

## Thankfulness in Barrenness

Habakkuk 3:17-18 (NLT)

Series: **For Such a Time as This: Hidden Treasures from the Cave of Quarantine.**

- Today's Sermon: **Thankfulness in Barrenness**

Habakkuk 3:17-18 (NLT)

**Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vines; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, yet I will rejoice in the Lord! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation!**

As Americans, we have a long tradition of THANKFULNESS in Barren seasons: Thanksgiving:

- *A brief history of Thanksgiving...*

**Giving thanks in hard, barren seasons is an American tradition.**

But it's not just an American tradition...

***We see the same pattern throughout the Bible: men and women face difficult, barren seasons with thankfulness.***

- Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Elijah, King Jehoshaphat, David, Esther, Jesus' mother Mary, Apostle John, Apostle Paul, Silas, others...
- But it is Jesus who provides the strongest, most poignant picture of thankfulness in barrenness.

**Jesus shows us how to face hardship with a posture of praise:**

Jesus was FULLY man and FULLY God.

*Just imagine that tension— the inner-battle to submit his temptation and impulses to the Father.*

- And with all that inner tension, it would be understandable if Jesus had trouble being thankful.

**But not only was Jesus thankful, he demonstrated a pattern of faithful, continual thankfulness.**

- This pattern is remarkable and significant for us to see in this uncertain, barren season...

**Jesus' pattern of thankfulness defined His seasons of barrenness.**

- In this current season of barrenness it can be easy for us to allow FEAR or CYNICISM or CRITICISM or even COMPLACENCY to define the season...

**Jesus' life was marked by thankfulness to God because Jesus KNEW & enjoyed the character and love of God.**

- Because God is LOVE and God is unchanging and God is faithful, JESUS WAS THANKFUL!

Thankfulness defined Jesus' life in two ways:

- 1. Jesus assumed a posture of thanksgiving and praise in His life.**
- 2. Jesus was ALWAYS—CONTINUALLY thankful.**

We're going to take a close look at these two defining characteristics in Jesus' life:

1. Posture of Thankfulness
2. Continual Thankfulness

### 1. Posture of Thankfulness

When you read the NT, you see Jesus thanking God the Father a LOT.

Jesus thanked God for everything, but more than ANYTHING, Jesus thanked God for food—and he did this OFTEN!

- Thanking God for our food seems the simplest thing on earth... and maybe that is the point.

**James 1:17-18**

**Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow. 18 He chose to give birth to us by giving us his true word. And we, out of all creation, became his prized possession.**

God NEVER changes!!

- So if our gratitude is based on life's circumstances, then our gratitude will be inconsistent because life's circumstances change...
- BUT if our gratitude is based on God who NEVER changes or shifts, then our thankfulness is UNCHANGING!

**James' point is that God CONSISTENTLY loves and cares for us as a good father.**

- And EVERYTHING we have comes from Him—EVERYTHING!
- When we realize WHERE everything comes from we discover a God who loves us!

Our response to our loving father is THANKFULNESS!

- We embrace and enjoy Him as our hearts overflow with THANKFULNESS.
- As well-loved children, the posture of our life is THANKFULNESS.

Jesus models this posture of thankfulness:

- When Jesus took seven loaves and a few little fish and fed four thousand, He gave thanks.
- When He broke five loaves and two fishes and fed five thousand, He gave thanks.
- When Jesus bowed His head at the last supper with the disciples, He gave thanks.
- When He was asked to have dinner with the disciples on the road to Emmaus, He gave thanks.

**Jesus, the Creator of all sustenance, gave thanks for simple provisions.**

Jesus was also thankful that the Father had revealed truth to common people.

- In the middle of teaching His disciples, Jesus began to praise God:

**Matthew 11:25-26**

**At that time Jesus prayed this prayer: "O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thank you for hiding these things from those who think themselves wise and clever, and for revealing them to the childlike. 26 Yes, Father, it pleased you to do it this way!"**

Imagine this moment—Jesus knows everything—EVERYTHING!

And he is here teaching His disciples and he something must have struck him...

- Maybe he's looking at how rough these fishermen and everyday workers were.
- Maybe he's noticing their rural accent and the simplicity of their manner...

Whatever it was, here we see Jesus—the King of Kings—pause His teaching to praise the Father!

