

- Jill McCloghry was an Australian singer who was excited about having her first baby.
- Then, when she was about six months pregnant, she went into unexpected labor.
- She shortly had a baby boy she and her husband named Max who was not even 24 weeks old.
- When interviewed, she said, “He was really little. But we had him and he was alive, and he was in the neonatal ICU where they were taking care of him. And we basically spent a full day with him and we believed and we prayed that he would be okay, but we trusted that God was in control. And that night he died of, you know, just being too little basically.”
- Jill was devastated. How would you respond?
- We are in a teaching series called “The Words we Sing”
- In the course of this month we are diving into the lyrics of 5 songs we regularly sing.
- The purpose of this series is to increase our revelation of who God is and so help us have an encounter with Jesus through our time of singing. It is really easy to listen or sing the same melody such that it doesn’t land anywhere but becomes routine.
- I would encourage you to go back and listen to the last two weeks as we examined two different songs, “Fullness” and “Do It Again” during these last two weeks.
- Many of you can or have been able to identify with Jill. How have you responded?
- The song this week is “Desert Song” by Hillsong.
- It is not to be confused with the “Dessert” Song which is a dance song done by Dawin
- I’m going to read the lyrics again to you. It’s very familiar to most of us, but take a note of what you think the main idea of the song is.

***This is my prayer in the desert**
When all that's within me feels dry
This is my prayer and my hunger in me
My God is the God who provides*

***And this is my prayer in my battle**
When triumph is still on its way
I am a conqueror and co-heir with Christ
So firm on His promise I'll stand*

***And this is my prayer in the fire**
In weakness or trial or pain
There is a faith proved
Of more worth than gold
So refine me Lord through the flames
I will bring praise, I will bring praise
No weapon formed against me shall remain
I will rejoice, I will declare
God is my victory and He is here*

*All of my life
In every season
You are still God
I have a reason to sing
I have a reason to worship*

***And this is my prayer in the harvest**
When favor and providence flow
I know I'm filled to be emptied again
This seed I've received I will sow*

- What do you think is the main idea? There are four verses that all begin the same way.
- “This is my prayer in the desert”
- “This is my prayer in the fire”
- “This is my prayer in the battle”
- “This is my prayer in the harvest”
- What ties them all together is the chorus and bridge.
*All of my life
In every season
You are still God
I have a reason to sing
I have a reason to worship*

- In every season of life that we are going through, can worship.
- We have reason to worship him, even when everything inside might cry out differently.
- Worship is not simply singing a song and feeling like those words are true.
- Worship is to ascribe value to something, but not just by saying, "They are awesome."
- Worship, the way God lays it out, is orienting our actions, attitudes and life towards someone or something. That someone or something takes priority for us. It is acting as though that someone or something is what is truly important.
- So what is this song saying?
- That in every season, in every situation, I can live in my actions and attitudes as though God is good, he is worth following and worth praising.
- **I CAN WORSHIP AT EVERY STAGE IN LIFE.**
- In unpacking this song, my mind went back to a very small little book in the Old Testament. It is a 3 chapter book written by someone called Habakkuk. When you read it, it seems a little difficult to understand and filled with imagery that is hard to get in our culture, but the conclusion of the book sums up this entire song.
- The country and nation of Israel is hundreds of years old. They started well but went downhill for a long time. People did what they wanted, when they wanted and their entire focus was themselves.
- There was this trend of having the occasional good king who tried to turn the people back towards God, but they would be followed usually by a number of evil kings who promoted their own agenda.
- When Habakkuk wrote, certain things were going on.
- In Israel, they had just come from a good king (Josiah) who had tried to promote spiritual reform (which worked on the surface) to a bad king who did not care at all.
- The nation was corrupt. Justice was not served. People were all about themselves. Morals were relative and God and worship had little influence in the culture. People were taken advantage of, and there was no safety. The people sinned at will and no one cared.
- On the world stage, the Assyrian kingdom had been or was just on the verge of being defeated by the new rising power, Babylon. Babylon, through a series of political and military maneuvers, would conquer the once powerful Assyrian empire, the Egyptian empire, and was the new bully and power on the world stage. And they were not nice people. They were powerful and cruel.
- Habakkuk is a record of a conversation between him and God. He asks God why he is not punishing the people of Israel for their sin. He is appalled at the condition of the country and wonders why God doesn't appear to be doing anything.
- God responds by sharing with Habakkuk that he is, in fact, going to be bringing punishment. The problem is that it is going to come in the form of the Babylonian empire. These evil and cruel people were going to be coming in to destroy, kill, torture and deport Israel and wreck them as a nation.
- This all came true within 15 years of Habakkuk's writings.
- Habakkuk was appalled at this. He wanted God to judge, but not through people who were more wicked than the Israelite people. He did not get it.
- So God showed Habakkuk what he was really like. How he had dealt with Israel and the nations. How powerful he was. How justice was under his control. That despite the apparent unfairness of it all, he had a plan and he was going to execute it.
- After this amazing discourse, Habakkuk finishes his entire writing with this statement. It is just as relevant in our nation today and in our own lives as it was 2,500 years ago.

