

Continue to Produce Fruit

Lamentations 3

Sunday Morning, February 14, 2010

Pastor Dwight LaPine at Calvary Baptist Church of Rochester

Introduction: This morning, I want to look at the subject of continuing to produce fruit, continuing to have fruit for His glory. There are two things I want to focus on, **First, God is faithful and He continues.** We read,

Hebrews 13:5 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

We do not continue, but God does. Fruit is more about God than it is about us. He has a plan that will come to completion, not only in this world, but also in our lives. He knows how to make someone in his image. He did it once, and he can do it again.

Genesis 1:26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness:

In view of God's power, it is ludicrous to think that anything can withstand his will. Paul, when writing to the Romans stated,

Romans 9:19 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?

20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?

This is a very comforting thought for me. Though I forsake Him and flee from His presence, there is no place that I can go where His will will not be performed in my life.

Psalms 139:7 Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

Though I change, and have many ups and downs, I am found in one who never changes. He is greater than my sin, and His faithfulness overcomes my failures.

Second, God has a purpose for man, and that purpose will be accomplished in man.

2 Timothy 1:9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,

That purpose is greater than any sin that man can commit. Man is very foolish if he thinks that he can thwart the plan of God by a decision that He makes. God's will is done on this earth and it is done in my life. God is greater than any sin and uses my rebellion to reveal His power and might. God continues and that statement is not conditional upon man. Before we get to this subject, I want to begin where we left of last week.

BACKGROUND:

Last week we were talking about “Continuing on to Perfection.” I shared with you three Greek words that are translated “perfect” in the New Testament. The first word was *Telios* and it means to mature, to be brought to an end. We said that God had a purpose and He always completes what He starts. When He left this world He prayed, “I have finished the work that you have given me to do.” When He was on the cross, one of His last statements was, “It is finished.” We know that He has started a new work, in me and in you. We read,

Philippians 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

The work is not done, but it will be. Jesus will complete what He has begun. I can be confident in that. That not only applies to me, but it applies to each of you and to your sons and daughters. He began the work, and though He may not be done, He will be.

The second word was *artios*. It is used in 2 Tim 3:16, when it says, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God might be perfect,” We said that this word means to be fit for a task. God created us for a purpose and that purpose will be accomplished through His word and its affect on our life. The third word is:

C. Katartios It means to be outfitted.

God’s desire is for us to BE PERFECT.

Heb 13:21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

The idea of perfect in this verse is someone who pleases Him well, also someone who brings glory to Him for ever and ever. You can’t get any more fit than that. That is God’s will. His desire is to bring you to that point.

There is a difference between fit and outfitted. Fit is personal preparation. Outfitted means that you have the equipment necessary to accomplish the task. Picture the disciples sitting on a rock by the sea of Galilee.

Mt 4:21 And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending <2675> their nets; and he called them.

During that night, like many nights, the net has developed a tear. Some of the netting is loose and some is missing. The fishermen must have a net that has integrity. In other words, without holes. Any hole will allow the fish to escape, and if left alone, the small holes will become big holes, and then the big fish will also escape. So they spend much time after every day on the lake, fixing their nets, getting them ready for the next time.

We have to be prepared for the task that God has given to us. Not only do we have to be fit, all of the holes need to be mended, and it is God’s task to mend the holes, to give us integrity. My main problem is not immaturity. My main problem is not fitness. My main problem is a life without holes. God is constantly patching me up. I still develop lots of tears and it is those areas where I lose integrity. We read

Galatians 6:1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore <2675> such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

In like manner, people get holes in their life, and they lose their integrity. It is our job as believers to help them to come back to the Lord. We need each saint in our church growing. But there are times when we will be hurting and we will fail. At those times, we need to be restored, so that we can go out again and catch fish.

God has a way of showing us the areas where we lack integrity. Just about the time we feel we have arrived, God puts us through a test that shows that we have a long ways to go. 1 Peter 5:10 gives us another round of suffering and pain so that we will be made perfect.

1 Peter 5:10 But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

The word used here is *katartizo*. It means to be fit and outfitted. It mean that we are ready and able to be and do what He wants us to be and do. But, this process takes some suffering. It is a process that feels like we are being torn. WE think that God should be mending us, but there are times when it seems like instead of patching the holes, he is tearing out huge chunks out of our lives. We shared with you that God is faithful. He continues and God has a purpose for man and that purpose also continues.

I. A Man without Hope Finds Hope

A. Disaster Strikes

To begin with this morning, I want to look at a man by the name of Jeremiah. He is sitting on a hillside outside of Jerusalem and he is crying. He is a grown man and he is openly weeping. He looks down at his city, Jerusalem, and it is destroyed. The man has no hope. The city is desolate. They have just been overtaken by the Babylonians. In the siege that took place before it was overrun, the people were facing starvation. Mothers even killed and ate their own children. Their skin was turned black by reason of their condition. There was no water. The temple was destroyed and its stones cast down. The wall was broken up, and there wasn't one stone left standing. Jeremiah looks at it and he can't help feeling sorry for himself and for his people. He says,

Lamentations 3:16 He hath also broken my teeth with gravel stones, he hath covered me with ashes. 17 And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace: I forgat prosperity.

18 And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the LORD:

19 Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall.

20 My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me.

You can hear him. His voice is trembling and his eyes are fallen and his head is drooping. He has no hope. It is perished with all his dreams.

