

11/16/25 – Blessed to be a Blessing - Lori Lower

Genesis 12:1-3, Acts 3:24-25, Galatians 3:8-9, Matthew 7:12

TOD: “Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.”  
-Leo Buscaglia

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I’ve titled today’s message, Blessed to Be a Blessing. I borrowed the topic from Bishop Lynn Thrush, who included this in part of his devotional on Sunday morning at our pastor’s retreat in September. If you’ve heard Bishop Lynn speak before, he almost always includes this scripture from Genesis 12, “All the families of the earth will be blessed through you.” “Bless all the families of the earth” is his catch phrase. Pastor Keith and I happened to be sitting next to each other and he leans over and says to me, “This needs to be preached at ABC. Do you want to do it?” After thought and prayer, I later agreed.

I’d like to take a brief look at God’s covenant with Abraham, as Chris read from our passage in Genesis, and what it means for us, looking at some New Testament passages from Acts and Galatians, as well as Jesus’ teaching from the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7. Then hopefully, we’ll glean some practical applications that we can implement in our lives as Christ-followers today.

I’ll start by reading Genesis 12:1-3; this time in the New Living Translation.

**12** The LORD had said to Abram, “Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father’s family, and go to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup>I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a *blessing* to others. <sup>3</sup>I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be *blessed* through you.”

If you noticed, there are different words used for *who* will be blessed. The NLT uses all the families on earth. The NIV uses peoples. Other versions I looked at include *everyone, all the kindred, people* – I’m not sure how that differs from peoples, and *communities*.

You may remember, or not, that I did a sermon on what bless or blessing means, back in 2018. Just as a refresher, the Hebrew word most often used for bless is “*barak*” [baw-rak’], a verb which means “to kneel” as one would kneel to receive a blessing. It also means to praise, congratulate, or salute. Another verb tense of the word is that it means to show respect, which is also typically translated as bless or be blessed. The Hebrew word, “*berakhah*” [ber-aw-kaw’], is the word for blessing and means gift or present. Strong’s Concordance states that “In a few cases, the Lord made people to be a “blessing” to others. Abraham is a blessing to the nations. His descendants are expected to become a blessing to the nations.” In Genesis 12, verse 2, God tells Abram, “and you will be a blessing to others.” God makes Abram the recipient of blessing and as well as a channel of blessing to others.

Most of us typically think of God’s blessings as him giving us good things, such as health, family, possessions, prosperity, and we often read in the Old Testament of God doing such things for his people.

But in Genesis 12:3, God also declares to Abraham that “all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” This blessing is fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus Christ, as recorded in the New Testament. Ephesians 1:3 states that as believers, we are blessed with every *spiritual* blessing, and as a result we are called to be a source of blessing to the world.

When we think about the story of Abram/Abraham and of God's promise that He would make him into a great nation, we often overlook the second part of God's covenant of blessing. One commentator notes, "Not only would this nation be blessed, God said, but the other nations of the earth would be blessed through Abram's descendants. Israel, the nation that would come from Abram, was to follow God and influence those with whom it came in contact. Through Abram's family tree, Jesus Christ was born to save humanity. Through Christ, people can have a personal relationship with God and be blessed beyond measure."

There is the ultimate blessing – that people can have a personal relationship with God, through Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

Now, you're probably thinking, as I did myself – are we or are we not direct descendants of Abraham? In the respect of time, we cannot delve into those complexities of lineage and genealogy today. So for the sake of argument, we are not – we are not Israelites or Jews, but we are *connected*.

In Acts 3:24-25, Luke – a doctor, who was a Greek, Gentile Christian (not a Jew), says this. (BTW he is the only known Gentile author in the New Testament – he wrote the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. He was a close friend and companion of Paul.)

<sup>24</sup>Starting with Samuel, every prophet spoke about what is happening today. <sup>25</sup>You are the children of those prophets, and you are *included* in the covenant God promised to your ancestors. For God said to Abraham, 'Through your descendants all the families on earth will be blessed.'

Furthermore, Paul himself, and remember he was a Jew of the strictest kind, wrote this in Galatians 3:8-9.

<sup>8</sup>What's more, the Scriptures looked forward to this time when God would make the Gentiles right in his sight because of their faith. God proclaimed this good news to Abraham long ago when he said, "All nations will be blessed through you." <sup>9</sup> So all who put their faith in Christ share the same blessing Abraham received because of his faith.

Because of this, we not only share in the blessing Abraham received, but also the *commission* to be a blessing to others (Gen. 12:2) This means the families, nations, communities, and all peoples are to be blessed through us! We are to **live a life of blessing** – Paul says this IS the Gospel!

Let's look at the example of Jesus and then we'll examine some ways to incorporate this into our lives.

In Matthew 7:12, Jesus sets forth what is know as "The Golden Rule."

*Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets.*

I looked this verse up in other translations and you might find these as interesting as I did.

The Amplified Bible, Classic Edition puts it this way - "So then, whatever you desire that others would do to *and* for you, even so do also to *and* for them, for this is (sums up) the Law and the Prophets." Or how about The Message: "Here is a simple, rule-of-thumb guide for behavior: Ask yourself what you want people to do for you, then grab the initiative and do it for *them*. Add up God's Law and Prophets and this is what you get."

A commentator said this about The Golden Rule. “In many religions it is stated negatively: Don’t do to others what you don’t want done to you.” By stating it positively, Jesus made it more significant. It is not very hard to refrain from harming others; it is much more difficult to take the initiative in doing something good for them. The Golden Rule, as Jesus formulated it, is the foundation of active goodness and mercy—the kind of love God shows to us every day.”

