

When life gives you lemons, make lemonade

LESSON BY TAYLOR JOHNS (FOR LADS TO LEADERS/LEADERETTES)

“When life gives you lemons, make lemonade.” We all know this saying, and its meaning is very simple: Make the most of what you have. This makes sense in a materialistic world, but what about a spiritual one? What if we thought about Christianity this way? How can we? And what will happen?

One thing I would like for us to consider is that every breath we breathe, every sunrise in the morning, and every time the seasons change, we are reminded that we have a new chance.... a new opportunity. There is a song we sing sometimes that says, "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning. Great is Thy faithfulness. The Lord is my portion says my soul. Therefore, I will hope in Him!" This song is a direct quotation from **Lamentations 3:22-24**.

If you know anything about the book of Lamentations you know that it was written by the prophet Jeremiah. He was often referred to as the weeping prophet. Sounds like a guy we need to listen to if we want to know how to make lemonade. Jeremiah says that when the difficult times come, we need to focus on the steadfastness and faithfulness of God. Why would he say that? Probably, because in his experience, he knew that people would let him down. But God would NEVER let him down. The Bible confirms this in **Matthew 28:20** and in **Hebrews 13:5** among many other places.

Paul understood this. Peter understood this. So did James and John, the beloved. But, the question is.... do you believe it? Do you really believe that God will be with you? That He will never leave you or forsake you? The problem is not the steadfastness and faithfulness of God, it is our faith in him. We are the ones that struggle.

How we spend our time on Earth is the most important thing. Let's elaborate a little. Solomon says, "*To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven:*

A time to be born, And a time to die;

A time to plant, And a time to pluck what is planted;

A time to kill, And a time to heal;

A time to break down, And a time to build up;

A time to weep, And a time to laugh;

A time to mourn, And a time to dance;

A time to cast away stones, And a time to gather stones;

A time to embrace, And a time to refrain from embracing;

A time to gain, And a time to lose;

A time to keep, And a time to throw away;

A time to tear, And a time to sew;

A time to keep silence, And a time to speak;

A time to love, And a time to hate;

A time of war, And a time of peace." (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8)

Okay, so we know there is a season and a time for everything, but what is the conclusion? He tells us in **Ecclesiastes 12:13**, "*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all.*" The single most important bit of wisdom Solomon could impart to us is NOT to get wrapped up in the season. Forget about it. Even if it's RAINING LEMONS, we just have to understand that it's LEMON SEASON. Time to do something about it. Make some lemonade. We could be sour. But, what would that accomplish? Nada. Zip. Zilch. Nothing. It would be useless, or as Solomon would call it VAIN!

So, how do we relate this to our spiritual life? First of all, let us think about the blessings God gives us every day. These blessings are our lemons. **James 1:17** says, "*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.*" And, don't miss that the second and third verses of his letter also say, "*My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.*"

James learned the secret recipe to making lemonade. It's the same secret that Jeremiah shared with his readers. Trusting in God! He gives the best gifts. We can see them as lemons. Or we can see them as blessings. We know one thing for sure. He loves us. **John 3:16** tells us that. And, we know that if we are in Christ, **Ephesians 1:3** also reminds us that we have great blessings. Even greater than anyone else in the world.

James encourages his readers to change their perspective. So, that is what I want to challenge us to do. How many times a day do we just sit down, and say, "God, I want YOU to work through me. Show YOUR light to others through me." Do we ever pray things like this? Probably not. Because we aren't thinking like James or Jeremiah. Two men that have "J" names. Or, what about Job? He did well by staying focused even when his friends and his wife turned against him. And, what about Jesus! He is the perfect example, isn't he?

Do we ever use ourselves for the glory of the One who saved us all? **James 1:22** tries to encourage us to do that. Don't just hear the word! Live it! Become a living example of the Word of God. Become a doer that bears fruit! As Christians, we know the greatness of God but our unlucky counterparts do not. They need to see Christ in us. Will you do this? Will you make some lemonade? Let's work on it, until Jesus comes!