

What do you believe?

Psalm 90:1-12
October 24, 1999

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What do you believe?

Do you believe the best defense is a good offense? Do you believe nice guys finish last? Do you believe winning is everything? Do you believe in taking matters into your own hands or do you believe in nature taking its course? Do you believe in destiny? Do you believe in the curse of the Bambino?

Do you believe honesty is the best policy? Do you believe in speaking your mind or do you believe in choosing your words carefully? Do you believe you catch more flies with honey than with vinegar? Do you believe children have something to say?

Do you believe in taking risks or do you believe in looking before you leap? Do you believe in covering your backside? Do you believe in burning your bridges or do you believe in second chances? Do you believe in forgiveness? Do you believe in taking care of your own? Do you believe your own will take care of you?

What do you believe?

All of us approach the world in a posture of belief. We bring with us a set of beliefs -- conscious or unconscious, spoken or unspoken, taught or discovered. This posture of belief is the rudder that steers our course upon the ocean of our experience and history!

That means that all of us have an internal set of beliefs that affect what we do and what we choose moment by moment. If I believe that I have a talent for art, I will keep on sculpting or painting or making music, as many times as I may fail. If I believe that I will keep doing it until something beautiful, something of value, emerges. If I don't believe that, I will never start. If I believe all creatures, all persons, are made in the image of God, I will react to you, respond to you, accordingly. If I don't believe that, what happens to you is not an issue for me. The beliefs we bring with us affect the choices we make, the actions we take.

Today you awoke and consciously entered the day, from the first moment guided by your posture of belief. You began the day expectant or apprehensive ... trusting or untrusting ... open or closed ... focussed or aimless ... energetic or enervated ... curious or bored ... confident or ashamed ... alive or merely surviving.

What do you believe?

*O Lord, you have always been our home.
Before you created the hills
or brought the world into being,
you were eternally God,
and will be God forever.*

Do you believe that? And if you do, what difference does it make?

O Lord, you have always been our home ...

If you believed that, what would it mean? Wouldn't it mean that regardless of circumstances or situation, you would always have a home? That whether you have had one home or many homes; whether you have one family or many families or no family; whether you know where you're headed or you do not; whether you feel in or out, welcomed or ignored, okay or not okay, up or down ... you always have a home?

If you believe that the Lord has always been your home, it means that you are never lost, never abandoned, never homeless. You belong. You belong here, because the Lord is here.

*Before you created the hills
or brought the world into being,
you were eternally God,
and will be God forever.*

If you believed that, what would it mean? Wouldn't it mean that nothing exists or comes into existence outside the edges of God? That nothing happens beyond God's reach? That all of your experience and all of your possibility are contained within the scope of God's attention?

It puts experience and possibility into context. It doesn't solve the mystery -- the mystery of suffering, the mystery of injustice, the mystery of accident, the mystery of evil, the mystery of death, the mystery of love, the mystery of the future -- but it gives the mystery a context. You cannot change yesterday, but God shared yesterday with you. You cannot know what tomorrow will bring, but God will be there. When you believe in the certain presence of God, before all things and forever, you do have *strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow.*

O Lord, you have always been our home ...

If you believe that, then you may let go your anxiety about finding a home for yourself, making a home for yourself, securing the home you have already found or provided. Instead you are freed to enjoy the home God has provided. So often we work so hard to find a "home" or make a "home" or secure a "home" -- the place we feel safe, the place we feel okay, the place we feel all right -- we expend so much energy in doing that. But if we believe the Lord has always been our home, whatever other homes may be ours, we may simply enjoy being home already. And where is that home? Look around you!

Believing this allows you to see the big picture, and, curiously enough, at the same time allows you to notice all the details. It is interesting that the experience of monastics -- people who have consciously withdrawn from the world in order to devote themselves to getting to know who God is, spending time with God, letting their lives be filled with God, seeing the big picture -- that experience, almost without exception, does not remove them from the details of everyday life, but drives them back into the details of everyday life. *I am a man who loves God and bakes bread ... I am a person who is filled with the love of God and makes some delicious honey ... I am a person who is filled with the love of God, and washes floors until they shine!*

The ones who are filled with the love of God are often the same ones that recognize all of life's little details and beauties. When we understand the Lord is our home, we can slow down and relax and enjoy the home. We can notice the details ... there's no need to rush. It's the difference between merely living to survive, and living ... to live!

*Before you created the hills
or brought the world into being,
you were eternally God,
and will be God forever.*

Do you believe that? And if you do, what difference does it make?

Something cannot come from nothing, which is to say, something must be eternal. This is probably the most basic of all our beliefs: what is it that we believe is eternal? Or to put it in another way: among whatever else comes and goes, what is the one thing that remains?

What is the constant in the midst of change? Is it matter itself, matter that in various ways for so brief a time takes recognizable shape, only to return once more to the elements? If it is matter that is eternal, then I live for the moment that I have, enjoy what I can while I can, until I return to the elements from which I came.

Is it energy? Energy that takes shape as power or desire? Energy that expends itself in one direction only to be returned again in the opposite direction as nature seeks its balance? And if so, do I recognize that all the energy I expend simply comes back in another way, so that ultimately what I do doesn't change anything about the nature of the universe?

Or is it God? In the midst of all that changes, all that comes and goes, is it true simply that God is? That whether you live or die; whether you fail or succeed; whether you are praised or reviled, hated or loved; whether you are virtuous or contemptible; whether you care or whether you do not ... God is?

If you believe that, it would seem that your life means little. It would seem that you run the risk of losing your identity, of being swallowed up into God. And so it is that those who been full of a sense of the awesome presence of the eternal God have at the same time been so aware of their own smallness and shame. But this sense of smallness, this humility, is wisdom: *Teach us how short our life is, so that we may become wise.*

It is wisdom to know your own limits; it is wisdom to know that you will die; it is wisdom to know that your life is not held in your own hands by your own will; it is wisdom to know to whom you belong.

O Lord, you have always been our home ...