

Hebrews 13:15 - Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise - the fruit of lips that openly profess His name.

As we approach this season of Thanksgiving, I'm reminded that many of us are challenged right now with concerns in areas of health, family, jobs, finances, homes that have been destroyed by the floods, turmoil in the world around us. A patient that I had visited came to mind.

Lying in peaceful repose in her hospital bed, I couldn't help but notice the serenity that pervaded the otherwise antiseptic atmosphere. Given the circumstances of her hospitalization, I was eager to ask the reason for her unusual peace and joy. Having shared that she had undergone more than 90 surgeries for the same medical condition, this patient revealed her secret.

"I was raised by my grandmother, a strong believer in Christ who understood the power of praise and thanksgiving. So every morning, she would come into my room and wait for me to recite ten things that I was thankful for that day. This was our routine - and I had to do it before my feet even touched the floor. You can imagine that I learned very quickly to think of many things for which I was thankful!"

It was this attitude of thanksgiving to God that enabled this patient to be joyful in the midst of her affliction. She was not denying that there was pain and difficulty in her circumstances. She was simply acknowledging that God's presence enabled her to persevere through them.

In this age of anxiety, of increasing birth pangs as we sense all of creation groaning in anticipation of the return of Jesus, I find great comfort in the words of the prophet Jeremiah from Lamentations 3. Not denying that life is really tough, this weeping prophet writes, "I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me.

"Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, 'The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for Him. The Lord is good to those whose hope is in Him, to the one who seeks Him.'"

Pastor Bill Johnson of Bethel Church shared these words in his sermon the Sunday after his father died of cancer. "Only on earth, in this situation, could I stand and offer worship to God while I am disappointed. I could never do this in heaven, because in heaven there is no disappointment. Only here can I offer a sacrifice of praise."

Today, in the midst of your circumstances, consider offering to God a sacrifice of praise, the fruit of lips that openly profess His name. Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good. His love endures forever.