

FBC Service Sunday, March 16, 20125 – Psalm 92:12-14 Faithful and Flourishing

Intro: Psalm 92 is a song of praise that speaks to the faithfulness of God and the flourishing life He promises to His people.

Verses 12-14 remind us that as believers, we are like the palm trees and cedars of Lebanon—called to stand strong, grow tall, and bear fruit, **no matter the season of life.**

Even in our later years, God has designed us to remain vital, fruitful, and vibrant, sharing His blessings with the generations that come after us.

In a few days, as we gather for our annual church business meeting, let's reflect on how we can remain fruitful and vibrant, and leave a legacy of faith that inspires others.

This morning I want to bring an uplifting, encouraging and practical message from this beautiful Psalm.

Take a look at this plant! It was planted in good soil and grew where Wyn planted it.

This plant grew into what it was meant to be, after being nurtured by a loving hand.

It's an amazing truth of God's plan for everything, and here's the cool part; **we're the same.**

God's people are meant to grow where God plants us.

Psalm 92 clearly tells us the way we can flourish both now on the earth and in the future.

12. “But the godly will flourish like palm trees and grow strong like the cedars of Lebanon.

13. For they are transplanted to the Lord's own house. They flourish in the courts of our God.

14 Even in old age they will still produce fruit; they will remain vital and green.

Believers, like the palm tree and cedar of Lebanon, are uniquely equipped to thrive in the place God has planted them.

The palm tree symbolizes resilience and fruitfulness, flourishing even in harsh desert conditions.

The cedar of Lebanon represents strength, longevity, and beauty, rooted deeply and standing tall for generations.

What does flourishing mean? It means thriving, it means growing, it means prospering. A tree that flourishes is doing better than “OK.

It's a healthy tree.

So when we talk about the righteous flourishing, we're talking about spiritual health.

The psalmist compares this kind of flourishing to a cedar or a palm tree.

If you're looking for a flourishing Christian life, you won't find it in a vitamin pill, a Red Bull drink, or an exercise routine, but in heeding what the Lord says. None of us know how long we'll live, but while we have breath, we should desire to be useful and fruitful for God.

He is the one who ultimately determines the number of our days, but we have the responsibility of doing what we can to live long and productive lives.

Let's take a look at our Scripture again. **What does it say?**

They are transplanted to the Lord's own house. They flourish in the courts of our God.

Those who attend the house of the Lord?

Those who visit the house of the Lord?

No - those who are planted in the house of the Lord.

Anyone can just visit a church and not be planted there.

Anyone can attend a church every Sunday and not be planted there.

Being planted in a church means that you give to that church, you're a part of that church, you help others in the church, you listen to the spiritual leaders of the church.

Being planted in a church means you value the church, its leaders, and each other, just as a plant values the ground, the oxygen, the sun, and the water.

It means faithfulness and loyalty to God and to His church.

To be faithful to something means to be steadfast in affection and allegiance. To be loyal to something implies a strong resistance to desert or betray those things you're loyal to.

God in His infinite wisdom has planted us in His church. That means if God planted us here, He's expecting us to be loyal and faithful to Him in this place where He's planted us.

I believe if God has planted us all here, then He's expecting us to bloom and bear fruit.

We are so blessed as we consider the people who serve in so many ways every week. Those who teach, those who play the music, those who take up the offering, those who serve as greeters.

There are those who keep the building in shape, those who set up and take down tables, those who run our fellowship times, those who run the overhead, those who update our website, and those who do secretarial work.

There are those who faithfully send out notes of encouragement. And there are those who uphold the work in fervent prayer. **Most of these dear folks are not "up fronters."**

But I thank God for every one of them and all who have made FBC their church home.

Most of the folks who visit us here at FBC probably come here because someone invited them.

Most of the people who make a commitment to Christ, do so not because of the persuasion or the oratory or eloquence of a preacher, but because of the influence of a friend, co-worker, or family member, who shared the truth of the Gospel with them in a simple way. **How was it with you?**

Broaden on own experience! Sammy Noble had no idea when he invited me to a church service just how far reaching that would be. That the teenage boy he witnessed to would come to saving faith and still be serving the Lord all these many years later. **But oh how I thank the Lord for him.**

We need to ask ourselves if we are willing to invite our non-churched friends to services.

