

Blessed to Be a Blessing
Sermon, April 5, 2020

Hi – I'm Pastor Shelley and it is my honor to share from God's Word with you today. Will you pray with me?

Lord God, as we worship together this morning, we ask you to you to open the windows of our souls so we can see, ask you to clear the paths of our lives so we can walk. We know you are up to something powerful right now and we want to be in on it. Use our time together to help us hear you and follow you. In Jesus name we pray. Amen

The past couple weeks Pastor Doug has been helping us to remember that God is never inactive – never just up in his throne room chillin waiting to see how things are going to play out on earth

God is always active - always up to something in our world for its good. For a good better than we can imagine.

He is always moving to spread the goodness of the love that has eternally existed in him out into our world – **always moving history towards the life and love for the world he has always intended.**

Now, of course, God spreading goodness isn't the same as making people feel good. Doing good and feeling good aren't the same thing – as anyone who's gone through surgery and then rehab knows very well.... Often the path to restoration is a painful one even when it's a good one.

That means that even if painful things are happening we can still trust that God is up to something good.

Isn't it great that that's the case? That this is the God who is?

AND, on top of that isn't it great that we have a God who not only is up to something good, but who made us to be in on that good WITH him.

That when we look at Jesus and are amazed by the way he lives, how **clever and kind and at peace** he is; and we say – I want that, I want in on the kind of life you have. That he says – come on! I thought you'd never ask.

God is always up to something good and he has always wanted us to join him in his good work. Not do it for him, but join him in it

Did you ever go to work with your Mom or Dad, When I was a girl every once in a while I got to go to the shop. The Shop is what our family calls the manufacturing plant that my grandfather started.

At the shop they fabricate things out of wire. Doing that kind of work gave the shop certain smells, and sounds and energy. One of my most vivid memories is having to use Lava soap to get the grease off my hands after being there. Any of you familiar with Lava soap?

As a child my Dad didn't have me come to the shop so I could do his work for him, he brought me because they enjoyed having me there, learning from him and sharing in what he was doing.

Thousands of years ago our Heavenly Dad came to Abraham and said, “Abraham, I’ve got a plan and I want you in on it.”

Abraham said, great, let’s do it!

And God said, okay here is the deal, even though you’re super old and don’t have any kids or assets yet, I’m going to make you into a great nation.

“Yeah!” Abraham said, “let’s do it! I’m liking this plan”

God said, “I’m not done yet. The reason I’m going to make you into a great nation is because I’m going to make this a great world. I’m going to bless you, in order to bless the whole world.”

Here’s what it says in Genesis 12:2-3

And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Got that Abraham?

Yep! I’m going to be blessed to be a blessing. Let’s do it!

So off they go, the nation of Israel comes into being, blessed to be a blessing.

And they were terrible at it. They didn’t get it wrong all the time – there were definitely high points.

- But it’s hard to receive a blessing and not hoard it.
- It’s hard to receive a blessing and not think you deserved or earned it so you could do whatever you wanted with it.

Israel is blessed to be a blessing and they are terrible at it.

Until, Jesus. Until Jesus, who the New Testament authors tell us lives as the true Israel: as the blessed who would be a blessing.

And what the nation Israel was terrible at, Jesus, was perfect at.

Jesus lived perfectly as the blessed who was a blessing.

Just what does it mean to be a blessing.

The best definition I’ve come across is by Dallas Willard who says:

“Blessing is the projection of good into the life of another. It isn’t just words. It’s the actual putting forth of your will for the good of another person.

Think about that for a minute – the projection of good into the life of another person that isn’t just words – but putting forth **all of your will** for the good of another person.

When Scripture talks about being blessed by God that’s it’s talking about:

God is projecting – God is putting forth all of his will FOR OUR GOOD!

Willard goes on and says “[Blessing] always involves God, because when you will the good of another person, you realize only God is capable of bringing that. So we naturally say, “God bless you.”

This projection of good into the life of another – Isn’t that a perfect description of Jesus?

Jesus receives the goodness of God into his life, and then releases that goodness out into the people and the world around him.

Think about the Triumphal entry in this context.

Here is Jesus entering Jerusalem to free his people from the power of sin, if we want to get in on the kind of life Jesus has, we have to first be freed from sin, and he knows that.

