

NATIONAL COMMUNITY CHURCH

May 03, 2020

The Valley of Weeping

Joel Schmidgall

Well, recently, we got to walk with a family that's very close to us through a difficult season in their life. And they had taken one of their children for a routine doctor's examination and abruptly ended up in the ICU. And they found out diagnosis of type one diabetes, and then learned about a state of serious danger that she was in and something called ketoacidosis. And they spent a number of days in the hospital just trying to get this thing under control. And they also spent that time understanding and thinking through the implications of a lifelong diagnosis and the managing of that that was to come. Well, over the next number of weeks, they began to lean in and figure out what they need to do. They made lifestyle changes; they made career changes all to be able to help their child and between the highs and the lows emotionally, and the tiredness, the lack of sleep, and just everything that they had to do to manage the situation, it was just this huge burden and they were just trying to survive in this season. And that's about when the dad called me. And he called and he just shared the burdens. And he said, "Listen, I'm just on empty, I got nothing left." And then he said this, he said, "I just need a word." And he stopped.

And I realized, okay, there's a little bit pressure on me right now. His emotional well being depends on what I say right here in this moment. So don't blow it, Joel. Like that's what I'm feeling inside. Right? And I had read Psalm 84 that morning, and it's our text today. And so I said, "Let me tell you about a place called Baka".

We want to read our text, it's verses five through seven out of Psalm 84. It says this, <sup>5</sup>"Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage. <sup>6</sup>As they pass through the Valley of Baka, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools. <sup>7</sup>They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion." Baka was a place that you had to pass through on your way to Jerusalem. And many scholars believe the word Baka gets its name from the balsam tree which would grow in these arid and these dry places. So you're going through a desert place. It's a rough place on any traveler that comes through it. In fact, the word Baka in Hebrew it means weeping or tear. So this is a rough journey, a rough place that you're journeying through.

Now, go back to Deuteronomy chapter 16. And we see this call for every Jew to pilgrim three times a year back to Jerusalem. And you wouldn't just pilgrim alone it was your whole family, your whole crew coming with you. And so you giddy up and you're not hopping on the metro. Right? You can't call up Uber. You can't get Uber to come pick you up. No, you're taking the whole crew and parents we know to get our crew just five minutes away to the grocery store is a chore. When I'm going on a bike ride with my kids it's like I gotta pack water. I got to pack snacks. I got to pack a sweater, coat, games, a shoe. I mean, it's ridiculous everything I'm throwing in just for this short... They're going on this pilgrimage, where you're taking the whole crew on foot, on camel, and it's tiring. It wears you down and the emotion

that's in it and involved and you're worn down and you have nothing left. You're running on empty when you get to Baka, when you then get to a desert place.

And here's the thing in Scripture names always describe a place. So you've got Jehovah Raha, he is God our healer because he healed in that place. You've got Jehovah Nissi, God our banner because he brought victory over here in this place. There's a reason that this place is called weeping. Because they are already at a place of brokenness when finally then they get to Baka we're still not there into the desert place, into the dry place. You are overwhelmed. You are frustrated in Baka. You are disappointed. You are sad. You are broke. You have lost a job. You are estranged from a family member. You haven't gotten to see your friend. You are hopeless. You are hurting. Come on, I'm talking to somebody today. What is your Baka? If you're on our online experience, you know what hop on the chat; write in what is your Baka? What is that painful place that you have gone through, that you are going through right now?

And here's the thing. None of us want to go to Baka but all of us want to go to Zion. All of us want to get to Jerusalem. We want to get to the Holy City. We want to get to that holy place of refuge where there is joy, and there is peace and there is understanding and there is goodness. But let me give you a geographical truth today. To get to Zion you got to go through Baka. Let me give you a vertical truth today. To get to the mountaintop you got to go through the valley. Let me give you a spiritual truth today. To get to that place of praise you got to go through a place of pain. And none of us like this and we don't want to hear this word right here but this is the triple truth for us today. Listen to this, you will go through Baka. You have to go through Baka. And some of you right now, you are in Baka. You're trying to find your way. And you're looking ahead and you're hoping ahead but to get to that place of hope sometimes it takes being broken down and going through a breaking in your own life. Nowhere in the Scripture is there a story where disciple pursues God's purpose and the next verse it's just easy, it's just blam. 'Okay. Well, I never knew it'd be that easy.' No, it's always the opposite, isn't it. We hear and we get a sense of purpose from God but it takes a lot longer than I expected. Or it's a lot harder than what I thought or it's disappointing, or it's frustrating or it's difficult. But can I just say something to you today? Can I preach something over you today? Can I prophesy over your house, over you, over you listening on your bike, listening in your car, wherever you are, can I prophesy that God can use this season right now that he can use it more than any other season? There is story after painful story in the Scripture of people who go through their Baka and yet they find the grace of God. They find encouragement in the Spirit; they find growth like they never have before.

So the question is this. How do we get through Baka? I want to talk about three things today as we unpack this Scripture, three ways that we get through Baka.

