

Blessed to Be a Blessing

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[0 : 00] The message this morning is it will be a topical message with a number of scriptures, but we'll read one of them as our scripture reading from Genesis 12, verses 1 and 2.

The Lord had said to Abram, go from your country, your people, and your father's household to the land I will show you.

I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you. I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. I'm sure you've heard the old story about the pilot who comes on the intercom with, hello travelers, I've got some good news and some bad news.

The bad news is we're lost over the Pacific. The good news is we're making great time. But you may not have heard the Air Force variation that I heard when we lived in Dover, Delaware.

[1 : 30] Dover Air Force Base is one of the bases that houses C-5 cargo planes, the military's largest transport plane.

I'll never forget driving along the highway next to the air base and having one of those planes come right over top of the car, practically. It seemed like it was just a few feet above my car onto the runway.

They are so, so huge. I nearly ran off the road. I think we have a picture of one. Can we?

Yeah, it can hold over 140 tons of cargo. Eight greyhounds can fit in the belly. And that's not a fish story.

Anyway, the Air Force version of the joke goes like this. The pilot comes on the intercom and says, I've got good news and I've got bad news. The bad news is all navigation and communication systems are out.

[2 : 35] I have no idea where we are or where we're going. But the good news is we're sure carrying a lot of it. Of course, the point is that we need to know where we're going.

Having a goal, a direction, a purpose matters. And if there's anyone that should be clear on the big picture, it's the believer in Christ.

The Bible abounds with God's purposes for our lives. For example, the two great commandments. To love God and to love fellow man. Or, many who were raised in the church know the Westminster Shorter Catechism.

Question number one. What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is? To enjoy him forever. Amen. Good answers. But unfortunately, sometimes it can be just words.

[3 : 43] Just an empty slogan. Because honestly, the way that we live a lot of the time is by letting life happen to us. Right? Or another way of saying it is we let life live us.

Getting things. Fixing things. Working. Eating. Sleeping. Sounds like a sad poem. And that's about it, right?

I mean, who has time to figure out what it's about? Just do it. We're flying all over, living busy and fast. And like that lost C5, about the only thing we can say is, well, we're sure carrying a lot of it. What should be our purpose in life? What is life about? Where are we headed? At the beginning of Jesus' prayer for his disciples in John 17, he said, Now this is eternal life.

Now this is eternal life, that they know you, O Lord. You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. Well, that is what life is about.

[5 : 00] Life is about. To know God. But that's not where I'm headed today. Most of you are here today with a desire to know God and to improve your relationship with him.

To receive and enjoy his truth. To bask in his presence, his blessings, his benefits. That's commendable. And I urge you to go deeper.

Go harder. Go farther. That's, it's the right direction. But when we look at the whole of the Bible, knowing God isn't the end.

It's the beginning. Yeah. I have a special burden about a major purpose and calling for every believer that is too often ignored.

Why has God graced us with the privilege of knowing him? Why has he forgiven us? Why does he teach us and renew our minds and hearts from the inside out?

[6 : 11] Why does he protect and defend us? Why does he encourage and comfort us? Why does he deliver us through trials?

Why does he so patiently, tenderly, and lovingly build into our lives his grace and love and wisdom?

Why does he bless us? Why does he bless us? As Ephesians 1, 3 says, with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms. The answer that I'm putting forward today is captured in an old Scott Wesley Brown song title, which I've also chosen as the sermon title that's in your bulletin. And we have a slide. Yeah, we'll go. Blessed to be a blessing. And if I tried to sing it, I'd probably start coughing because I'm struggling a bit with a cold. But the chorus starts out with these lyrics. We've been blessed to be a blessing. Loved to give his love. And the song flows out of a biblical truth that our blessings are not just for us.

[7 : 27] Our blessings are for others. It's not just what God does in us, but also through us for others.

We receive from God that we might re-give to others. And we see this often in the Bible, perhaps more than you might realize.