So Jesus goes into the hotspot of **hostility, the headquarters** of the people who want to kill him in order to put that into effect, in order to project God’s goodness into the lives of his people.

And the people are so happy about it! Their language about him, their attitude and actions toward him are all projecting goodness – right? Pastor Doug read it for us:

“Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!”^{11:10} Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! We want him! He’s going to make our life great! Go, Jesus!

And in just a week, the blessing has turned to cursing. The projecting of goodness his way has turned into the projecting of evil

SO FAST the language and actions of the crowds went from wanting him to be their king to wanting him to be killed.

And yet Jesus stays the course

People have long pointed out that its under stress, in real life experience, that the true nature of our heart is revealed.”

That’s what we see here – the heart of Jesus.

Even with insults, rejection, betrayals and beatings hurled his way, he won’t be dissuaded from projecting the goodness of God into the world.

Even though they don’t want him to do it, God wants him to do it. And that is enough.

He was blessed to be a blessing. So he would be.

We who belong to Jesus, who’ve looked to him and said I want what you have, that’s to be our life as well.

We receive the goodness of God and we release it into the world.

How do we do that?

We do it by being with Jesus, engaging in the practices he engaged in, in order to receive the love and power of God the Father and then release that love and power in the world for others to experience

It's important we understand the criticalness of being with Jesus and others who love him in this process in putting his ways into practice

Because having the kind of life we see in him that he trains his disciples in – that doesn't happen just through the sharing of information, it happens through the sharing of experiences.

It's not information download we go off and try and do on our own. It's a ways of life we train for in the power of the Holy Spirit with the community of believers.

In the presence of the Spirit of Jesus we learn how to pray like he prays; understand Scripture like he does.

With him we learn how to set the rhythms of our life, what to prioritize, and what to let go. What to seek out and what to run from.

With him we practice treating people the way he does.

We don't hold grudges, but forgive. We don't stir up dissension we work for unity.

With live generously - making do with less, so other people can have more.

We put into practice all we learn from Jesus, not because if we don't we won't make it to heaven when we die, but because we want in on what he is up to in the world which is bringing heaven to earth – now.

We want to experience the flow of receiving and releasing of the goodness of God into us and through us into the world

So in stressful times, whether people are blessing or cursing me, are for me or against me I am able to, like Jesus, project goodness to that person or situation.

So we live blessed to be a blessing.

So – here we are. In a unique, stressful time in history in which God is actively doing something good and we get to be in on it with him.

Through our language, our attitudes, our actions, we get to receive and release the goodness of God into the world around us.

Now, I don't know what all that's gonna look like in your life, your family's life. But I do have some things I offer you to consider.

Pray. Jesus received and released goodness through prayer. He blessed people by praying for them.

And we can too. Even if its for people or situations where they don't think prayer works. Pray.

Speak. Jesus spoke words of life to any who had ears to hear. There are people who need you to speak life as well. Words of hope and consolation, words of encouragement and thanksgiving.

Write notes, send emails, make phone calls, create videos. Help people know they are not forgotten. Help people know they are appreciated.

Act – Jesus was never all talk. He was a man who acted. There are people who will be blessed by you doing certain things for them.

Husbands, your wife needs you right now. She doesn't need you to say everything is going to be okay, that you'll protect her from anything bad that might come. She doesn't need you to be God, in fact she needs you to let God be God and you be her husband.

A husband who, no matter what happens, is WITH her and FOR her.

So I encourage you to bless her by looking her in the eye and telling her that you are FOR her and WITH her, no matter what happens to our health or economy. Ask her, how can I help you know that its true?

Wives, your husband needs your blessing. He needs you to be receiving the goodness of God into your life and releasing it into him. He doesn't need you to be the Holy Spirit in his life, that job is already taken by someone way more qualified.

What he needs is a wife who BELIEVES in him; that is glad he is in your world. So I encourage you to go to him point out strengths he has that you appreciate, and ask what you can do to support him.

Stressful times expose what's going on in our hearts; stressful times are opportunities to turn more deeply to the **God who is doing great things and, with him, to be blessed to be a blessing.**

As we enter the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, I encourage you to see it as a time of rededication. Of living into your baptismal vows.

Of saying, Lord – thank you for being who you are, thank you being up to something good like you always are; thank you for welcoming me in to what you are doing.

As part of that rededication I invite you to pray with me this prayer of confession and then Pastor Doug will lead us through the sacrament.