And the first is this; to strengthen yourself in the Lord. Psalm 84; verse five it says, "*Blessed are those whose strength is in you.*" One of the first songs written in all of Scripture is Moses, he pens this song out in the wilderness and then they sing it together and it's found in Exodus chapter 16. And here's the

beginning of the song. It says, 'The Lord is my strength. He is my defense and he has become my salvation.' This is a song that other songs in the Scripture take its theology from. It's this beautiful song that we receive. Isaiah 40:31 says, *"But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up on wings like eagles; they shall run and not grow weary; they shall walk and not faint."* This word wait it means to attach oneself or to tie oneself unto the Lord; to bind yourself unto the Lord. And so in a Middle Eastern vineyard, you find grape vines that are bound to stakes because the vine is not strong enough to hold itself up. But when the vine falls down on the ground, it's gonna die off it's not gonna grow fruit and so they're bound to stakes. And when they are picked up, when they are pulled up, come on somebody, are you with me today? You know where I'm going with this, when they are pulled up, when they are bound to the trellis above it. When they are lifted up, they find a place of health and of growth, regardless of the elements all around us. Listen, you are the vine. He is the branches. You are the vine. He is the support. You are the vine. He is your strength when we put our faith in Him.

Listen, if you're here today, and you've never put your faith in Christ, I want to just make that invitation to you today. Maybe God's compelling your heart, and you need to take a step out and you need to attach yourself unto the Lord. You need to bind yourself unto to Him and He will give you strength. If that's you click on that live prayer button today. We'd love to talk with you today. But for all of us how are we binding ourselves unto God? When we bind ourselves to him he strengthens our very soul.

Have you ever looked back on a challenging season and you wonder how you ever got through it, right? How did I come through all that? And when you go through a Baka season, you're bruised up. You got punished a little bit, didn't you? And it hurts and that you are humbled and you got down low, but we know that in our weakness, the Scripture says, I am made strong. That's when he shows up as our strength. Psalm 121, *"I lift my eyes up to the up the mountain top, where is my help come from? My help, it comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth."* Are you thankful today that our help it doesn't come from our employment? It doesn't come from our employer. It doesn't come from our roommates. It doesn't come from our boss. Our help does not come from our government. Our help it comes from the Lord. And so we find our strength in him.

Number two. Strengthen yourself in the Lord number one. Number two know your destination. Verse five; *"Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage."* In other words, you have to remind yourself where you're going. You have to know what lies ahead. You're on this journey and you're in a rough place. It's a place that has no mercy on you. It is relentless in pushing you down, and you are overwhelmed and your relationships have blown up and your finances have dried up and your career has stacked up not what it should be and you're in a desert and you're in a dry place. But realize this today, you've got to realize that this place is not what I'm going to but it's what I'm going through. I am transient. I am a pilgrim on my way, somewhere else. I am not building a house in Baka. No, I might put a tent up but I'm continuing to move and I'm going to learn what God has for me in this place. I'm going to learn that right here, but I'm going to know that I'm going elsewhere. And when the

enemy comes in, and he says, "Listen, this is your destiny." You say, "No, this is not my destiny. My final destination is somewhere else and I'm going to keep headed in that direction."

Our quarantine dinner question the other night was, "If you could go anywhere right now, where would you go?" And the kids were having fun with it. And we heard I'd go to my friend's house. We heard I'd go to the beach. I'd go to California. For the record, I was inspired, I said Fogo de Chão. That's where I want to go. Come on, who's with me 13 cuts of meat, a parade of meats. And we were talking about this but I wonder what your there is? Is it in the embrace of a loved one? Is it to pay respects to somebody? Is it just routine? But what's your there?

We see a holy there in Psalm chapter 84. This Psalm was written to the Sons of Korah. And they're the Levitical choir, they're descendants of Korah, and they would use this Psalm to sing on the pilgrimage on the way to Jerusalem. And listen to what the beginning of our Psalm says today in verse one, *"How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord Almighty! <sup>2</sup>My soul yearns; it even faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. <sup>4</sup>Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you."* God's people are saying, "Listen, we want to be over there and we're going there but we know we're not there yet. We're here. But the difference between here and there is a lot of tough stuff. But listen, we know God is there and he's drawing us from here to there. It's having the final destination in our mind.

The theory of personality is a foundational pursuit in psychology. How does personality develop what motivates human behavior? Freud's work focused on early childhood. So those experiences in your very early years developed your behavior or those influences in the first couple of years they developed your personality. Now, another individual came along named Carl Jung, and he agreed with Freud and he understood the value of the early years in developing who you are but he added addition to this. He also added value to that which lied ahead. In other words, Carl Jung had this idea that human behavior is not just being pushed by the past but it's being pulled by the future. That human nature is purposeful. That purpose out ahead, it actually draws us out.