It's a way of thinking and seeing. That's the definition of a paradigm. A framework of the way that God has planned his salvation in his church.

It's a perspective that is intended to saturate our every experience of his blessings. We're going to look this morning at a few scriptures which can help us incorporate this perspective more fully in our lives.

We're going to look at some reasons God blesses you in Christ. And its connection to the way that you are to live in relationship to others. Our first scripture is the one we read earlier, Genesis 12, verses 1 and 2.

[8 : 38] The Lord had said to Abram, I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you. I will make your name great and you will be a blessing.

Right? Blessed to be a blessing. I will bless you and make you into a nation so that you might bless the nations.

God has blessed Abraham and his seed, calling a people to himself from generation to generation, beginning with Israel and to the ends of the earth, even all the way to Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Yeah. Abraham's blessing started with a blessing to his family and their families. And then it has been a multiplication through the centuries, blessed to be a blessing.

In the new covenant, the church is the true Israel. And we who believe today are the fulfillment of that Genesis 12 promise and purpose of God.

[9 : 45] We are the holy nation chosen to be a blessing to the ends of the earth. We have his great name. And no less to us than to Abraham, the Lord says, you will be a blessing.

Let's look now at Exodus 19, verses 3 through 5. Then Moses went up to God and the Lord called to him from the mountain and said, This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel.

You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt and how I carried you on eagle's wings and brought you to myself. Now, if you will obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession.

And you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. The Lord says, I saved you dramatically, radically, totally.

And, oh, so gently and securely as on eagle's wings. I brought you out of Egypt. I brought you to myself as my treasured possession.

[11 : 16] An incredibly special and blessed people for all eternity. That's a blessing. But don't miss the result.

The so that. So that. You will be for me a kingdom of priests. What's the role of a priest?

The priest is a mediator. A channel to represent God before others and to help others know and connect to God. Priests minister God's blessings.

To others. And again, the church is the new covenant or New Testament fulfillment of this plan of God.

1 Peter 2.9 shows us this when it says this about all believers in Christ. You should recognize the language from what we just saw in Exodus.

[12:18] You are a chosen people. A royal priesthood. A holy nation. God's special possession. Not simply. That you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Do you see it? God has chosen you for himself. And blessed you as his special possession. Not simply for you.

But that you would be a royal priesthood. Carrying his blessing to the world. In Matthew 10.8. Jesus sent out his disciples to preach with this instruction. It was a number of special instructions which ended with this.

Kind of summed up with this. Freely. Freely you have received. Freely. Freely give. Freely give.

[13:26] Their calling. Is our calling. To share the gospel. And where indeed. Jesus. Was teaching them. Befriending them. Saving them.

Discipling them. Giving himself to them. So that. They might give to others. The same. Is true for you and for me.

We have a savior who walks with us. Into and through the whole of our lives. Who blesses us with a special fellowship. Freely you have received.

Freely give. That's so that. We are blessed. Why? To be a blessing. Let's look at a couple of passages now in 2 Corinthians.

The first one in chapter 1 verses 3 and 4. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Father of compassion and the God of all comfort.

[14:32] Who comforts us in all our troubles. So that we can comfort those in any trouble. With the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

Why has God given you his comfort? It's not just for you. It's so that you can comfort others with the comfort you have received. You are comforted to be a comforter.

You are blessed to be a blessing. Also in 2 Corinthians 9. God is able to make all grace abound to you.

So that in all things. At all times. Having all that you need. You will abound in every good work. Now Paul.

In this context. Was talking about financial giving. There was another church. Whose members. Were in great financial need.

[15:32] And Paul was encouraging the Corinthians. To help. These brothers and sisters. In their need. But the principle applies.

Really in all areas of our lives. Not just the financial. God. Has given abundantly to you. So that you can give. Abundantly. To others. He's caused his blessing.

To abound to you. So that through you. It may abound. To others. He causes his grace.

