**LOSING MY MARBLES**

***Numbering Our Years***

As a child I loved to play marbles. We collected “shooters” (the big ones that easily cradle in a kid’s hand so he can shoot it with his thumb) and the little ones you shot at (flinties, moonies, cat-eyes, corkscrews, etc). I had hundreds of them and put them in glass jars to look at. Today I want to take that image from my childhood and teach a valuable lesson regarding our life on earth.

“***The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years… So teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”*** (Psalm 90:10,12)

The *Birthday.com* website calculates that since I was born on October 18, 1952 I have on this date of April 16, 2021 now lived: 68 years, 5 months, 29 days, 7 hours, and 23 minutes. For my lifetime I have lived 822 months, 3,574 weeks, 25,021 days, 600,504 hours, 36,027,360 minutes, and 2,161,643,600 seconds. For those interested (and I am) it even tells me that my age in Dog Years is 285. Oh, that’s ruff. Funny, I don’t feel that old. So I ask myself, “Rick old boy, where did all those 25,021 days go?”

Some mornings when awake I still think of myself as young and vibrant. But then, woe is me, the mirror doesn’t lie. Nor does my snap-crackle-and-pop Rice Krispie joints when I step out the door for my walk. On those days I believe in Dog Years, sympathizing with the patriarchs Adam (930), Seth (912), Enosh (905), Cainan (910), Mahalalel (895 – pity he died so young), Jared (962), and Methuselah (969 – if he had just hung on for 31 more years, but then again, he might have if it hadn’t been for that global flood thing).

Let’s play a game of marbles, shall we? Using the Spirit-revealed numbers Solomon gives us above as an average lifespan, let’s say God gives you 25,550 marbles to start your life. We get that number from 70 years x 365 days = 25,550. But, to be liberal about it, let’s use Solomon’s greater number of 80 years, which gives you 29,200 marbles to play with.

Ok. To play the game you must know your age and then figure out how many marbles you have already lost. I’ll give myself as an example. Today, as I said, I’ve lived 25,021 days. Let’s say God gave me a big see-through glass bowl with 29,200 marbles in it. He tells me I will live to fourscore years (i.e. 80 years). Since I’ve now removed 25,021 of them that leaves me with just **4,179** in my glass jar. If 70 years is my death-age, then I’ve only got **529** marbles left. Some of you teenagers will probably say it this way, “Mr. Rick, you’ve lost your marbles!”

Now, it’s your turn. If you live to be 80 you have:

29,200 – \_\_\_\_\_\_ (days you’ve been alive) = \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ marbles (days left to live)

If you live to be only 70 you have:

25,550 – \_\_\_\_\_\_ (days you’ve been alive) = \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ marbles (days left to live)

Some of you, like me, have lost most of your marbles (literally and figuratively). If you’re younger, you still have lots of marbles left to play with. Or do you?

Since this is not a game of VR (Virtual Reality), but AR (Actual Reality), then all of us, according to God, are really given only one marble: *Today*. Jesus reminds us of a fool who once said: “*Then I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years, take your ease: eat, drink, be merry.’ But God will say to him, “You fool,* ***tonight*** *your soul is required of you*.’” (Lk 12:19-20). The “fool” only had one marble left and he was wasting it on things he could not take with him into eternity.

That reminds me of the story of King Belshazzar of Babylon as told in Daniel 5. He was living high and mighty, secure from the Persian threat because of the “invincible” walls around Babylon. Even under siege he felt no threat, pompously throwing a big drinking party in his palace. That night God sent “*the finger of a man’s hand*” to write on the wall the words MENE MENE TEKEL UPHARSIN. He was terrified by the sight and begged all his wisemen to give the interpretation. They couldn’t. But the Queen mother remembered Daniel’s interpretation powers from many years ago that had blessed his father Nebuchadnezzar. He was called in and gave the meaning. In short, Belshazzar had played the fool and he would die that very night. We learn Darius the Mede breached the walls before morning’s dawn and destroyed Belshazzar and ended the Babylonian empire. He thought he had many marbles left. He only had one.

But what if you are given a promise from God like the one given to another king, namely Hezekiah? 2 Kings 18:1-2 says Hezekiah, king of Judah, *“was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem*.” This means he lived to be 54 years old. But when he was only 39 he was told by Isaiah the prophet, “*Set your house in order, for you shall die*” (2 Kgs. 20:1). He cried out to God in tears to spare his life. God did, telling Isaiah to return and tell him, “*I have heard your prayer and seen your tears, surely I will heal you… and will add to your days fifteen years*.” (20:4-6). In other words God added 5,475 marbles to his jar.

Do you know what Hezekiah did with those extra marbles? “*He did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done… He trusted in the LORD God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him. For he held fast to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments”* (2 Kgs. 18:3-6).

Two kings: Belshazzar and Hezekiah.
Two reactions to warnings of death: pompous pride and prayerful tears.

Two destinies: death and life (both physical and spiritual).

While I collected marbles in my youth, one by one I am giving them away in my old age. My glass jar doesn’t look like it used to. All those Shooters, Flinties and Moonies with all their pretty colors are being depleted. But in reality what I am doing with each marble is taking it from my earthly jar and dropping it into my heavenly jar. Each day, by living wisely, I am “*laying up treasures* *in heaven*” (Matt. 6:20). When I live my last marble, and my jar is empty, I will wake up before the face of Jesus and be given a brand new jar with an endless supply of marbles (blessings).

Sidenote: I hope I get a purple and gold Cats-Eye Shooter.

Live wisely (James 4:13-15). – Rick