

Blessed, to be a blessing

Message for Sunday, March 17, 2019
by Bruce Fraser

Scripture: Genesis 12:1-2

Children's Message:

The word “blessing” means “something that is good or helpful.” In this Bible passage, we see that God blesses us, so that we can be a blessing to others. You might wonder, “What could I do to bless someone?” So let me tell you a story.

“Hi, Mommy, what are you doing?” asked Susie.

“I’m making a casserole for Mrs. Smith next door,” said her mother.

“Why?” asked Susie, who was six years old.

“Because Mrs. Smith is very sad; she daughter died and she has a broken heart. We need to take care of her for a little while.”

“Why, Mommy?”

“You see, Susie, when someone is very, very sad, they have trouble doing the little things like making dinner or other chores. Because we’re part of a community and Mrs. Smith is our neighbour, we need to do some things to help her. Mrs. Smith won’t ever be able to talk with her daughter or hug her or do all those wonderful things that mommies and daughters do together. You are a very smart girl, Susie; maybe you’ll think of some way to help take care of Mrs. Smith.”

Susie thought seriously about this challenge and how she could do her part in caring for Mrs. Smith. A few minutes later, Susie knocked on her door. After a few moments Mrs. Smith answered the knock with a “Hi, Susie.”

Susie noticed that Mrs. Smith didn’t have that familiar musical quality about her voice when she greeted someone.

Mrs. Smith also looked as though she might have been crying because her eyes were watery and swollen.

“What can I do for you, Susie?” asked Mrs. Smith.

“My mommy says that your daughter died and you’re very, very sad with a broken heart.” Susie held her hand out shyly. In it was a Band-Aid. “This is for your broken heart.” Mrs. Smith gasped, choking back her tears. She knelt down and hugged Susie. Through her tears she said, “Thank you, darling girl, this will help a lot.”

Mrs. Smith accepted Susie’s act of kindness and took it one step further. She purchased a small key ring with a plastic picture frame—the kind designed to carry keys and display a picture at the same time. Mrs. Smith placed Susie’s Band-Aid in the frame to remind herself to heal a little every time she sees it. She wisely knows that healing takes time and support. It has become her symbol for healing, while not forgetting the joy and love she experienced with her daughter.

Source: Meladee McCarty (author of *Acts of Kindness: How to Create a Kindness Revolution*) was on a radio talk show in Chicago when someone called in with this story.

Message: “Blessed, to be a blessing”

In Corrie ten Boom’s book *The Hiding Place*, she tells about life in the Nazi concentration camp Ravensbruck. She and her sister Betsy were prisoners there because their family had given shelter to a Jewish family who were hiding from the Nazis.

The building where the women prisoners slept was terribly overcrowded. Even worse, fleas were everywhere. It was impossible to avoid being a meal for fleas all through the night.

Corrie and Betsy miraculously had been able to smuggle a Bible into the camp, and in that Bible they read that in all things they were to give thanks, and that God can use anything for good. Corrie’s sister Betsy decided this meant thanking God for the fleas. This was too much for Corrie, who said she could do no such thing. Betsy insisted, so Corrie gave in and prayed to God, thanking him even for the fleas.

During the next several months, a wonderful, but curious, thing happened. They found that the guards never entered the women’s quarters. This meant the women were not assaulted. It also meant they were able to do the unthinkable, which was to hold open

Bible studies and prayer meetings in the heart of a Nazi concentration camp. Through this, countless numbers of women came to faith in Christ.

Only at the end did they discover why the guards had left them alone and would not enter their quarters. It was because of the fleas! The fleas were not a curse; they were a blessing.

God has so abundantly blessed us! Many of these blessings we don't even notice. For instance, think of your favorite food. Maybe macaroni and cheese. Or steak. Or Thai green curry. Or homemade apple pie with ice cream. What if none of them existed? What if, when God created us, he designed us so that we would eat or drink just one food. Our digestive system would then convert that into all the nutrients that our body needs. Just like the digestive system does right now. We would have the same food every day of our lives, with never any variety. (It would be just the same as the way we breathe: we breathe in the same air every day, and never give it a thought that maybe we could breathe something else.) We would never know all the wonderful smells and tastes of such a variety of foods.

Instead, our world is more delicious than it needs to be. We have been blessed with a *superabundance* of divine goodness and generosity. God went over the top. We don't need the variety we enjoy, but he gave it to us out of sheer exuberant joy and grace.

Why? Why did God plan it this way? Why has God so abundantly blessed us?

As people of faith, we believe that everything we have, even our bodies, comes from God. We may work to build things and earn money, but God gave us the ability to do that work, and gave us the time in which to do it. The people around us—that's God's gift as well. The beauty of nature—same thing again.

It's not just us. God has blessed everyone. Every living being on the planet. And even the earth itself. God's love is beyond our imagination.

God has given us all this. We get to choose how we are going to use what God has given us. That's a pretty good deal!

However, God knows us pretty well. So God has given us some directions or rules to help us make good decisions about how we use all this goodness. That means either that God is a control freak, or that God knows our human tendency to misuse things. Hmm, I think the latter is correct. Forget about the daily news with all the evil in the world; we don't have to look any further than the end of our nose to know this.

But I want to go back to the question I posed a moment ago: Why has God so abundantly blessed us?

We see an answer to this in God's covenant with Abram and Sarai:

Genesis 12:1-2, New Living Translation:

Then the Lord told Abram, "Leave your country, your relatives, and your father's house, and go to the land that I will show you. I will cause you to become the father of a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and I will make you a blessing to others."

Just so you don't get confused: this Abram is the same person as the more familiar Abraham; and Sarai is the same person as Sarah. Their names were changed later on in Genesis.

There you have it: "I will bless you... and I will make you a blessing to others." We are spiritual descendants of Abram, so this applies to us as well. The purpose for us being blessed is not so that we can keep it all to ourselves. The purpose is so that we can pass the blessing on to others. We are *blessed, to be a blessing.*

So here's what I'd like you to do this week: be a blessing to someone else. And let's have some fun while we're doing this!

Jesus tells us not to show off when we're blessing others:

Matthew 6:1, New Living Translation:

"Take care! Don't do your good deeds publicly, to be admired, because then you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven."

So we're going to be secret agents of blessing. That is, don't let the person you're blessing know who did it. You can put something in the mail

anonymously. You can call from a phone booth—there still is one in town, by Kevin Goodkey’s garage—and disguise your voice. You can break into someone’s house when they’re gone out and—well, maybe that’s not such a good idea. ☺ But my guess is that in an area like ours without a lot of crime, there’s a lot of people who don’t lock their doors, so you’re not really breaking in. Go in, and leave something on the kitchen table. OK, if you really don’t want to do that, just leave something by their door!

Next Steps:

- As the song says, “Count your blessings.” Think of all the benefits with which God has blessed you.
- Pray: say “Thanks” to God. Then continue in prayer: “How can I be a blessing to others?”
- Have fun blessing other people this week!