provide for our daily needs.

Hope for our nation and hope for our world comes from another true hero, who sacrificed his life for all on the cross; who ran into the fire to cancel the debt of our sins, who took our

sickness to give us His health. He is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. If He is your Savior and Lord, make Him the center of your day. Recognize your calling and your mission. Find your rest in Him. Then you can count your days and make your days count.