

Title: This is Why I'm Choosing to Be Grateful

Text: Matt 7:24-29

Date: Nov 22, 2020 at FBCW

INTRO. As we begin to reflect upon this bizarre year → we have a choice to make:

We can choose to be cynical, and think of what we've lost – OR –
We can choose to be grateful, and to remember God's faithfulness.

2020 personal observations:

I would not have chosen this to be my first full year at FBCW without Pastor JH.

I grieve that my children left their former school without any real goodbyes to their friends.

I grieve that each of my children have had birthdays – but not really parties or celebrations.

I grieve that my children have not had Sunday School, Children's Church, Kids Choir, VBS, or an AWANAs experience this past year.

I grieve that an entire year of their formal spiritual development as children has been taken away...

- Sure I hurt over this as a pastor.
- But today I grieve it as a daddy.

I grieve that I've done both weddings and funerals during this Covid-19 season...and none of them were normal or easy.

I grieve every single call (prayer request) about:

- Job loss...depression...loneliness...isolation...anxiety...

But this is what I'm thankful for:

I'm thankful for the way this church has loved/embraced our family.

- Older people loved me and prayed for me...
- I couldn't imagine pastoring this church...in a year like 2020, without your prayers.

Early on, I joked – really unfortunate if Pastor JH didn't build a church that can survive a global pandemic...

- Totally teasing, "Hey, if FBCW doesn't make it...don't blame me...blame the pandemic!"

But this statement today is not a joke at all. I'm being totally serious. I'm thankful for a church that in the midst of this pandemic has revealed who she truly is.

- In crisis...we don't become who we wish we were. (It is revealed who we truly are.)

FBCW continues to give...serve...remain open...worshiping...reaching...loving...

(Consider community stats here.)

I'm thankful that we have two great options.

For many...you've said – we just can't worship “well” online – and you've needed the live, in person experience.

- I'm thrilled you are here...and I'm thrilled we have been open since mid-June for you.

For many...you've said – for very legitimate reasons – you are not able to return in person yet.

- You're immunocompromised, or you have an underlying health condition, or you are caring for someone elderly or sick.
- We are thrilled to have you as part of our online family.
- You are hanging in there with us and watching each week online (and giving and supporting us) – wow – I'm so glad we are able to do this.

I'm thankful for our church Tech/Media team – you guys are rockstars, thank you!

I'm thankful for Michael from Michigan...who started watching online.

I'm thankful for two precious boys...who's family decided to visit FBCW for our Deaf Connect ministry...

- Their church was not able to offer ASL during this time.
- They started watching with us (Tytus, etc) and they were saved/baptized!

I'm thankful for the precious young lady who started attending The Well – she comes from a Muslim family → but she was recently saved and baptized here.

I'm thankful for parents and baby dedications – and last week we had 21 families participate with us.

I'm thankful for our faithful, servant-hearted deacons. Shannon Jones leads a group of 40 deacons.

- Nearly half of them are first time serving deacons...and many are young.

Covid couldn't stop the Church this year...Jesus has had a great plan all along!

I'm thankful for Doctors...Nurses...Grocery Stores...First Responders...Truck Drivers...School teachers...

Pastor Jeremy – why are you telling us all of this. Here's why → because 2020 has been unprecedented and unpredictable.

- We can choose to be cynical! OR

- We can choose to be grateful.

Here's why I'm grateful → I know the rock I'm standing upon...

(ILLUS) Elderly lady (Betty) from the early days of Cross Point.

- Her husband died.
- She had health problems and lived on a modest, fixed income.
- She was caring for her adult daughter with special needs.

Sometimes I tremble on the rock...but praise God...the rock never trembles under me.

ILLUS: I recall going as a seminary student for NOBTS to the NAMB offices in Alpharetta – to help field emergency crisis calls in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

- The stories of people who lost so much – emotionally devastating.
- But yet – the Katrina disaster wasn't really personal for me.
- I was able to leave the office that night and go back to my home. My home wasn't affected by the hurricane.

FACT. Real, personal storms prove –

Rom 5:3-4, *And not only that, but we also boast in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope.*

2 Cor 4:16, *Therefore we do not give up. Even though our outer person is being destroyed, our inner person is being renewed day by day.*

FACT. Storms have a unique way of bringing about the “good” that could only happen in view of the storm:

- Increased prayer.
- Deep, trustworthy relationships.
- Personal knowledge of the Word.

Matthew 7:24 – “*Therefore*” = all of the Sermon on the Mount.

- A. Foolish and wise man experience the same exact storm.
 - a. John 9, the disciples question Jesus about the blind man's condition.

- B. Storms are sure.
 - a. Noah, Jonah, Disciples, Paul, etc. All go through storms.
 - b. No storm is bigger than the Master!

- C. Storms make us act on Jesus' teaching – we must build correctly.
- D. There will be no storms in heaven.
 - a. Phil 3:20-21, *Our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly wait for a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform the body of our humble condition into the likeness of his glorious body, by the power that enables him to subject everything to himself.*

There are Three Types of Storms in this text:

First, the rains come from above (they come down). These are the types of storms that God sovereignly permits in our life. I think of Job 23:10 and Romans 8:28.

We must filter these storms through: God loves us. God desires what is best for us. God is being glorified in us.

Second, the floodwaters can come from beneath (they rise up). These are the types of storms that the devil causes in our life.

FACT. God loves us, but Satan hates us.

John 10:10; 1 Peter 5:8; James 4:7; Ephesians 6:10-11

Third, the winds howl around us (these can be our own fault). We may not want to admit this, but we can cause storms by the unwise personal choices we make.

- IRS investigation...speeding ticket...overeating...outbursts of anger.

We might understand it this way:

The **Storms** – everyone has to deal with storms.

The **Stone** – the stone here is the righteous truth of Christ. (On Christ the solid rock I stand...)

The **Sand** – the foolish person builds here...there will be great destruction.

We can be cynical about the storms...or we can be grateful about our rock, Jesus Christ!

CONCL. Storms have a way of revealing how well your house (life) is built.