

“Blessed to be a Blessing”

Genesis 12:1-3 and Galatians 3:8-14

Pastor James York

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North Presbyterian Church

Each one of us is blessed by God to be a blessing. God made a covenant with our ancestors, Abraham and Sarah, that extends to us today. God promised, *Genesis 12:2* “*I will bless you and you will be a blessing.*”

Bless is a word that has multiple facets. The word bless signals glory and completeness beyond our comprehension. Bless can be an action, a state of being or a gift. Bless sometimes means holy, happy, honored, joyful, praising, glorifying, favor, love, peace, transformation, belonging, benefits, gratitude, life-giving, fruitfulness.

Bless is a word that is ever expanding in all it entails.

Genesis 12:1-3 “The Lord said to Abram, “Leave your country, your relatives and your father’s home. Go to the land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation, I will bless you. I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you, I will curse. Through you every family on earth will be blessed.”

The opposite of bless is curse. Anyone who treats Abraham, Sarah or us when we are trying to bless another with contempt will reap the consequences of their deed. Stated in the positive; God will protect those who are blessing from those who are seeking to mistreat them.

An overly simplified way of understanding blessing and cursing is; blessing is receiving from God and sharing; cursing is taking from another and hoarding. The purpose of Genesis is to express God’s desire to be in loving relationship with everyone. In the beginning God blessed all of creation by creating everything good. Everything was perfect, in harmony, glorious and eternal. Everything was blessed by God and shared. Humanity was created in the Trinity’s image. The Trinity is a perfect loving relationship. Each person, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the Father are distinct yet their love, their blessing and sharing, is perfect making them one God. We are created in God’s image designed to love, to bless and share uniting us with God and all people in loving harmony.

Genesis describes *bless* as God taking evening strolls, listening and talking with humanity, laughing, enjoying God’s love and sharing love. This is called Eden, meaning delight, paradise, a place of blessing. Humanity chooses to try and take from God, to be God and hoard God’s blessings. This is symbolized by the taking and eating of the fruit. As soon as humanity tried to be God, they began hoarding. God came to bless, to enjoy fellowship with humanity but humanity hid. Humanity withheld love for God, humanity tried to hoard love by limiting their love for God and others. The consequence for cursing, for taking and hoarding was and is death.

God's love for us, God's desire to bless us, is endless so God with grace softens the curse. Death was not immediate yet everyone will die an earthly death. Yet God will ultimately overcome every curse with eternal resurrection life. Even though humanity continues to constantly curse God, God full of grace softens our consequences. The consequences of our cursing, our taking and hoarding blessings, is pain, suffering, struggle, broken relationships and unbalanced relationships.

God continued to bless humanity, Cain and Abel. Cain cursed God. Cain took God's blessing and hoarded it, refusing to share with his brother. Cain killed Abel. God full of grace softened the curse and did not take Cain's life however the consequences are a sense of homelessness and struggle to grow enough food.

Over time humanity's cursing, taking and hoarding became rampant. Only one person, Noah, was open to blessing, to receiving from God and sharing. Noah received instructions from God, received the ability to build an ark and shared space on the ark with animals of every kind. Noah received life from God and shared preserving all future earthly life. The flood was the consequence of humanity's cursing.

Over time humanity once again grew bolder and bolder in their cursing of God. Humanity cursed God by building a tower, a monument to humanity's greatness, a symbol declaring that humanity can solve all problems, that humanity can sustain life without God. Once again humanity took from God and hoarded. The consequence was a scattering of people, different languages, confusion in communicating and difficulty in understanding each other.

Genesis Chapter 1 and 2 is the story of God's lavish, abundant blessing upon us. It is the story of creation and joyful, loving relationships between God and humanity.

Genesis chapters 3-11, is the history of our ancestor's sin, our cursing God. Genesis chapter 12, with the covenant from God; "I will bless you and you will be a blessing.", is the turning point to God's redeeming of everyone and all of creation.

Rediscovering and receiving God's blessing begins with movement, a journey, a shift in being, from sin to God, from curse to blessing, from taking to receiving, from hoarding to sharing. **Genesis 12:1 & 3 "The Lord said to Abram, "Leave your country, your relatives and your father's home... Through you every family on earth will be blessed."** It is a move from exclusivity to inclusivity, from sharing blessings with your immediate family to everyone in the whole world. It is an ever growing expansion of love from family, to relatives, to country to the entire world.

Abraham and Sarah make plenty of missteps on their journey to receive God's blessings and be a blessing. Their journey ran up against obstacles and was confusing yet they kept striving to receive God's blessing and be a blessing.