**He couldn't contain His gratitude that God would choose to bring His glory to THESE PEOPLE!**

- To the ORDINARY—the HOPELESS—the FEARFUL—the STUCK... THAT'S ME—US!!
- Jesus is praising the Father for the Father's plan to bring His love to people like ME and YOU!!

**There is deep meaning in this pause of Jesus'...**

He's TAKEN BACK by the Father's plan that he STOPS teaching and He gives thanks.

- I am amazed that the Lord would let me be a recipient of His grace.
- I am SHOCKED that I am invited to be a participant in His family and His Kingdom plan.

○ **Allow this reality to sink in today!**

○ Allow this reality to create in you a THANKFULNESS!

○ **Allow this THANKFULNESS to evict any fear or cynicism or critical spirit or complacency that has crept into your heart in these difficult times...**

**Hebrews 12:1b**

**[...] let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us.**

Strip away the things that are tripping you up!

- Strip away fear!
- Strip away that cynicism and critical spirit!
- Strip away complacency!

The Lord has a PLAN for your life, and this season of barrenness is a PART OF THAT PLAN!

### **POSTURE YOURSELF for victory in this season by taking a posture of THANKFULNESS.**

- Turn your eyes to Jesus and THANK HIM for the new life He has given us.
- As the Lord brings THANKFULNESS to our hearts, let's turn that thankfulness into praise!
- Say, "THANK YOU LORD for providing for my needs. Thank you Lord for bringing me back to you."

### **Let's allow this THANKFULNESS to become our POSTURE.**

- Let's evict the fear and cynicism and criticism and complacency...
- Let's take a posture of thankfulness as we put our eyes on Jesus in this otherwise barren season.

We desire to assume a posture of thankfulness, and we live lives marked by:

### **2. Continual Thankfulness**

Jesus' life was marked by His continual thankfulness to the Father.

#### **It is good for us to see because Jesus gave praise to the Father in seemingly barren times:**

- He gave thanks as he was surrounded by thousands of hungry people and almost no food.
  - Picture this—Jesus is surrounded by THOUSANDS of hungry people, and rather than sending them away to find food, He goes to great trouble to organize this MASSIVE crowd into groups of 50-100 people.
  - Once everyone was organized into groups Jesus stands up and raises up the food—all of it.
  - He has just 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish...
    - This wasn't even enough food to feed his 12 disciples!!
    - Imagine what Peter must have felt in that moment... facepalm...
  - As He holds up this small meal, Jesus expresses His THANKFULNESS to the Father for the food that they had.
    - He stands in front of thousands of people to express PUBLIC gratitude to the Father.
    - He CONTINUES in thankfulness in the midst of what MUST have been a skeptical crowd.
- **In a barren moment—when people were NOT SEEING what Jesus was seeing—Jesus continues in thankfulness.**
  - And of course we all know that Jesus then multiplied the food!

It was the same with his dear friend Lazarus.

- Jesus stands at the entrance to a tomb that REEKED of Lazarus' decaying body...
  - Look at what Jesus does in this moment:

### **John 11:41-42**

**They rolled the stone aside. Then Jesus looked up to heaven and said, "Father, thank you for hearing me. 42 You always hear me, but I said it out loud for the sake of all these people standing here, so that they will believe you sent me."**

Jesus is thanking the Father for HIS faithfulness to hear His prayer.

- He is thankful for God's character—NOT just for God's acting on our requests.
- BEFORE Lazarus rose from the grave Jesus praises the Father for hearing him!

**Jesus is motivated by the Father's CHARACTER, and He responds in THANKFULNESS.**

Finally, we see Jesus expressing thankfulness to the Father in a VERY unlikely circumstance at the dinner table at His last supper...

- He expresses thanks to the Father for the bread and the wine they were about to eat.
- This is poignant—Jesus lived from a place of knowing the cross was before him, and He RECEIVED this hard reality—this seemingly barren calling—and he gave thanks to the Father.
- On His last night as a free man Jesus thanks the Father as he breaks bread and offers the cup representing both the horror of His impending death and the fullness of God's love for humanity.

While feeling pressure to feed thousands, or standing at the tomb of a friend, and even the evening before He faced unspeakable torture and horrific death on a cross...

- Jesus' response was never FEAR or PANIC or CYNICISM or CRITICISM or COMPLACENCY...

**Jesus fixed His mind on the character of the Father where He became THANKFUL and found PEACE.**

**Jesus faces hardship with a posture of thankfulness and He continues in thankfulness...**

- He was even willing to stand alone in His thankfulness.