Here’s where it ties in to Pastor Keith’s message last week. I’m not sure he did this on purpose, knowing this one was coming, but yes – what the world needs now is love, sweet love – but not the love that the world knows, but the love of God and the love he has for people – the nations, the families of the earth.

Jesus showed unconditional, compassionate love to everyone he encountered. I love all the passages where it says that “Jesus had compassion.” When Jesus saw crowds of people who seemed lost, he was moved with compassion. When he healed the sick or fed the multitudes, the Bible says he was moved with compassion.

Jesus’ compassion always leads to action, whether healing, feeding, providing, or calling others to serve! What would it look like if we too were moved with compassion? If we were moved to bless others by practicing The Golden Rule?

The quote that I had put on the cover of the bulletin is from Leo Buscaglia, often referred to as "Dr. Love", who was an American author, motivational speaker, and a professor in the Department of Special Education at the University of Southern California. He was known for always getting on the elevator, putting his back to the door and introducing himself saying "This might be the only chance I'll ever get to meet you and I don't want to miss this chance." (I could see Bonnie Graves doing this!) I’m not sure if he was a Christ-follower, but it was said he would rake the leaves in his yard and put them in a room in his house so he could sit and study them. He was fascinated that God would go to the trouble to make every leaf different. He said, "Imagine how proud he is of us if he goes to that much trouble for a simple leaf on a tree."

While teaching at USC, Buscaglia was moved by a student's suicide to contemplate human disconnectedness and the meaning of life, and began a noncredit class he called Love 1A, which became the basis for his first book, simply titled *Love*.

His statement is may sound trite, but it is very profound - “Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.”

I’m afraid to ask for a show of hands, so don’t raise them, but how many of you listened to the second song I sent out in last week’s Wednesday Worship email? *Who’s My Neighbor* was written about the story of the Good Samaritan, which Keith referenced in last week’s message. The first verse of the song is “They asked “Who’s my neighbor and whom should I love; for whom should I do a good deed?” The master related a story and said, “It’s anyone who has a need.” The fourth verse restates, “I know who’s my neighbor and whom should I love; for whom should I do a good deed? For Christ made it clear in the story he told; it’s anyone who has a need.”

For me, one of the most effective ways to “find” someone to bless is through prayer. I don’t do this as often as I should, but starting the day by asking that I would see others as God sees them and how I can

be a bleraction with our neighbors; our houses are situated in such a way that we rarely see each other. But when I hear the family next door yelling and swearing at each other, I try pray for them.

Do you have the gift of generosity, service, encouragement, hospitality, craftsmanship? Think about how *your* spiritual gifts can be used to bless the families of thssing, typically has a huge impact on my day. You know that phrase, “When I pray, coincidences happen, and when I don’t, they don’t. (William Temple) If you’re brave, I would suggest that you try this as an experiment.

I remember one week, although it was some time ago, that this happened as a result of my prayer. There were 3 or more separate instances out in public where people either said something to me, like “Are you a Christian?” or simply came up and asked me for help.

Yeah, it’s like that – God-incidences. God will put you in the path of someone who has a need or He will put that person in your path. It might be as simple as letting someone go in front of you in traffic, smiling at someone at the store, helping someone in the parking lot at Walmart corral a runaway shopping cart or their kids.

I also wanted to point out that our spiritual gifts are not meant to only be used or shared within our church or Christian community; they are meant to be used to bless those around us – the nations of the earth, the families, communities. Some of the named spiritual gifts, such as the gift of evangelism, are naturally to be shared with non-believers. But others such as encouragement, hospitality, intercession, etc. can be used as well to bless others – our neighbors.

One of my spiritual gifts is intercession. At times, I have been nudged to pray “covertly” for others. Gary and I don’t have much interaction with our neighbors; our houses are situated in such a way that we rarely see each other. But when I hear the family next door yelling and swearing at each other, I try to pray for them.

Do you have the gift of generosity, service, encouragement, hospitality, craftsmanship? Think about how *your* spiritual gifts can be used to bless the families of the earth.

Bishop Lynn, in his book, Soaring Hope – Imagining Life as it Ought to Be, made this statement that the prophets “see “many peoples” coming to God’s people. They see kings coming to the brightness of the light of God emanating from God’s people. I can only deduce that as God’s people possess the land, and do so with steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth, that their/our behavior becomes magnetic.”

Did you catch that – our behavior becomes magnetic? When we radiate the love and light of Christ in our lives, we become magnetic. People will want what we have – “I want what she’s having” and that will give us opportunities “to tell *everyone* who asks you why you believe as you do. Be gentle as you speak and show respect.” I Peter 3:15 b New Life Version

Randy Frazee puts it this way in his book, Believe – Living the Story of the Bible to Become Like Jesus. “Jesus provided his disciples with divine insight into the ministry of compassion to the poor and needy. He told them their acts of compassion would have eternal consequences. When Jesus returns he will separate the obedient followers from the unbelievers. How we treat others should make it clear into which of the two groups we fall. After all, our behavior has results that reach far beyond our time on this earth.”

Let’s ask for eyes that see others as God sees them, and that we would have compassion on them as Jesus would.

Because we are blessed with the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, we are blessed to be a blessing!

In a moment, Jeffrey's going to lead us in the song, "Make Me a Blessing." I urge you to pay special attention to the words.

Prayer

Benediction

The Scripture reference in our hymnbook for "Make Me a Blessing" is from Zechariah 8:13.

*But now I will save you. You will be a blessing to others. (NIRV)*

The Message says *From now on, you're the good-news people.*

Let's be the "good-news people," as we bless others along the way!