

## God's Blessings Upon You

Rev. Taek Kim

Scripture: Numbers 6:24-25

<sup>24</sup> The LORD bless you and keep you;

<sup>25</sup> the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;

<sup>26</sup> the LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

Blessings have been a part of human existence ever since the beginning. God blessed Adam and Eve with each other. God also blessed them both by telling them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth...” (Genesis 1:28). God blessed them with what they needed to eat, live and flourish. Even when Adam and Eve disobeyed and sinned against God, with facing harsh consequences, God still cared for them, clothed them, and watched over them in their lives outside of the Garden of Eden, a life that would always be filled with reminders of the consequences of their actions. Throughout the Bible we read of God blessing individuals, couples, families, and groups of people.

There are also blessings that people gave to one another; from parents to their children, a patriarch or matriarch to the next leaders, and from the religious leaders and teachers to friends.

Of course, when it came to the salvation of our very souls, God did not leave or abandon God's loved creation. The promise God made to Adam and Eve when things seemed to be hopeless was fulfilled in time.

We are blessed disciples of Christ because of what God did through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. The blessings we received through Christ are the blessings we not only cherish in our lives, but also share generously with all, including the saving Good News of Jesus.

Even before you were born, God prepared things in a series of events, even with free will God gave to humans, that led to your life and journey thus far. So when I think of God's provisions and grace that were prepared in advance, I was reminded of how things were prepared for me before I and my family arrived in Carleton in July of 2012.

It was actually in January of that year the appointment was announced. In February we were invited to the church's Children's PJ Party to help our kids meet other children, as well as for us to meet other parents from the church and community. Though there are usually protocols to when a new pastor participates in events before the official start date for various good reasons, Rev. Brent Webster welcomed our family to join in the PJ party. I remember after the fun games, pizza and snacks and the flashlight hunt, and as we pulled out of the church parking lot our 3 children, the Andrew and Jonathan only 2 years old and Rebekah 4, said that they wanted to come back to this church. Jamie and I smiled and said they were surely going to return to this church.

That was one of several blessings we received before we arrived. As I've done with incoming pastors when I was leaving, as the pastor wanted, it was Pastor Brent took time to meet with me. We also took time to have lunch with our spouses. There was the time to visit the church and parsonage, with Joanne Northey as the SPRC Chair at that time who with her husband Tom drove us around to get a tour of Carleton. Of course there was Jim Marlow, the trustee chair, who with a host of church members prepared the parsonage for us that became our home.

And over these years we have experienced the blessings of God as a congregation. Not only in experiencing blessing for each other, but also blessings for our community by:

- Collecting food several times a year and delivering food baskets and gifts to families in need during Thanksgiving and Christmas
- Serving our homebound and those in nursing homes in various ways, including leading monthly worship services at Fountain View
- Raising funds so that the children and youth could attend activities without giving any thought to whether they could afford special events and trips
- Being involved in our schools with collecting clothing, volunteering, and supporting our teachers as needed

And the list goes on and on. We are to give God thanks for blessing us so that we can be blessings of God unto others.

This is a wonderful and powerful theme in the Bible and throughout history. When we look around us today, from our communities to places throughout the world, there are those who feel incredibly blessed as well as those who feel they missed out on such blessings, or at times they even have been punished or cursed.

That is understandable when you consider what has been experienced by so many all over the world since humanity's curse of sin. Though in Christ we have been freed and saved spiritually, we continue to live with struggles and the constant effects of sin and spiritual warfare that is manifested in so many ways in life.

Though such struggles and trials in life are not desired for self or others, it is often in the midst of troubles and even tragedy that blessings are most evident when people come together and pray together, grieve with one another, provide what is needed, help with journeying through the toughest moments, and help when there is rebuilding to be done.

We have done this with family, with friends, with one another as a church family, and with complete strangers who God has led us to cross paths with in one way or another. Some unexpected blessings came to me when total strangers said words that blessed me when they said something like, "You're the pastor of that church that helped me when..." or "Your church helped my friend or family member or a group of children or...you fill in the blank."

It's often from the perspective of being blessed that we may read these verses in Numbers 6. But take a moment and look beyond how God has blessed you to see how you can be a source

of God's blessing in the lives of those all around you. How it is that others experience God's blessing through you, through your words and actions.

So when you hear these verses from Numbers 6, think about how you can communicate these blessings through your life.

The LORD bless you and keep you;

the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;

the LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

As I've said this in various ways in my previous messages, how others experience the blessings, love and presence of God is through other people, including you and me! Just as we have experienced God's blessings through others, we are the very people God works through also.

Blessings is not always things that are easy, comfortable, or gifts that we'd wake up and desire. So do not misinterpret being blessed as only things that go your way or how you'd want, or it being having no problems or troubles or needs. In fact, we see the word "blessed" in a very different light when we hear Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:1-16.

**5** <sup>1</sup> When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. <sup>2</sup> Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:  
<sup>3</sup> "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
<sup>4</sup> "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.  
<sup>5</sup> "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.  
<sup>6</sup> "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.  
<sup>7</sup> "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.  
<sup>8</sup> "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.  
<sup>9</sup> "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.  
<sup>10</sup> "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
<sup>11</sup> "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.  
<sup>13</sup> "You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.  
<sup>14</sup> "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. <sup>15</sup> No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

It doesn't mean you're blessed when everything is going your way, there is no conflict. Rather in knowing your spiritual needs, the sin that Christ died for, and your need for Christ's righteousness, mercy, renewed heart, you find the blessings of God. And that included when we are merciful when there are demands for harsh punishment, and when we seek to be

peacemakers when conflict and war are desired or even encouraged. On top of that, when we are persecuted for following Jesus, we have assurance that such suffering will also be blessed. And let me point out that the persecution Jesus spoke of was a life-threatening persecution that many disciples faced when imprisoned and even killed.

See how in verses 13-16 Jesus goes from how those who are in need emotionally, relationally, mentally, and of course spiritually can be and are actually blessed by God, but also to how God works through each of us to point to God, guide others to God by shining the light we have from Christ. It is Christ's light, not our own, that we shine. And that last verse is one that strikes the point I made earlier of how others experience the blessings of God in and through our good works so that it is God who is praised and thanked.

So when we are the ones feeling spiritually defeated, when we are in grief and mourning, when we feel bombarded by others as we strive to follow Christ, let us not give up hope, let us not lose faith, and let us not give up on living for God and loving God and others. In doing so, we may feel God's blessings at all times and in all circumstances, especially in how we share the blessings that God has for us to share with others, near and far. Amen.

#### Prayer Requests:

1. Keep Chetti Smith's sister-in-law in prayer as she recovers from surgery for cancer.
2. Pray for Mark & Bev Buell, Jeanette Richman and family on the passing of their sister-in-law, Marty.

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As this is my last sermon, please know that the new pastor, Rev. Cloud Poy, may not continue having written sermons mailed to you. I began doing this since I knew there were those who were not able to watch online services or preferred or needed printed sermons.