

“BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING”
Galatians 3:6-14, Luke 12:35-44, Gene3sis 12:1-9
April 7 & 8, 2018

There are many people in this world who need us. We might not see it at first, but as we get to know someone, we can see just how our befriending them and encouraging them makes a difference in their life. We are truly blessed with our situation and we have so much to look forward to. We don't often realize that even a simple act of kindness can change a person's life. So I want us to look today at how blessed we truly are, and how we might become a blessing to those around us.

Here's how blessed you are. Did you know that if you have food in your refrigerator, clothes in your closets, a place to call home, and a decent place to sleep, you are richer than **75% of the people** in the world? Did you know that if you have money in the bank, a few bucks in your pocket or wallet or purse, even if you have spare change in a container at home, you are among **the top 8% of the world's wealthiest people**? Did you know that if you have never experienced the danger of battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture or the pangs of starvation, you are already ahead of **five hundred million** people who have experienced these things? Did you know that just by attending worship here in this place without fear of harassment or arrest or torture or death, you are more blessed than **3 billion** people on this planet? Right now it is illegal to worship God in places like this for 3 billion people. We are tremendously blessed people, but we tend to forget the blessings we have from God.

Everything we have is a gift of God. *“Out of the fullness of His grace God has blessed us, giving us one blessing after another”* (John 1:16). Though it is easy for us to compare with others and see what they have compared with what we have and judge how blessed we are compared with others, we are tremendously blessed with all that we have as a gift from God.

Today I want to direct our attention to the blessings we have as we look at the life of Abraham in the Old Testament. As we do that, it is good to reflect how we become blessed and what we are to do because we are so blessed.

In the Epistle lesson of Galatians 3 Paul reminds the people, “...*the scripture says, ‘He believed God, and because of his faith God accepted him as righteous.’ You realize, then, that the real descendants of Abraham are the people who have faith. The scripture predicted that God would put the Gentiles right with Himself through faith. And so the scripture announced the Good News to Abraham; ‘Through you God will bless all mankind.’ Abraham believed and was blessed; so all who believe are blessed as he was*” (3:6-9).

We are blessed as we have faith in Jesus Christ. As Abraham first had faith in God to live in a way that would be pleasing to God in following all of His ways, so Abraham was blessed. He became the father of many nations, and as he trusted in God’s guidance, that same faith was “passed down” through the generations for all to see and follow, too. As we trust in God’s guidance and understand His great love for us, we see that God provided the long promised Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. He, being God’s only begotten Son, came to us so that we could turn back to God. By His crucifixion and resurrection He took the penalty of all our sins, and by His sacrifice we are set free from the wrath of God because of sin.

So all of our blessings come to us through Jesus Christ as we put our trust and faith in Him. God has chosen to **ble^ss us** as we follow Abraham’s life of faithfulness. But we need to remember that blessings don’t come to us because we follow the Law, or because we are religiously following rules of some church denomination, or because we are trying to earn God’s blessings. **We cannot do anything** to earn God’s blessings, they are a gift to us as we have faith in Jesus Christ. It is in our faith that God determines to bless us.

Paul says, “*Those who depend on obeying the Law live under a curse*” (Gal. 3:10). That’s because depending on obedience to the Law to get God’s blessings doesn’t work. None of us is ever able to keep the whole Law, so striving to keep the rules doesn’t bring blessings to us. The Law exposes our disobedience, but faith in Jesus Christ brings us life and blessing.

Paul goes on to say, “*Now, it is clear that no one is put right with God by means of the Law, because the scripture says, ‘Only the person who is put right with God through faith shall*

live” (3:11). Faith in Jesus Christ is the only way to find God’s rich blessings for us. A relationship with Jesus Christ is how we are able to receive God’s blessings. *”Abraham believed and was blessed; so all who believe are blessed as he was”* (3:9).

You see, *“...by becoming a curse for us Christ has redeemed us from the curse that the Law brings...Christ did this in order that the blessing which God promised to Abraham might be given to the Gentiles by means of Christ Jesus, so that through faith we might receive the Spirit promised by God”* (3:13-14). So God’s blessings only come to us (Gentiles) as we first have faith in Jesus Christ and follow after Him. The only way we get God’s blessings in our life is through a relationship with the One who paid the price of redeeming us from the curse of the Law. As we faithfully follow Jesus, God is then delighted to provide us with His rich blessings. When we become part of the family of God by believing in Jesus (John 1:12), God makes sees it fit to bless us, not just so that we might have more than others, or flaunt what we have, but that those around us might see the benefits of having faith in Jesus Christ. God wants to bless us so that we might be a blessing.

