Newlonsburg Presbyterian Church
WORSHIP·SERVE·GROW

Generosity When Life is Hard

Habakkuk 3:17-18 11/8/26

Have you ever worked really hard on something, and it failed because of something outside of your control? If you have, you can empathize with farmers.

For Habakkuk the harvest fails. What do you do when you have worked really hard on something and it fails because of something outside of your control?

As many of you know, I have been tending an orchard. This spring when the blossoms on the peaches, apricots, apples, plums and pears blossomed, that night, they froze. No fruit! How do we respond? Generosity. Share with others. When life gets hard: generosity is where we will find joy.

Habakkuk responds to the failed harvest by choosing joy instead of dread, but this takes practice. The harvest failing could be metaphoric for the Babylonian empire conquering Jerusalem in 586BC. How do we respond when a bad event outside of our control negatively affects our lives?

Let's hear the answer in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.

Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Get comfortable with the uncomfortable. One of my favorite hymns of all time is "It is well… It is well. With my soul… With my soul." Horatio Spafford wrote that hymn in 1873 in response to the ocean liner SS Ville du Havre sinking taking his four daughters. The hymn declares deep inner peace and trust in God not because life is easy or pain-free, but because his soul is anchored in Christ regardless of external trials. Gratitude that survives hardship is a powerful witness. But this takes practice.

Hoops & Hope ministry last Monday at 8P had 25 boys show up for prayer and basketball. Two students are leading this ministry because of the insight and initiative of church member, Lauren Jessup. Her vision was to build student leaders while offering student led pick-up basketball. She believes there is demand for Christian nourishment and non-organized play. For the month of November, the devotion revolves around teaching the Lord's Prayer and the importance of practicing the habit of prayer. For Jesus, His practice of prayer and worship have a tangible outcome: He generously gives His life.

On Wednesday, I presented to our Stephen Ministers. If you have experienced loss recently, let me know and I will let the Stephen Ministers know. They are trained to offer Christ's presence in your season of loss. Our Stephen Ministers asked me how I handle grief. My initial response is the hope of the resurrection of Jesus Christ! As I prepared to present on the question, "How do I handle grief?" the Holy Spirit showed me a beautiful alliteration: Friends, Firewood and Fire. When loss happens, you don't have to be alone. Like Habakkuk, chose joy not dread. I call on Hope, my three best friends, and you Christ's Church. Susan Long did a marvelous job last week kicking off the stewardship campaign. During her talk she illuminated many insights: 1)

when you generously give to Christ's Church, you are investing in each other. 2) When you come to worship, you enhance worship! 3) Your presence helps others through loss. Firewood: I get outside and literally pray and split firewood by hand. Jesus practiced getting outside walking and praying. His father Joseph was traditionally understood as a carpenter, but the Greek word is *tekton,* which means working with your hands. When you experience loss, get outside and create with your hands. Fire: I build and watch fires by myself or with friends often. If by myself, I'm praying. If with friends, I'm building Christ's Church!

Remember the Book of Job. Job is a wealthy, faithful man, with a large family. One day, out of Job's control, he loses all his wealth and his family. During his immense grief, he gets terribly ill with sores all over his body. Job responds like Habakkuk, instead of dread, he worships God. Then his friends come to console him, but they insist that he repent of whatever sin has caused such suffering. Job vehemently defends his innocence and demands God's attention. God shows up in a storm never giving a direct explanation of Job's suffering but instead reveals to Job the vast complexities of the universe acknowledging that humans cannot understand the inner workings of God's interaction with creation nor God's justice. Job repents, choosing joy instead of dread. God also reprimands Job's friends for their narrow, rigid and unempathetic theology, while commending Job for his honest response to pain. Generosity is not rooted in comfort, joy/generosity are rooted in Jesus Christ.

When life gets difficult, join the joy of generosity. You cannot have joy without generosity, and you cannot have generosity without joy. Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Love,
Pastor Curtis

Theme: Christian generosity is rooted in Jesus, not comfort.

Sermon Notes:

1. Habakkuk chooses joy when the harvest fails.
2. Gratitude that survives hardship is a powerful witness.
3. Generous people refuse to let fear control their lives.
4. Jesus' habits of daily prayer and weekly worship produce His generous living.
5. Generosity is rooted in Jesus' faith.