Habakkuk 3:16 I heard and my heart pounded, my lips quivered at the sound; decay crept into my bones, and my legs trembled. Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come on the nation invading us. 17 Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, 18 yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. 19 The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to tread on the heights.

- This is not just positive thinking where he shut out the idea of the barren fig tree and the empty cattle stalls. Instead, he saw those problems for what they were and remembered that God was greater than them all.
- With desolate circumstances like he just described, Habakkuk could find no joy in the fig tree or in the vines or in the fields or flock; yet God was unchanged. He could still rejoice in the LORD, because He is unchanging.
- He knew that this God of majesty and power is not diminished because man faces difficult trials. Sometimes we think, "If God is so great and powerful, how come I am going through a hard time?" Habakkuk knew this was the wrong question and the wrong attitude. Instead, he said: "I know you are strong and mighty, and if we are in desolate circumstances it is because we deserve it. I will praise You still, and even rejoice in You."
- He echoed the thoughts of king David:

Psalms 46:1 God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, 3 though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.

This is the heartfelt trust, following and praise of God in the midst of whatever happens.

- Have you ever met people like this? (They irritate me because I want that and they honestly feel like they are faking)
- What Habakkuk realizes and writes that was true then and is true today is that **I CAN WORSHIP AT EVERY STAGE IN LIFE.**

I. Desert: I worship by acting in trust.

*This is my prayer in the desert
When all that's within me feels dry
This is my prayer and my hunger in me
My God is the God who provides.*

- The desert is when things are dry. It feels like nothing is happening.
- Nothing fills us up. Life is drudgery. This is when we are living the dull routine.
- We want move. We desire joy and life. Those around us seem to have it and it is noticeably absent in our own lives. Nothing seems to fill us. This is an incredibly frustrating place to be.
- The greatest temptation in the deserts of our life is to move away from God. To take control. To try and fill that desert space with other things or try to get through it any way we can.
- It's where our trust takes a hit.
- To Habakkuk it seemed like God was absent. He wasn't showing up. God responded by showing him his record of involvement and provision for the nation of Israel.

Habakkuk 3:16 I heard and my heart pounded, my lips quivered at the sound; decay crept into my bones, and my legs trembled. Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come on the nation invading us.

- When we find ourselves here, we worship God because he has proven his faithfulness in the past. We saw this last week. He can be trusted. He has not abandoned you.

- **I CAN WORSHIP AT EVERY STAGE IN LIFE.** When you are in those desert spaces, you worship by acting in trust. Don't take over control. Let him set the agenda. Continue to live the same as you would if he felt fully present.