Now because God has richly blessed us, He wants us to celebrate those blessings through worship. Let’s look at what Abraham did when he received God’s blessings. Follow along as I read Genesis 12:1-9. (READ Genesis 12:1-9)

Abraham was a son of Terah, the 9th generational descendent of Shem, one of the sons of Noah. Abram, as he was called then, was faithful in following the Lord God of his ancestors before him. When God talked to Abram, he listened and did what God was asking of him. God invited Abram to leave his relatives and go to a place where God would show him. If he followed God’s instructions, God promises to *“bless (him) and make (his) name famous, so that (he would) be a blessing”* (Gen. 12:2).

Now Abram was 75 years old when God invited him to move from his family and go to a place where God would show him. I am intrigued with this, because I would have wanted to know where I was going BEFORE I started out away from the rest of the family. I mean, guys,

how many of you would rent a U-Haul truck, pack up your family possessions, and just head out of town? Your wife or kids would ask, “So, where are we going?” and your response would be “I don’t know, but God will let me know when we get there!” They’d think you were nuts! It’s because we usually want to know where we’re headed BEFORE we take the step of faith and pack up. But Abram heard God’s call in his life, packed up the family and allowed God to guide him to the place that He wanted him to live. Now that took faith!

Yet, look at what Abram did, “*Abram traveled through the land until he came to the sacred tree of Moreh, the holy place at Shechem... The Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, ‘This is the country that I am going to give to your descendants.’ Then Abram built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him*” (Gen. 12:6-7). **Abram WORSHIPPED God** in the midst of his blessings. God was showing him the land that would become the home of Israel, and out of gratitude, Abram worshipped God and said “Thank You!” for what God was doing, and for what God was going to do. And wherever Abram went, he set up an altar to the Lord so that he could worship Him and give thanks for all that God was blessing him in.

As we receive the many blessings from God through our faith in Jesus Christ, we are invited to follow Abraham’s example and worship the Lord God. Now, worship is not something **we do**; it is **a lifestyle**. It’s an attitude of gratitude where you continually thank God for everything in your life. You thank God for each new day; you thank Him for the clothes you wear, the food you eat, the car you drive, the church you come to worship in, the friends and family you have, and on and on. You live in a perpetual attitude of thanksgiving for all that God has blessed you with. That’s worship.

And when God sees you doing that, worshipping Him all day, every day, He wants to bless you for your gratitude. Because you’re grateful for what you’ve got, He wants to give you more. But if you’re ungrateful, why would God want to bless that? He doesn’t. So celebrating the blessings that we have through thanksgiving and worship open up the doors of heaven for us

to receive even more blessings through Jesus Christ our Lord. Worship reminds us that our blessings are not from us, but come as we faithfully follow and worship the Lord Jesus.

We receive God's blessings in Christ Jesus, we celebrate God's blessings in worship, and we can then expect God's blessings through faith. Abraham trusted God's promise of blessing in his life and obeyed God's instruction. Having a close relationship with God, Abraham could expect that what God had promised would come true. God is ALWAYS TRUE to His Word, so as we have faith in His Word and move out in obedience to His Word, we can expect that God will bring His blessings to us. God blesses people who trust Him. God blesses people who believe in Him. God blesses people who expect Him to bless them.

We're told in the Bible (Hebrews 11:1) that *"to have faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of the things we cannot see."* As we put our trust and faith in the Lord God through Jesus Christ, He is pleased to bless us. It's not going to church, or being a nice person, or anything else. Only faith can guarantee the blessings we hope for. God blesses you when you trust Him. And God loves it when you expect Him to take care of you. It's a compliment to God that you trust Him in faith.

It works like this: You say, "God, I don't know how to handle this problem I'm facing, but I am trusting You. I'm up to my neck and I'm in deep, and I feel like I'm going under for the last time. But God You have blessed me in the past, so I am certain that You're going to do it again because You are a good God. I don't know how this is all going to work out. I don't know what You're doing and I don't know what the problem's solution is, but I do know this – You are a God of blessing and You have blessed me many times before and I am counting on You blessing me again. I am trusting You. I'm expecting You to bless me."

And God says, "That's my girl! That's my boy! You are doing exactly what I want you to do – Trust Me." It is faith that brings God's blessings into our lives. *"Without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever comes to God must have faith that God exists and rewards those who seek Him"* (Heb. 11:6).

Let me ask you this: “What are you expecting God to do in your life? Today? This next week? You see, if we don’t expect God to work in our life, if we don’t faithfully expect God to work in us, He won’t do it. We have to step out in faith, trust in God’s guidance and direction and then expect that He will bless us as we follow His lead. God will do exactly what you expect and trust Him to do in your life! No more, no less, according to your faith in Him. So we get to determine the extent of the blessings from God as we step out in faith to follow Him. We get to decide how much blessing God will pour into our lives, for according to our faith He blesses us.