This past week, I talked to my son, and he was very discouraged. It is hard for a dad to listen to the distress of a son. His wife was not able to get work for a long time. They used up all of their savings and now he has accumulated dr bills for a kidney stone, for a kidney infection, for tests and medication and he has lost hope of ever accomplishing his goal of getting his degree. But God is not limited by money. He is not limited by time. God's gifts and callings

are without repentance. He does not change His mind concerning what He has given. He does not take it back. He does not change His mind about your purpose. He created you for a reason, and nothing that happens will change his mind about why you were created.

There are some things that we can not learn in prosperity. There are lessons of trust that you can't learn with money in savings. God has people in your future path that will need the lessons that He is teaching you right now in the desert. You will not be able to comfort another if you have not experienced the comfort from God yourself.

B. God Makes the Difference But something happens to change this man's outlook...

Lamentations 3:21 This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.

22 It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

23 They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.

24 The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.

If God changed, we would be dire shape. We could lose all hope. But since our hope rests in God and since God never changes, WE NEVER HAVE TO LOSE HOPE. The Lord's mercies do not end. They do not fail. They are new every morning, without fail. He is our portion. His faithfulness is great. Notice verse 31

25 The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.

26 It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.

27 It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.

Learning to trust in the Lord is not a bad thing. It is a good thing. It is good because the Lord is good. Because He continues. Since He remains good, whatever He deems fit for us, must also be good. The best thing that can happen is for us to lose hope in our dreams and gain hope in His purpose. We read,

31 For the Lord will not cast off for ever:

32 But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies.

The Lord will not cast us off forever. He has a plan for our pain. We do not see pain as a part of the plan. But God himself underwent pain to ease our pain. He sent His own son so that He would take our sin, to take our suffering, so that we could bear the problems of this world. His mercy does not end. Verse 32, allows God the right to cause grief because he has compassion. He never does anything without compassion. He does not cast off. He does not give up on us. He is good. Our hope is found in Him.

The problem of bearing fruit, of purpose does not rest in the instrument. I have a guitar. I don't play it much any more. I used to play it all the time. When I was in Bible college, I played every day for many hours at a time. I learned many songs and I had some friends who were incredible guitarists. They taught me a lot of chords and a lot of chord progressions. I used to love the guitar. Over the years, playing basketball has caused by fingers to not work the same way they used to work. I have sprained my fingers just too many times. They don't bend as they used to. I still love to pick up the guitar and play chords.

Now, you can picture that guitar in my closet. It is in a nice case, and it is pretty much

in tune. I make sure that the neck is straight. I don't allow it to warp. But, it's purpose is not determined by the guitar, it is determined by its owner. If it sits in a corner, it is because that is where I put it.

We do not believe that God created this world and then left it. That would be deism. But why then, do we think that God created us and then let us stumble on our own. God's mercies are new every morning. He has created us for a purpose and it is His work that allows us to be used to fulfill that purpose.

II. God's purpose in my life continues throughout my life.

The message this morning is on our fruit remaining and continuing. It is part of maturity to be consistent not only in what we say and think, but also in what we produce in our lives. There are times in your life when you are more productive than others. There are times when we have great success and God truly blesses us greatly. Usually the times when we are the most productive are middle age. We have learned how to work and we have learned what works. We haven't reached the time yet when we are too tired to do our best. We seem to have endless energy.

As a believer in Christ, we also want our lives to count. We want to be blessed of God and we want to have a purpose in our life, for what we do and why we do it. There are times when we are more productive than other times. But God's desire for us is,

John 15:8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

God desires us to bear much fruit. It is not as if he is standing over us with a whip and demanding that we produce or else. He knows what will give us the greatest joy in our lives. Listen to these verses,

John 15:11 These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

John 15:16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

Notice that God's desire is that our joy would be full. It is also his desire that we should bear fruit and that our fruit would remain. There is a connection between having joy remain in us and having our fruit remain. If the fruit does not remain, neither does the joy. God knows that we were created for a purpose. It is the greatest human tragedy for a man created for a purpose to live his life and never accomplish the purpose for which he was created. Imagine a man buying a 500 dollar barb que grill and never once in his life using it. It sits outside on his deck and it just plain rots. It never gets used. Finally someone buys the house and throws that old grill away. It is a waste of money and material. It is a waste of space and a waste of the time to make it and move it.

But we are flesh and blood, and we were created by a God who does not waste anything. It is not God's desire that anything perish. That talks about going to heaven, but it is more than that. It is a desire that nothing is wasted, that nothing is allowed to rot because of misuse.

The problem again is that when a man lives without purpose, he also has no purpose from the Lord to continue living. Notice this illustration,

In Luke 13, there is a story about a fig tree that does not produce figs. The owner of the fig tree says to his servant, “cut it down.” But the servant pleads with him, “wait one year, and I will dig around it and fertilize it, and if it does not produce than we will cut it down.”

The verse says,

Luke 13:7 Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?

Surely there is room on the earth for another fig tree, even one that does not produce. But the owner sees little reason for it to “cumber the ground.” There are many Christians who really do not have a purpose for “cumbering the ground.” Our initial purpose is still our same purpose.

Genesis 1:28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth,

God wanted Adam, even before the fall to be fruitful, to multiply, to replenish the earth. After the fall, man’s ability to be fruitful was greatly diminished. We find that even the ground would not bear its increase without man’s toil. Now, we understand that the initial command had to do with having children. But God wants us to replenish the earth not with natural men. He wants all men to be saved, and so our goal as Christians is to reproduce after our kind. He wants this world to be filled with those who would glorify Him. He wants us to produce fruit that would produce more fruit. He wants us to have fruit and have fruit remain in our lives.