When people begin to bloom in the churches they're planted in, the church can accomplish what it's called to do. **To grow disciples for Jesus and faithfully preach the Gospel in the communities they serve.**

When a plant begins to bloom it fulfills the purpose for which it was created.

A flower blooms and we enjoy its beauty.

A vegetable blooms and begins to yield food to eat.

A fruit tree or vine blooms and it begins to offer us the sweet, satisfying fruit it bears.

When God's children bloom where they're planted, they begin to yield a fruit that comes from their loyalty and faithfulness to God.

In return for their loyalty and faithfulness, God provides a way for the fruit to be displayed. It's displayed through the gifts and talents that God enables all of His children with.

Every born-again believer, planted in a local church, has something to offer the Kingdom of God.

Each of us should use whatever gifts we have received from God to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace.

"God has given each of you a gift from His great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another." **1 Peter 4:10.**

Everyone has something to offer the church they're in.

Often young believers feel they must do something very significant in order to follow the Lord.

Sometimes folks determine that they should become a Pastor, Missionary, conference speaker or some other dynamic leader.

These are noble and well-meaning thoughts that they want to do something meaningful for God.

But in the meantime, God wants them to be serving Him right where they are, planted deep into their local communities and congregations.

Here at FBC, He wants to use us right now where we've been planted.

What God desires is that we serve and obey Him in what we're doing right now.

He has placed us where we are for His purpose, calling us to be faithful where we are.

He expects us to pursue excellence in our work, to be a beacon of light in our community.

God expects us to follow Him faithfully, to stand for Him in a worldly environment, and to look for opportunities to plant seeds of faith.

There's more!

You may be retired and feel you're limited in what you can do. Don't feel if you've passed 65, there no more kingdom work for you to do, is it a valid reason for retiring from the work of the church?

What does our text say? "Even in old age they will still produce fruit; they will remain vital and green."

No pulling over and parking here!

This passage certainly suggests there's a place of service for older folks in work for God. They're able to **"bear fruit"** and remain "fresh and flourishing", despite their advancing age. **God can and does use the elderly.**

Moses and Aaron were 80 and 83.

Remember old Caleb who at 85 said, *"Give me another mountain to conquer."* Daniel was well over eighty when he served as one of three governors over the kingdom of Babylon - Dan 6:1-3

Zacharias and Elizabeth were the parents of John the Baptist.

They were "both well advanced in years" - Luke 1:7 yet he was serving in the temple, and she gave birth to John!

Simeon And Anna were two elderly people who bore witness to the Christ child when Jesus was presented to the temple to be circumcised - Luke 2:25-38.

Anna herself was at least 84, and had been serving God "with fasting and prayers night and day"

Paul refers to himself as Paul the Aged... in Philemon 9

There's always a need for service the elderly can provide.

Here are some examples:

Hospitality and benevolence - many older folks are financially secure, able to do what many younger families cannot

Edification and evangelism - with so much time on their hands, why not use it to study with others?

Send cards, make phone calls

Spend time in prayer

Support God's work at home and abroad if the Lord has blessed you financially

Recount God's mighty works to the next generation.

Psalm 78:1-8. *"We will not hide these truths from our children; we will tell the next generation about the glorious deeds of the Lord, about his power and his mighty wonders."* — Joel 1:3

What greater blessing can there be than parents and grandparents sharing faith stories with their children and grandchildren and younger generations.

Leave a legacy of faith that helps others see how God has worked in your life. This can be through storytelling, written reflections, or consistent example.

We see a great example of this when Paul writes to Timothy, *"I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also."*

For this reason, I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord."

Our job is to move forward and trust that God, in His marvellous grace, will provide for those tasks. He will give us the words to say and the courage we need.

It's not the easiest thing to start a conversation with someone about their relationship with Christ.

In 2 Corinthians Paul tells us that he had learned a very valuable lesson. He learned that God's grace was sufficient for him.