Abraham saw that it wasn’t up to him to find God’s blessing in his life. He couldn’t earn it through anything that he did. There was only one thing for Abraham to do to get the blessings that God promised him – trust that God could do what He was telling him, and faithfully obey God’s guidelines. So Abraham packed up the family and moved out to the country that God was already preparing for him to receive. He received God’s blessings by faithfully doing what God was inviting him to do. He received the blessing from God by having faith in Him.

And that’s how we receive God’s blessings, too. We have to believe in Jesus and listen to His voice speaking in our lives and then follow Him expectantly. When we do that, the blessings that God has already prepared for us will be provided for us. It’s ours for receiving if only we’ll step out in faith to follow God’s guidance.

That problem that’s keeping you awake at night, that problem that’s making your stomach tight with worry, God is asking you a question today – “Will you trust Me?” God blesses people who trust Him and expect His blessings by faith.

There’s one more key to receiving God’s blessings in your life. When we believe in Jesus Christ, as we worship and thank God for all His blessings given to us, as we expect God’s blessings to be ours as we have faith in Him, we then come to the final step in the blessing formula, sharing God’s blessings with others.

God doesn’t want to just bless your life – He wants to use your life in a great way. God

doesn't want to just bless you so you can feel good and go, "Isn't this great? I feel blessed!"

No. God wants to make you a blessing so that you can bless others. And the more you share with others, the more God is going to bless your life.

That was God's promise to Abraham. God told Abraham, "*I will bless you and make your name famous, so that you will be a blessing...And through you I will bless all the nations*" (Gen. 12:2-3). God's blessings weren't just for Abraham and his family. Those blessings were given to Abraham so that he might be a blessing to all those around him. It wasn't enough that God should bless Abraham, but through that blessing He blessed all those who sought after God and followed Him in all their ways.

So as we have received the abundance of God's blessings, we are also to share those blessings to bless others. You might think, "But I don't have that much, so how can I share with others. I'm not THAT blessed." Have you forgotten already that you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy? You are indeed blessed, and God wants you to share with others from what you have. So as you start to bless others, even as you can, God will begin to bless you even more so that you can be a blessing to more and more people. You start sharing what you have and God will give you more. It's not when you get to a certain level, or when you achieve a certain thing, or when you get more time, or when "this" happens in your life. No, you start sharing what you have and God will give you more so that you can continue to be a blessing to those around you.

And that is the intent of the Gospel lesson today that we read earlier. Jesus calls His disciples to "*be ready for whatever comes, dressed for action and with your lamps lit like servants who are waiting for their master to come back from a wedding feast...*" (Luke 12:35). We are to be doing the work that God has invited us to do, in faith, through Jesus Christ, as we worship and give thanks to God, and we share those blessings with others. Jesus tells the disciples, "*I tell you, (the master) will take off his coat, have them sit down, and will wait on them. How happy they are if he finds them ready (doing their work)... Indeed, I tell you, the*

master will put that servant in charge of all his property.” (Lu. 12:37-38). Jesus invites us to become involved in the work of the Lord as we remain faithful in seeking Him and following Him.

God has certainly blessed us so that we might be a blessing to others! God wants to bless you so you can bless others so He can bless you more so you can bless others more so He can bless you more so you can bless others more and on and on and on. And we'll learn more of how to do that in the next few weeks.

But I want you to consider a few critical questions today. What are you **good at** that you could do for other people? Not for profit, just to do it for others to be blessed. What are you good at?

What do you **know** that you could pass on to other people that would be a blessing to them because of your experiences? What do you know?

What do you have that **you could give** to somebody who needs it or at least loan it to somebody who needs it in order to be a blessing?

Who do you **know who needs to know Jesus Christ** that you could invite to church next week? The greatest blessing you could give anybody is to introduce them to Jesus Christ. There is no other greater blessing than that, to bless a person's life by introducing them to Jesus. You could secure their eternal destiny. Who could you share your faith in Jesus with?

There are so many ways that God is blessing us to be a blessing to others, if we believe in Jesus, give thanks to Him for those blessings, expect Him to work in and through us for Him, and then share those blessings with others. It all comes down to one question, “Will you follow Jesus?”

Let's pray...Father, You have blessed us so abundantly so that we might touch the lives of those around us. Help us this week to hear your voice guiding us to be a blessing to others, even as we have been blessed by You. Open our eyes to see how we might touch those around us by sharing our blessings with them, in Jesus' Name we pray. AMEN.