

# AN UNEXPECTED JOURNEY



## THE POWER OF THE RING: LONGEVITY

*A mortal, Frodo, who keeps one of the Great Rings, does not die, but he does not grow or obtain more life, he merely continues, until at last every minute is a weariness. - Gandalf*

This week, we continue to look at the “one ring” about which Tolkien’s entire saga revolves. Remember, this is an object of great power, and because of this power it becomes the ultimate desire of good and evil alike. These powers, however, come at a cost. All of those who bear the ring eventually become enslaved by the darkness that brought the ring into being.

This week, we discussed the power of longevity that is given to the one who wears the ring. At first glance, this power would seem to be innocuous. In *The Hobbit*, Bilbo isn’t even aware that it is the ring that has given him the longer-than-usual life. Moreover, what’s so bad about living longer? Yet, even Bilbo acknowledges that he was getting restless and uneasy, and in his words “thin and stretched.”

Human beings, as a whole, are living longer. In 1900, the average life expectancy was approximately 30 years. In 1985, it was about 62 years. Better hygiene practices and advances in medicine have given us opportunities to live longer. But to what end do we desire longevity? In Tolkien’s world, every character that possesses the ring over a long period of time may have an extended life, but in the end they are consumed by the darkness. In other words, lives that were not being lived fully and completely.

One of the questions that we should consider in our lives is what drives the quest to live longer lives? Are we living more fulfilled lives where we are doing good, or lives that are lacking? Do we desire longevity because we are a culture that avoids death at any cost?

In the Apostle Paul’s first letter to the young pastor, Timothy, he writes (to those who *are rich in the present age*), “*They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.*”

## WEEKLY CHALLENGE

Our faith teaches us both to live well and to die well. In both, how do we take hold of the “life that really is life.” What does it mean to live a full life?

This week, I challenge you to think about how we might grab hold of the life that is really life. What does that look like for you? How might you do good? What is one thing in the next week that you want to do that will help you begin to live into a life of ‘storing up treasures of a good foundation.’ What impact is God inviting you to make on those around you?

**Additional Resources:** Just for fun, check out this three-minute video about the oldest living person who ever lived (that can be documented). Her name is Jeanne Calment, and she was born in 1875 and died in 1997 in the town of Arles, France. [Youtube.com/watch?v=fYLD0R3GaPY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fYLD0R3GaPY)

**Psalms 90:1-10:** A Prayer of Moses, the man of God. <sup>1</sup>Lord, you have been our dwelling-place in all generations. <sup>2</sup>Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. <sup>3</sup>You turn us back to dust, and say, ‘Turn back, you mortals.’ <sup>4</sup>For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past, or like a watch in the night. <sup>5</sup>You sweep them away; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning; <sup>6</sup>in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers. <sup>7</sup>For we are consumed by your anger; by your wrath we are overwhelmed. <sup>8</sup>You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your countenance. <sup>9</sup>For all our days pass away under your wrath; our years come to an end like a sigh. <sup>10</sup>The days of our life are seventy years, or perhaps eighty, if we are strong; even then their span is only toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away.

**I Timothy 6:12-19:** <sup>12</sup>Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. <sup>13</sup>In the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you <sup>14</sup>to keep the commandment without spot or blame until the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>15</sup>which he will bring about at the right time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords. <sup>16</sup>It is he alone who has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see; to him be honour and eternal dominion. Amen.

<sup>17</sup>As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. <sup>18</sup>They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, <sup>19</sup>thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.

- Scriptures from the New Revised Standard Version -

# REFLECTIONS