And we talk about this idea in our home more recently in parenting. We talked about the difference between push parenting and pull parenting. And if I'm honest, I tend to push parent, right, okay. So you need to give instructions on what needs to be done, then I come behind and check it. And there's a consequence if you didn't do it. And I think Nina is a little better at pull parenting, and drawing and the word educate, you know, it means to draw out and so it's more of an invitation, instead of a pushing. Now, if you have a strong willed child in your home, you know, if you push parent, you guarantee yourself a whole lot of battles, don't you? And even if you win some of those battles, it feels like you lost, doesn't it? Now, the idea of pull parenting is to cast a vision for what is ahead. It's to try to attach the motivation for what is out here to draw your child towards that. So for example, instead of saying, "Okay, you need to go out to the car now". It's saying, 'Okay, I'm going out to the car. Come on, follow me in a minute, okay. And I want to hear more about that story that you were telling me about.'" Or

maybe it's instead of push parenting is saying, "Now you need to get your homework done and if you don't, you're gonna get discipline." Instead of saying that it's pull parenting would be saying, "Listen, if you get your homework done now, you can actually have an extra 15 minutes of Lego time. You can do this." You see, there's just a little difference, and it's attaching goals and motivation and purpose. Its understanding we've got to know when we're in Baka we have to know what is out ahead what our destination is to come.

So, strengthen yourself in the Lord. Know your destination and number three, dig a well. Verse six says, "As they pass through the Valley of Baka, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools." The people of God, they get to Baka and they're tired. They're physically exhausted. They have completely exerted themselves and they are desperately thirsty. In our Baka we're thirsty. We're thirsty for opportunity. We're thirsty for growth, we're thirsty for help, we're thirsty for support. We're thirsty we are in need and we have this thirst but here's the thing about thirst. When you're thirsty it helps you to go and helps you to grow. So when we're in Baka in this place, listen, we can sit back and sulk or we can stand up and do what the scripture calls to. It says to dig a well, to make springs out of this place. You can sit back or you can stand up and begin to dig and begin to drive and go towards what God has for us and realize that the Holy Spirit can come and bring about creativity in you to attack that problem, that issue from a different angle, from a different way and to come about it and to see a problem solved in a new way. Because you're stepping out when you dig God pours. It's a beautiful thing. He shows up when we act. He sees our faith and he bolsters that with coming behind us.

Some of us, we will pass through the valley of weeping and we will be changed by it and that's a good thing. And then some of us will pass through the valley of weeping and we will change it. That's what digging a well is. It's literally changing the landscape all around you. To dig a well it seems so counterintuitive when you're at your lowest place you're telling me I gotta give? Yes. When you give you grow, right? Push and God teaches us in this season, he teaches us how to give out of our lack, how to love the unlovable, how to give some heaven to somebody who's acting like hell, right; how to pour out, how to sow seeds, in those that God has placed in our path. We say God, I need a miracle. God says pick up a shovel. Make a desert, a garden. Come on; make a dry place a spring. And when you do that, when you pick... Like I said when you do God shows up and he pours. It says that the autumn rains came and it filled up like pools. The word pool can also be translated as blessing. So in Baka God, when you dig a well God pours out blessing, he pours out his presence. He pours out joy. He pours out goodness. He can pour out peace right in the middle of Baka he can give you that joy.

Verse seven says that, "*We go from strength to strength.*" The strength you got in Baka digging wells, fighting fights, gaining a mentality, that strength it bolsters you and the strain developed strength in you doesn't it? It builds you up and then you all of a sudden realize what I just went through. Now what I go through now it's nothing 10 years ago, it would have crushed me but now I have been through Baka and I know God is with me. I know God, he is my strength and we had no idea that God has been setting us up for what is to come. You say what's to come? Exceedingly and abundantly more than we can ask or

imagine according to what? According to his strength, his power that is at work within every single one of us. You fight through Baka and you will come out with a testimony.

I started the sermon by talking about one family who was journeying through Baka. And they were pressing in and they're still in a place of tiredness and difficulty. But you know what they have found strength they have found a new normal, and they have found a place of faith. And so I asked them, "What would you say to that person in Baka right now?" So I want to read that. I want to invite our team to come forward our worship team and I want to share what they shared with me. They said this, they said, "In the early days I was devastated. My heart was broken in a million pieces to see a life of challenges that lay ahead. I didn't have anything to give, I felt broken. But I realized we have this greater opportunity that goes beyond our feelings. If I could, if I could not have this happen, I would but there are already things that my child has gained from this that she wouldn't have otherwise. Our nuclear family is so much stronger and closer from it. Fear will come to your doorstep but every fear is a call to prayer, to recenter yourself in Christ, when your world is turned upside down, and you feel stuck in the situation forever. But you've got to remember this season will change things will turn. When that feeling like you're never going to escape comes you've got to talk back to it. Take every thought captive and live out a Christ centered narrative which is that all things we experience can be redemptive."

Psalm 84:7, *"They go from strength to strength till each appears before God in Zion."* Notice each one gets there - each. It might be hard but we're gonna get there. It might be challenging, but family, we're gonna get there. You might feel overwhelmed but I'm gonna preach to you today - You're gonna get there. You might feel like you got nothing left, like you're done, like it's over. But we're gonna get there family, you might have tears and you're awake, and you can't emotionally take anymore. But I'm telling you today when you are weak, he is strong. And I'm telling you when the weeping comes and endures for a night, his joy it comes in the morning. We are gonna get there. In Jesus name we pray, amen.