He discovered that when he felt the weakest and the most inadequate but still tried to do what was right, those were the very times he was actually the strongest.

In those times He had to depend more fully on God's strength.

Multitudes of Christian workers testify how completely unequipped they feel as they meet people in crisis situations. **Preachers often walk into the pulpit and wonder what God could possibly do through them.**

Yet in those times, they discover a supernatural strength.

The words seem to come and people are blessed. The point is: it's His strength that holds us up.

The key to truly flourishing where we've been planted is to remember that our job is not to promote ourselves . . . it's to seek in all circumstances to promote God's glory.

God is honoured more when we serve Him in the shadows than when we serve Him in the crowds. **What we do when no one else is looking is the true test of character and of faith.**

The bottom line is this: the true measure of faithfulness will not be what people say about us; **the true measure of faithfulness will be how others view God because of us.**

It doesn't matter if no one knows our name as long as they see Jesus in us. It doesn't matter if we get credit for our work in this world. **What matters is that God's glory is promoted.**

So here's the challenge this week. Take a peek at your life. Ask yourself, **"How can I serve God in my present position?"**

Is there more I can do? Is there a new mountain for me to conquer? Is there someone I need to talk to about eternity?

Don't limit yourself to only big things; look also for little ways where you can show faithfulness.

Look for ways you can plant a seed of grace. Look for ways you can honour the Lord.

And once you've identified what you can do: Take a step of faith, trust His wisdom and grace, and then get to work.

The Bible has much to say to us about running the race of life. We're told to keep running until we get to the finish line. Our job is to continue to serve Him, grow in Him, and worship Him until our dying breath!

There's no such thing as a retirement age from our Christian life. **There is only a graduation day!**

Our job is to continue to do our best in the classroom of life until that day when God says we have finished the course and we have kept the faith.

That and that only will be our graduation day. **Quote Verses 12-14.**

The key to making this passage a reality in our lives is found in 10 essential attitudes.

Keep Learning. When we cease to learn, we stop growing because a lazy brain is an aging brain. So much has changed over the course of the years. **As technology advances, we must continually learn skills our parents and grandparents never had to know.** But the most important pursuits in life are learning the Word of God and memorizing Scripture.

Keep Loving. The first and foremost commandment is to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, and might (Deuteronomy 6:5). And Jesus taught and modeled love for one another as well. God created us to love Him and others.

Keep Laughing. Laughter affects every part of our body, including our nervous system, and sets us free from discontentment and grumbling. Of all the people in the world, Christians should be the happiest because we have the joy of the Lord within us and the greatest reasons to be grateful.

Keep Leaving. To stay youthful and productive, we must leave yesterday's cares and problems behind us instead of dragging them with us into the next day. Hanging on to past hurts, disappointments, and discouragements negatively affects our bodies, minds, and emotions.

Keep Longing. As we get older, we must keep dreaming about the future. Instead of looking at all the things we can't do, we should concentrate on what we can accomplish and look forward to what awaits us in the future.

Keep Looking Ahead. We should plan for tomorrow even if we don't think we have many active years left. Looking forward to what God would have us do and pursuing activities we enjoy energizes us to continue being useful and productive.

Keep Looking Your Best. There's something about looking and doing our best that stimulates and encourages us to keep going.

Keep Labouring. Although we may not be able to do what we once did, retirement from a career is not a time to cease working. In the Christian life there is no retirement because we can still bear spiritual fruit and make a difference in people's lives until the day we die.

Keep Leaning on the Lord. Each day should be lived in dependence upon and trust in God. He's the one we rely upon for wisdom, direction, and provision. There is no need to fret when we lean on the Lord in prayer. We can trust Him with all our concerns, knowing that He is always present and faithful.

Keep Listening. The most important thing we can do is listen to the Lord. Though we cannot hear Him audibly, He speaks to us in our hearts through His Word and His Spirit. As we open the Scripture and pray for guidance and wisdom, He'll answer us. He will help us make wise decisions, guide us into the right relationships, empower us to avoid temptations, and convict us when we sin.