To abound in us. In such a way. That. We are enabled to give. Over and above. Out of all that he has given to us.

In every manner of good work. Caring for one another. Reaching out to our community. Living the gospel. In word and deed. What has the Lord given you?

[16:36] The encouragement here. Is to. Not be. Just a. Consumer. Right. God.

Causes blessing to abound to us. So we can abound. In blessing to others. What have you received. From the Lord. That you can use. To bless others.

How has he blessed you. Materially. Emotionally. Spiritually. How can that spill over.

In blessing. To others. For others. It's an old hymn. That some of you may. May know. Says.

Count your blessings. Name them one by one. Count your many blessings. See what God has done. Right. Amen. Well the aim of the hymn.

[17:34] Is to express gratitude. And. Thanksgiving to God. For all he has done. But. This morning. I'm encouraging you. To count your many blessings.

To see exactly what you've got to work with. In blessing others. Right. You are blessed. To be a blessing.

Thank you. I appreciate it. Amen. Our final text.

Text is Colossians 3. Verse 16. Let the word of Christ. Dwell in you. Richly. Usually that's all you.

Kind of hear. Of this verse. Let the word of God. Dwell in you. Richly. Right. It's shared as an encouragement. To. To soak in God's word.

[18:37] To feast on it. To meditate on it. Memorize it. But what happens. Then. What happens. With what we learn.

See. Let the word of God. Christ dwell in you. Richly. As. Or so that. You. May teach. And admonish. One another.

With all wisdom. See. As he. Blesses us. With. His word. Then we. Share. And minister that word. To others.

Practically. This means. That. That we. Share with others. The truths. That help us. If it stops. Inside of us. Then we're quenching. The word. We're quenching. The spirit. It. Right. Right. Right. Right. Whether it's your. Personal reading.

[19:34] Your. Small group study. Or class. Right on. You down. Every worship service. Right on down to this very. Sermon. Today.

Today. What. Word. Word. Is the Lord. Speaking. To you. And you're blessed by God. With his word. So that you can channel that blessing.

Of his word. To others. And so you. You kind of. What I'm. Or encouraging you to do. Is to develop the mentality. When you're hearing God's word.

That says. How can I. Pay forward. What I'm hearing today. Whenever. Whenever you hear his word. Now I don't. I don't mean. To.

To listen. So that you can figure out. What you need to. Preach to your neighbor. That you haven't preached to yourself. You. You. You. You got to. Take it. And soak. You know. Soak in it. In your own life first.

[20:28] You got to let it dwell in you. Richly. But then. Then. It can't stop there. Right. It's got to go. It's got to go somewhere. My wife.

Celeste and I. Attended. Furman University. In Greenville. South Carolina. And at. At. At. At. At. At. At. At. At. I don't. I don't. I haven't kept. Up. To know if it's still true today. But at that time.

Furman. Furman had a large number of. Campus Christian ministries. And the tendency. For us as students. Was to bounce from.

Ministry to ministry. Yeah. Looking for the newest study. The. The latest word. The best teachers. The best music. And so on. We were consumers.

You know. Looking for what. For what we could get out of it. Too much. Of the time. But I was blessed. That the Lord. Planted me.

[21:29] In a ministry. It's called. Campus Crusade. At the time. Now it's called. Crew. That stressed. The idea. That being a disciple. Of Christ.

Doesn't stop. With us. It involves. Winning. Others. Building. Others. Sending. Others. And one of the tools. We used. Was a series.

Of little studies. Called. Transferable. Concepts. I think I have a picture. Yep. Of these. These are actually. Still in use. And the idea.

Was very simple. You would study. And learn. Them. Yourself. And then. Share it. With someone else. Pass it on. Pay it forward. Transfer it.

Hence. Transferable. Concepts. Right. But you don't have to have a booklet. For that. For this. The booklet helps.

[22:25] But you don't have to have that. You. Can. Put on. Your. Blessed. To be a blessing. Eyeglasses. And then.