II. Fire: I worship by embracing his work in me.

*And this is my prayer in the fire
In weakness or trial or pain
There is a faith proved
Of more worth than gold
So refine me Lord through the flames.*

- For Habakkuk, the idea that the results of Israel's sin would result in famine, desolation and suffering was difficult to accept. God was going to be refining Israel and calling them back to be a holy people. It was going to be a very difficult time.
- The fire is when the pains and problems of this life tends to overwhelm. We encounter sickness or pain. These things try our patience. We want to move past them. We hate feeling this way.
- Sometimes it is a result of our own decisions. Sometimes it is external circumstances. Sometimes it is simply living in a world that is not like it is supposed to be.
- Peter, a disciple of Jesus who faced all kinds of trials
1 Peter 1:6 In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.
- We worship by embracing God's work in us through the fire.
- *"Suffering is not an interruption in the story of your life. Suffering is a powerful chapter in the story of your life."* (John Stumbo, President C&MA)
Habakkuk 3:17 Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, 18 yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior.
- We are not worshipping by simply going through suffering. We worship by how we respond to God in the face of suffering. We respond by remembering that God is bigger and what he is doing in me has tremendous value.
- You worship because he is not against you – he is for you. Every time you think that God has something out for you or has it in for you, this is a lie from our enemy. He is making you more fully into what he designed us to be.
- **I CAN WORSHIP AT EVERY STAGE IN LIFE.** Remember this truth: You will never be able to trust God in difficult, painful circumstances in heaven. We only have this life to respond in faith to the fires we face.

III. Battle: We worship by living from our identity.

*And this is my prayer in my battle
When triumph is still on its way
I am a conqueror and co-heir with Christ
So firm on His promise I'll stand.*

- God assured Habakkuk that despite the impending doom, it was not the end of the battle. Babylon would be punished. Israel was still God's chosen nation.
- Sometimes it feels like we are fighting for all we are worth. We are praying for things that are not happening. We are faced with opposition.

- We find ourselves under a barrage of things or people that want to beat us down or make us give up. We find ourselves questioning ourselves, questioning God. Our self talk goes sideways.
- We can worship because he has made our identity firm and has promised us victory.
Romans 8:37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- You might be battling but you are doing this with doubt or worry. He has adopted us into his family. We are his. He has equipped us with his armor and his weapons. He has already promised us victory. Even when the circumstances are messed up, that can't separate us from him.
- **I CAN WORSHIP AT EVERY STAGE IN LIFE.** When I am in the battle I worship by believing that I am valued, loved, amazing, powerful and living like this is true.

IV. Harvest: I worship by passing on God's blessing.

*And this is my prayer in the harvest
When favor and providence flow
I know I'm filled to be emptied again
This seed I've received I will sow.*

- One of the reasons God was going to bring judgment on Israel was because they forgot the purpose for which God chose them. To be an example to their world of who God is. Do demonstrate how to live in freedom by following his life and ways.
- When we are in a season of harvest, this is when the world is going right. God is at work. We feel it. We know it. He is active and we can feel him pouring out his life into us. We are growing and learning. We have more joy than we've had in a while.
- When this happens, we are supposed to be giving it away.
- If you are in a season of harvest, pour it out. Bless others. In your words. With you money. By your actions. Lift others up. You can say like Habakkuk:
19 The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to tread on the heights.
- **I CAN WORSHIP AT EVERY STAGE IN LIFE.**
- It might not feel like it, but you can, and should, worship.
- God is inviting us to place our actions and life at his feet and live his way.
- Are you in the desert? Worship God by living and acting from a trust in him.
- Are you in the fire? Worship by embracing what he is doing in you and cooperate without fear.
- Are you in a battle? Worship by living from your identity which is totally set.
- Are you in a time of harvest? Worship him by passing it on to others.
- Do you remember Jill McCloghry, the Australian singer. She was a singer with Hillsong. She lost her baby the week before they were going to be performing and then recording this song for the first time.
- "I actually remember sitting in a hospital right after everything happened and knowing that I needed to sing, that I needed to still do what I know I'm supposed to be doing and that I felt like that was just a victory for us. Right now it's just choosing to worship all the time; that's what it is for me cause I don't...I don't always feel like it. Sometimes I don't feel like singing to God, but I know that my circumstance in the season doesn't change and that God is still God. It doesn't change what God's called me to be or what He's called me to do. He's still

on the throne in heaven and He still rules, and He still bigger than everything that I'm facing."

- No matter where you are, you can worship.
- He is still God. He can still be trusted. He has still set your identity. He is for you.