The exodus was a journey from slavery to freedom, from a place where idols were worshiped to where God was worshiped, from a place where resources were hoarded for the rich and powerful to where resources are shared and care is given to the vulnerable. On their journey they were given manna. Manna is another word that has multifaceted meaning. Manna is bread, nourishment of body, soul and mind. Manna is blessing. Everyday God blessed the people with manna except for the Sabbath. A

double portion of manna was given on the day before the Sabbath. The people were invited to receive the manna and share. If one took more than their share, more than their need of manna, if one hoarded the manna then all the manna taken would spoil. Jesus encouraged everyone to journey from sin to God, to receive God's blessing and share God's blessing. Jesus harshest words were aimed at those who were taking God's blessings and hoarding blessings; for Herod who took power and wealth and hoarded it; for religions leaders who hoarded blessings for whom they deemed worthy rather than sharing God's blessings with everyone, for those who erected barriers and boundaries instead of living in the glorious freedom of love, for those who were prejudice and excluded instead of being welcoming, for those who cursed instead of blessed. Jesus took all the cursing to the cross, conquered it and buried it enabling God's blessings to flow freely to everyone.

The Apostle Paul writes **Galatians 3:8-14a** **“What’s more, the Scriptures looked forward to this time when God would declare the nations to be righteous because of their faith. God proclaimed this good news to Abraham long ago when God said, “All nations will be blessed through you.” So all who put their faith in Christ share the same blessing Abraham received because of his faith. But those who depend on the law to make them right with God are under curse, for the Scriptures say, “Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the commands that are written in God’s Book of the Law.” So it is clear that no one can be made right with God by trying to keep the law. For the Scriptures say, “It is through faith that a righteous person has life.” This way of faith is very different from the way of law, which says, “It is through obeying the law that a person has life.” But Christ has rescued us from the curse pronounced by the law. When Jesus was hung on the cross, Jesus took upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing. For it is written in the Scriptures, “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.” Through Christ Jesus, God has blessed the nations with the same blessing God promised to Abraham”.**

The foundational covenant for Judaism, Islam and Christianity is **Genesis 12:1-3** **“The Lord said to Abram, “Leave your country, your relatives and your father’s home. Go to the land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation, I will bless you. I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you, I will curse. Through you every family on earth will be blessed.”** The majority of the world is trying to live out this promise from God, trying to receive God's blessing and share blessings. What do you make of the promised universal blessing? God promises *Genesis 12:3* *“every family on earth will be blessed.”*

Like Abraham and Sarah we are making plenty of mistakes along the way, we often give into cursing, into taking and hoarding. We curse, take and hoard money, power, resources, and stuff. Even more disturbing is we curse, take and hoard love, joy, peace, grace, forgiveness, healing and encouragement. Sadly we curse, take and hoard through our churches, denominations and religions. We have and are enduring tremendous consequences as a result of our religious cursing. Think of all the wars

that have been fought over a denomination or religion trying to hoard God for themselves. Think of all the pain, hurt and suffering that has resulted from a faith group proclaiming that unless you act and believe in a way that they determine is God's way then you are excluded. Why do we continue to try and claim God's blessings for ourselves when God's call is to universalize the blessings? Do you hear of anyone excluded in God's promise *Genesis 12:3*

"every family on earth will be blessed."?

Notice that the fulfillment of the blessing is future tense. During their earthly lives Abraham and Sarah never saw the enormity of their offspring, the great nations God promised, how Jesus would be born from their descendents, how their sharing of blessings would ripple around the world and into the future until everyone is blessed.

One needs to embrace God's covenant with hope believing that God will use your receiving and sharing of God's blessing to bless every person past, present and future.

Revelation paints a picture of this future blessing. God will bless with a pure river, crystal clear, flowing with the water of life from the throne of God. Along the river will grow trees of life with leaves that will heal everyone of every pain, every curse.

Jesus will wipe away every tear. There will be no more cursing, only blessing. You are blessed to be a blessing. You should have received a letter this week inviting you to count your blessings and reflect on how you can be a blessing. There are extra

letters by the door to Meisenheimer Hall. How are you receiving God's love and sharing love? How are you cursing, taking and hoarding God's blessings instead of receiving and sharing? Open your mind to the enormity of blessing. Even though blessing is grandeur than any of us can perceive, how will you strive to grow your view of blessing? God is blessing you with life. Are you living life abundantly, joyfully, in gratitude to God and in worship of God? God is blessing you with influence. Are you a positive, gracious, welcoming influence? God is blessing you with family, friends and relationships. Do you affirm and celebrate the beauty in others, build others up into the likeness of Jesus and love? God is blessing you with peace. Are you unafraid, hopeful and living in the present? God is blessing you with a place to live, transportation and stuff. How are you sharing? God is blessing you with

the cosmos. Are you caring for creation in a manner that will enable future generations to enjoy a pristine earth? God is blessing you with talents, abilities and gifts. Are you nurturing them and sharing them? God is blessing you with grace, forgiveness, healing and resurrection. Are you forgiving and helping others? God is blessing you with money. Are you sharing the money God has given you? Please pray about all the ways God is hoping you will be a blessing and ask God how God wants you to spend the money God is loaning to you. Your pledge to North Presbyterian Church is one aspect of how you are blessed to be a blessing. Please bring your pledge card to dedicate your offering to be a blessing, next Sunday.

Session will strive to use every penny to bless others. Resist the urge to curse, to take and hoard blessings. God's promise to you, to all of us, to everyone: "I will bless you; you will be a blessing; through you every family on earth will be blessed."

Amen