Think about the people. In your family. Think about. The people. In your. Your workplace. In your neighborhood. Then.

Think about. Every truth. That you incorporate. Into your life. Every blessing. You experience. Every. Enjoyment. Of your relationship. With God. As a. Special occasion.

To give. To others. By your words. By your service. By your. Your finances. By your prayer. By your example. Your life. In Christ.

Your life. In Christ. Is not. Just. For you. Right. Don't. Let it. Stop. With you. You're blessed. To be a blessing.

[23:26] Think. Green. Was. A big push. In my lifetime. We got a. Picture. Think. Green. All right.

Magic. Thank you. Joseph. It can be taken too far. But at its core. It's the idea that the resources that we have can be reused, re-given, recycled to benefit others.

And the analogy can break down if you take it too far. But in a spiritual sense. It would be saying don't be an abuser or user or a mere consumer of God's resources.

Be a steward. Be a channel. So that these resources are then made available and continue to be made available to others. Think about.

Let's put it in a spiritual context. I'm going to change it to think life. Yeah. Live green. Live green. Live green. Live green. Live green.

[24 : 31] Live green. And what you receive then the question is how can I re-give? Receive. Re-give.

Right? Our society is certainly a consumer society.

A consumer mentality rules. It's all about what we want. What we can get.

What we can enjoy. And that can infect the church too. You need to change your way of seeing. Change your paradigm. Get the right prescription for your spiritual glasses. Because you are blessed to be a blessing. What you receive is for you to re-give.

[25 : 25] The Christian life is a transferable lifestyle. Live green. Right? Now don't misunderstand me. The church is a filling station.

So tank up. Yeah. It's a buffet of spiritual food for you. Eat your fill. And yes, it's a hospital. When you're hurting, let us nurse and listen and care and help the healing process. The church is a place for needs to be met. The staff and all the ministries are here to serve.

They're here to be used. It is for you. But, so don't hesitate for a minute to receive and consume. And there's not any guilt here that says you have to give in order to get. That this is a grace community. It's not bless others so that you can get God's blessing.

[26 : 37] There are times when we're all so starved that all we can do is be fed. When we're so weak.

That all we can do is lay on a bed of prayer and be ministered to. But, when the Lord blesses us with his grace and peace and love and strength.

What do we do with it? How do we respond? In time. In the right time.

And in the right place. In the right way. We need to overflow with that blessing to others. Let's wrap up with a look at the New City mission statement.

A vision statement, I should say. It's currently called. Our church vision statement recognizes that our salvation and being brought into the church is just the beginning point of grace and its blessings.

[27 : 47] It says, Our vision is to be a cross-cultural worshiping community centered in the gospel of Jesus Christ that produces disciplined believers who become God's instruments of grace, justice, and mercy.

Are you blessed to be in a cross-cultural worshiping community? I think it's an incredible blessing. A demonstration of God's glory in the gospel. Are you blessed with life through the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Are you blessed to be growing here as disciplined believers? Amen. Amen.

But where does it lead? Our vision is that you become a blessing to others as God's instruments of grace, justice, and mercy. You are blessed to be a blessing.

[28 : 59] You are blessed and you are a blessing. A blessing in your family. A blessing in your church. A blessing in your community. A blessing in this world.

It's exciting stuff. Knowing God in this life is amazing. Eternal life is a blessing that exceeds our imagination. But to be his blessing to others in building his church and extending his kingdom, this is even more incredible.

Another level for the glory of God. Let's pray. Oh Lord, we overflow with thanksgiving for your abundant blessings.

Help us to see them, to count them, to name them one by one. And we rejoice that you are with us. That you are for us. And we pray that through us, you would build your church and extend your kingdom.

[30 : 21] Give us eyes to see not only what you are doing in us, but what you would do through us in your kingdom. We ask it in the great name of Christ, our King.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Let us stand and in response to the sermon today, let us surrender our lives back to Jesus.

Amen.