

## **Sermon in a nutshell: "I have 10,000 reasons to praise God." (Psalm 118:1-4)**

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### **I have ten thousand reasons to praise God.**

When we had a dry season, one of our church members asked me to pray for rain. We prayed for rain during a worship service. Then we had rain that week. On the next Sunday, at the worship service, a church member suggested we pray for more rain.

I said, "Let us give thanks first for the rain that we have." We need to give thanks to God for what we have before we ask for more and more. The psalm 118 says, "O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever!"

### **Leah praised God, but Rachel asked more.**

In Genesis 29 we read a story of Jacob and his two(!) wives. Jacob wanted to marry Rachel, the younger daughter of Laban. He worked 7 years for her. However, on the wedding night, Laban gave Leah, the older daughter to Jacob. Without knowing the difference, Jacob spent the first night with Leah. In the morning, Jacob appealed to Laban. Laban answered that it was against their custom that the younger sister should marry a man before the older sister. Laban suggested Jacob to work 7 more years to get Rachel also. Jacob had to work 14 years to marry Rachel. That was how he got two wives.

### **Our God is the God of the marginalized.**

In the Bible, one thing that we can tell about our God is that God is the God of the weak, of the poor, and of the marginalized. For example, in Luke 1, Mary praised God after the angel that announced her pregnancy, saying, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty." (Luke 1: 46-53)

### **God gave sons to Leah.**

The Bible says, "When the Lord saw that Leah was unloved, he opened her womb; but Rachel was barren. Leah conceived and bore a son, and she named him Reuben; for she said, 'Because the Lord has looked on my affliction; surely now my husband will love me.' She conceived again and bore a son, and said, 'Because the Lord has heard that I am hated, he has given me this son also'; and she named him Simeon. Again, she conceived and bore a son, and said, 'Now this time my husband will be joined to me, because I have borne him three sons'; therefore, he was named Levi. She conceived again and bore a son, and said, 'This time I will praise the Lord'; therefore, she named him Judah; then she ceased bearing." When God gave sons to Leah, Leah praised God by giving names to her sons. Reuben (Look, he is a son), Simeon (God hears!) Levi (We are united) and Judah (Let us praise God!) If we make a sentence of her sons' names it says, "Look, he is a son. God hears my prayer and helps us to be united. Let us praise God!" Leah praised God for the prayer heard and sons who made the parents united.

## **God gave sons to Rachel.**

In Genesis 30 we read the stories of Rachel's maid Bilhah and Leah's maid Zilpah. Rachel had two sons through Bilhah, Dan and Naphtali. If we put Rachel's son's names in one sentence, it means that God judged me and I wrestle with my sister! For Rachel, God is just the judge for a wrestling with her sister. God is not the giver of life!

Leah also had four sons through Zilpah Gad (Good fortune), Asher (Happiness), Issachar (Reward), and Zebulun (Honor)! In a sentence, Leah confessed that God gave her good fortune, happiness, reward, and honor.

When Rachel was still struggling and trying to win the competition with her sister, Leah said, "I praise God who gives me everything and I am happy."

When Rachel finally had her biological son, she named him Joseph (More). God gave one more son Benjamin (son of a right hand). Rachel died after she bore Benjamin. The competition stopped there. Rachel asked for one more son and she got what she asked, a son who had power!

## **Two different attitudes and two different results**

Rachel kept asking God for more and more. Then finally she got a son who had power. The first king of Israel was Saul, who was a Benjaminite. However, King Saul struggled all his life with jealousy as Rachel did. Saul was always anxious and depressed to win popularity over/against a young boy, David. Joseph was sold as a slave to Egypt. Later he became the prime minister of Egypt and saved many people, but he made the Israelites come over to Egypt where all of them became slaves until Exodus.

The second king of Israel was David who was a Judahite. Levites were the temple workers. Jesus, our Lord is from the family of Judah also. Now the Israelites are called Jews.

Would it be an oversimplification for me to say that different attitudes bring different results? When we ask for more and more, we do not know satisfaction and thanksgiving. When we start giving thanks to God, we find many more reasons to give thanks.

Psalm 118 says, Let Israel say, "His steadfast love endures forever." Let the house of Aaron say, "His steadfast love endures forever." Let those who fear the Lord say, "His steadfast love endures forever."

## **Find reasons to be thankful in your life.**

According to ESPN, a Polish javelin thrower Maria Andrejczyk auctioned off her silver medal from the Tokyo Olympics for \$125,000 with the goal of using the funds to help an infant receive a life-saving heart surgery. She did it to help 8-month-old Miłoszek Małysa. The boy had a serious heart defect and was in need of surgery but the family was looking to attain financial support.

Andrejczyk promptly auctioned off her silver medal from the javelin competition, saying, "He already has a head start from Kubus – the boy didn't make it in time but whose amazing parents decided to pass on the funds they collected. ... And in this way, I also want to help. It's for him that I am auctioning my Olympic silver medal."

She could have said, "I want a Gold Medal." However, she said, "I will use my Silver Medal for a good cause." The boy had a successful surgery and recovered. Then the winner of the auction gave the silver medal back to Andrejczyk! What an amazing ending!

I know you all received a pledge drive letter. When you fill out your pledge card, consider this simple spiritual principle. "Do not ask more, but first give thanks to God for what you have now."

Let us sing this song according to the tune of Amazing Grace: "Do not ask more and more to God. Give thanks for what you have. God will free you from anxiety, and, give you a happy life."

**Amen**