

Sermon - November 20, 2016 - Last Sunday of the Church Year

Healing Worship

Blessed to be a Blessing

Various verses



Introduction:

Dear Friends in Christ

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” (2 Corinthians 13:14)

For the past few weeks we have been meditating on our liturgical worship, on why we do what we do every Sunday as God gathers us in His name. We have meditated on the mayor elements of our Liturgy and today we do meditate on the last one element, the benediction.

Now when we started the series, we introduced this diagram (on the screen) that explains the process of our worship service. As you look closely you see that God brings us up to his holy Mountain, to the top, to the mountain top, just as the letter to the Hebrews tells us (Hebrews 12:22-24), this is what the text says: Hebrews 12:22-24 “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering,²³ and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,²⁴ and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.”

Now notice how the line goes, we start from the bottom but as we come to the other side or the end of our worship service, we don't exactly come down from the mountain but we continue in the height of the mountain, remembering what God did for us during worship, how are forgiven of our sins, how he fed us his word, his body and his blood, and how we worshiped in joyous response to God's doings.

Now, as the line continues and as we walk away from the worship mountaintop, we are sent, we sent with a blessing.

You probably know the words of the blessing, right? From the book of Numbers, (Numbers 6:22-27) we hear how God instructed his priests to bless his people: “²² The LORD spoke to Moses, saying,²³ “Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel: you shall say to them,²⁴ The LORD bless you and keep you;²⁵ the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;²⁶ the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.²⁷ “So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them.”

Every time we come to the close of the service, we certainly look forward to the blessing, or the benediction as we call it, and it is not because the service is ending, but because we would like to leave this house of prayer with God's blessings. That God's presence is going with us; that he is blessings us as we go out.

And we are blessed indeed!

However, God's intention in blessing you is not so much to make your lives easier, good or prosperous, but God blesses us so that we can bless others. The

Psalmist David tells us why. In chapter 67, (Psalm 67:1-2) prays this blessings with a purpose. He says: "May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us,² that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations."

Yes, Lord bless us, as you promised, so that the land in which we live can be blessed, and in the Psalm it happened. Later in verse six and 7 (Psalm 67:6-7) we hear these words: "The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, shall bless us. ⁷ God shall bless us; let all the ends of the earth fear him!"

God blesses us so that we can bless others and help them understand and know for themselves God's ways and salvation and glory. God blesses us so that we can live our lives in such a way that the people around us can see what God has done in us and for us. It has always been God's plan.

It was God's plan for the Old Testament Church, the people of Israel. When God first called Abraham and told him that he was going to make him into a great nation it wasn't just so Abraham and his extended family would know the goodness and prosperity God gives, it was so that the world would see God in them, it so that God would bless the rest of the world through the blessing the nation of Israel would share with the rest of the world. We read in (Genesis 12:2-3), how God blessed Abraham and why. "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 dishonours you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

God blesses Abraham so that he and his family would be a blessing in the world and so that the world would be blessed through him. God's intent wasn't just to take care of one family but to be known and honored and worshiped by all families in the world.

And so generations later God reminded them why he was blessing them. Through the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 42:6-7) he said: "I am the Lord; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, ⁷ to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness."

As you see God's purpose was that his people would be blessed so that they could shine God's light to the Gentiles so that they would be able to see the heart and mind of God by how they lived.

The blessing of God's authority and Christ's presence with us always isn't just for us but to be used by us to make disciples of all people. We are blessed by God in order to be a blessing to the world. Now how should we bless others? How does that look like?

You remember the three words of our mission statement, right? Faith – love - Community.

Blessed to bless other with faith: Now, why should we be bless other with faith? Isn't that what we are supposed to do? Going back to Psalm 67, the psalmist reminds his people of the primarily purpose of their existence: "that your way" that God's way "may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations" he says. That all be saved, that's why Jesus came to this world to die on behalf of all sinners, you, me, and the rest of the world. And that's Jesus commission and charge to each one of us.

That's at the heart of faith, of our faith, that's what we need to bless others with. It's a task that we should have as a priority here, as a congregation, but also as individuals.

The way God's people lived was to help open the eyes of the blind so they could see all that truly mattered to God. **Jesus didn't call people** to follow him for the sole purpose of having their lives improved, the call to follow Jesus always came with a call to be a blessing to others. Peter was called to be a fisher of people – to draw people to Jesus so they could find life. The disciples were to be the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13) and the light of the world (Matthew 5:14a). In other words, their lives of faith were to be lived with such power and love and clarity that people would be able to see Jesus and the blessing and kingdom of God in them and see the power of life that Jesus had to offer the world, and so that that by faith they would come to salvation as well. Isn't that what Jesus charged us with (**Matthew 28:18-20**), in his Great commission?

He said: **"All authority** in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in^[a] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Blessed to bless other with love: we should love, yes we should love one another. Now I have said this before, that love among God's people should be a two way process, as the Apostle Paul teaches (**Philippians 2:3-5**) us to do, he says: **"Do nothing from rivalry** or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus."

But when it comes to showing love to the world, that's different, it requires sacrificial love. It requires that we invest in them. That what we do would express a profound Christian love, dynamic and **fearless**. **"For** God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control." (2 Timothy 1:7)

Remember how blesses us. How he keeps us, how he makes his face to shine upon us, and is gracious to us, and how he gives us peace. That we are to share in love and care for those who are hurting.

We are blessed so we can bless in Community: Yes we are to bless others through and with our community, this community, this community of faith and love. That we would live as God has called us to be in Community, to know and remember that each one of us has been brought, by faith in Christ, to be part of God's people as the apostle Peter (**1 Peter 2:9-10**) said: **"But you are a chosen** race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

So, let us live in God's grace, mercy and forgiveness, but let us also learn to share God's grace, mercy and forgiveness with each other.

Let us forgive as God forgives us, letting go of offenses and not seeking revenge, I know, it isn't always easy, but we do have One who teaches and enables us how to forgive, it's the healing God brings about in His Gospel, it is what we have experienced in worship. Think of what forgiveness and grace could mean to each one, people who suffer with depression for example, and what it might do to help restore marriages and strengthen families. None of this is easy and for real life to be experienced through the

process of forgiveness there needs to be truth and accountability and justice and change on all sides, but if we could begin to offer real forgiveness to others, think what a blessing that would be for our community and why not the world.

Conclusion:

Dear Friends, our God is good, our God is gracious, loving and forgiving. He has blessed us beyond our understanding, and reassures us with his blessings when he sends us out.

His words are full of promised and power, when you hear these words "The LORD bless you and keep you; ²⁵ the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; ²⁶ the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace." Think and see that He not only blesses you but enables you to bless others as well, through His Son Jesus Christ, in the power of His forgiveness, by his death on the cross, by his burial, and by the power of his resurrections, he sends you out with a blessing, you are blessed indeed.

In his name, amen.