When people around him were gripped in fear or became cynical or critical, or even when His friends were complacent and sleepy—Jesus CONTINUED in Thankfulness!

As He continued in thankfulness—in barren circumstances—Jesus affects the world around Him.

- God MOVED through Him!

We see God do this throughout scripture—God moves in and through thankful hearts!

Paul and Silas are a great picture of this...beaten, chained and in prison, they remember God's character and assume a posture of thankfulness.

- In fact, they continue in thankfulness as they WORSHIP and PRAISE God from prison...
- And they affect the world around them!!

Paul & Silas...

#### **Acts 16:23-34**

**They were severely beaten, and then they were thrown into prison. The jailer was ordered to make sure they didn't escape. 24 So the jailer put them into the inner dungeon and clamped their feet in the stocks.**

**25 Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening. 26 Suddenly, there was a massive earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors immediately flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off! 27 The jailer woke up to see the prison doors wide open. He assumed the prisoners had escaped, so he drew his sword to kill himself. 28 But Paul shouted to him, "Stop! Don't kill yourself! We are all here!"**

**29 The jailer called for lights and ran to the dungeon and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 Then he brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"**

**31 They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household." 32 And they shared the word of the Lord with him and with all who lived in his household. 33 Even at that hour of the night, the jailer cared for them and washed their wounds. Then he and everyone in his household were immediately baptized. 34 He brought them into his house and set a meal before them, and he and his entire household rejoiced because they all believed in God.**

What's going on here??—Paul & Silas' THANKFULNESS affected the world around them!

- God moved IN them and THROUGH them!!
- **This is how God operates—God is always working IN us to affect the world AROUND us.**
  - Our attitude affects the world around us.
  - Our thankfulness CHANGES the spiritual climate around us.

**In the midst of this season of uncertainty—this Coronavirus barrenness—we can be certain about the character and faithfulness and the goodness of God!**

- Even if it's the ONLY THING we're certain of...
- Even if we STAND ALONG in this certainty...

**Christian, God is working in you today to affect the world around you RIGHT NOW!**

- The Spirit is working today to show you the love and faithfulness of God by showing you Jesus!

**God is faithful in every season so we can be THANKFUL in every season—even seasons of barrenness.**

- And it's not always easy to be thankful—especially in seasons of difficulty.
- But thankfulness in hard times turns our hearts toward God and affects the world around us!

**We'll never walk in thankfulness if we're looking for contentment in life's circumstances.**

- The key to thankfulness in hard times is to focus on the eternal character of God and NOT on life's ever-changing circumstances.
- This is how Jesus found a place of gratitude—even in difficult, barren times.

**Jesus set His heart and mind and His eyes on the eternal, unchanging character of God**

- and walked in thankfulness in the mid of barrenness
- And Church, SO CAN WE!

Let's pray for the church this weekend—men, women, families...**that we would have grace and Holy Spirit power to follow after Jesus and walk in thankfulness as we set OUR heart and mind and eyes on the never-changing character of God in these ever-changing times.**

- Let's walk in the same freedom, joy and THANKFULNESS found in Habakkuk:

**Habakkuk 3:17-18 (NLT)**

**Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vines; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, yet I will rejoice in the Lord! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation!**

As we know and enjoy God, we can:

- ENJOY thankfulness in barrenness.
- PRACTICE thankfulness in barrenness...
- SHARE thankfulness in barrenness.

**Maybe today you want to CONNECT WITH GOD—LIVE LINK in description below...**

- If you want to **Know God** or **Get Prayer**...
- Prayer— We have a team of people who would love to pray for you!
- If you want to know more about Jesus we want to connect you with someone to talk with about Jesus.
- Just click the LIVE LINK below.

**Right now we're going to WORSHIP together.**

- DRAW NEAR to God
- DECLARE TRUTH about God...
- Declare THANKFULNESS for God's faithfulness and goodness!

**God is WITH YOU—right where you are!**

- And He is MOVING in the midst of your life RIGHT NOW—even if it feels like a barren season!
- He is WORKING in the midst of your situation RIGHT NOW!

**God is POWERFUL and FAITHFUL and ABLE and WILLING to move and work IN YOU and work THROUGH YOU to affect the world AROUND you!!**

- Let's fill our hearts and homes and neighborhoods with thankfulness and PRAISE as we worship now!