

What Christians Can Learn from Blackberries

Don Ruhl • Savage Street, Grants Pass, Oregon • August 30, In the year of our Lord, 2015
Song Leader and Song Suggestions: Larry Amberg – Songs about creation or God or both

Prelude:

I. Blackberries surround our property.

II. Picking them brought spiritual thoughts to Kerri.

Persuasion:

I. Be Patient

A. We start getting a couple of berries around the Fourth of July, but

1. still several weeks have to pass before the harvest truly comes on.

B. It takes hours to harvest them, because

1. you have to dodge the thorns.

2. Once in Klamath Falls, a green snake was on a cane and

a) it matched the leaves perfectly and

b) I reached my hand in right along the snake

(1) without realizing it

(2) until I pulled my hand out.

3. Thanks, grandpa Adam, for the thorns!

4. Have I added any thorns to my life or someone else's life?

C. James 5 shows the necessity of patience.

1. Creation does not rush, because

2. the Creator does not rush.

a) Why then should we rush?

b) Let us learn from the farmer who learns from creation,

7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. 8 You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand

(Jam 5.7–8).

II. Be Content

- A. Greed is not worth it.
- B. The best berries always seem to be beyond reach.
 - 1. If only you had longer arms.
 - 2. Or a tool
 - a) Yet, all you often have to do is look under a leaf and find a clump.
 - b) Or just taking a step
 - (1) reveals berries you could not see from the position you were in
 - (2) though it was only 6 inches difference.
- C. Turn to Mark 10.
 - 1. Look around in your life and
 - 2. you will find that you do not have to be greedy, but
 - a) you have blessings all over the place,
 - b) places that may not have occurred to you.

29 So Jesus answered and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, 30 who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life. 31 But many who are first will be last, and the last first” (Mark 10.29–31).

III. Be Fruitful in Old Age

- A. Old blackberry canes dry and hold up the bush,
 - 1. making it easier to harvest, and
 - 2. providing a privacy screen.
 - a) The younger vines grow on the older ones.

- b) The older ones support the younger ones.
- B. When they die,
 - 1. they fall to the ground, and
 - 2. become mulch.
- C. Psalm 92 shows the fruitfulness of old age for people.
 - 1. Older people may not be able to do what they did when younger, but
 - 2. they can still serve and help the church.

**12 The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree,
He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.
13 Those who are planted in the house of the Lord
Shall flourish in the courts of our God.
14 They shall still bear fruit in old age;
They shall be fresh and flourishing,
15 To declare that the Lord is upright;
He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.
(Psa 92.12–15)**

- D. Revelation 14 shows that,
 - 1. just like blackberry canes,
 - 2. when older people die,
 - a) they leave behind valuable things.
 - b) They have built the kingdom of Christ, our nations, businesses,

12 Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. 13 Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them" (Rev 14.12–13).

- E. They might be old, but they are still functional.
 - 1. Have you heard older people say,
 - a) they would gladly go back to youth,

b) if they could know what they know now?

(1) What do they know now?

(2) Ask them. I do.

IV. God Is Determined

A. Blackberry plants have an unbelievable determination to take over.

1. They spread by seed.

2. They spread by root.

3. They spread by cane.

B. They are difficult to destroy.

1. Snow, fire, drought, poison, and cutting

2. rarely do it.

C. Romans 8 shows that God is determined to be in your life.

1. He will not abandon you.

2. Even if you abandon Him,

a) He still works to get you back.

b) Do as Kerri and I,

(1) we have decided not to rid our lives of blackberries, but

(2) to enjoy them.

(a) Likewise, do not try to get rid of God.

(b) Enjoy Him.

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? 33 Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or

famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written:

**“For Your sake we are killed all day long;
We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”**

37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8.31–39).

Exhortation:

I. Therefore, when you see blackberries bushes, remember

- A. to be patient,
- B. to be content,
- C. to be fruitful in old age, and
- D. remember that God pursues you relentlessly.

II. Pursue Him relentlessly.