

Blessings

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Preacher: Tobin Miller

[0 : 0 0] we just say, well, whoever shows up, we'll just worship with them. As we think about the Chinese New Year, one of the themes that comes in often is this idea of blessings and being blessed.

And so what we thought we would do is we would change the service around a little, and we'd spend the focus and the majority of our time with you worshiping before the Lord. But you would spend this time thinking about how God has blessed you this last year, the blessings that he's brought into your life.

I think if you're like me, often the people who are the most blessed are the ones who are the biggest whiners, because we just take those things for granted.

And so our hope and our prayer this time is that you would put aside some of your whining and that you would focus as we sing and we worship and we would focus on the Lord and his goodness in our life.

Also, this Wednesday begins Lent. Lent is an English word. The Greek word and Latin word actually means 40 or 40 days or length. And it's the beginning of 40 days before Easter.

[1 : 0 3] It's one of the oldest celebrations in the Christian calendar. And it's traditionally a time when Christians come together starting on Wednesday and they start to reflect on what Christ has done for them.

They think about their life. They think about things they should be doing differently. And it's a time of repentance and worship. And so we felt like as these two holidays collide, it offers us the perfect opportunity to worship the only one who is worthy of our worship.

It's Jesus. So let me pray for us. Father, we thank you for this day as we come and we think of blessings. And we know that the ultimate blessing is your son hanging on a cross.

And so we come before you this moment and we beg you to meet us. We need you to meet us. We need to be different. We need to hear from you. We need to know you.

Lord, we pray as we come before our hearts, we just surrender them to you. Convict us of evil. Convict us of sin. Convict us of sloth. Convict us of all the things that we should have done, but we didn't do them because we were just too busy doing other things.

[2 : 1 1] And as we surrender and we repent these things to you, we just fall on your mercy and your grace. And we know that you've promised to forgive us and to change us.

And so we come today, this morning, in these precious few minutes, and we ask you to change us, to meet with us. We love you.

We praise you in Jesus' name. Amen. Before you're seated, would you just turn around and welcome someone to the house of the Lord?

Wish them a happy new year. Okay. Everybody got a chance to greet somebody? So hopefully everybody got a chance to greet somebody. Okay. So since it's Chinese New Year, what I'd like to do is really quickly, just have all the kids stand up.

All the kiddos stand up. Don't stay right where you are, right by your parents. Stay right where you are. All the kiddos stand up. Okay. Come on. Okay. So I have 200 Hongbaos here.

[3 : 17] 200. And they are filled with the most precious thing I think in the world besides Diet Coke. And that's chocolate.

So, but I'm told that you have to say something to me before I give these things to you. So can you guys say that out loud for me? I can't hear you.

Okay. Okay. So this is what we're going to do. I'm going to pray for you and we're going to dismiss you.

And Miss Auntie Sherman or one of the teachers is going to help hand these out to you. Okay. So now they're nut free and gluten free and fun free. Okay.

So your parents should have no reservations about this. Okay. So let me pray for us. Father, we thank you for this day. We thank you for this family. We thank you that we're not just one group of people or one nationality, but we are multiple, multiple nationalities.

[4 : 26] We're marrieds and newly marrieds and older marrieds and we're singles and we're kids. And all of these things bring us together as your family.

And to lose any of these groups, we would be, we'd be less. We wouldn't be a family. And so we thank you, Lord, for all that you brought to your church here. We pray for these little kids right now as they're about to head out.

Lord, we pray for their teachers. We pray for mercy. We pray for grace. We pray for patience. We pray that the kids would fall in love with you. They'd see Jesus taught in the words and in the videos and in the lives of the people who teach them and sacrifice their time to raise our kids for these couple of moments.

So they would see your son and they would see how beautiful he is and they would love him. They'd walk a lifetime with him. And they would do mighty things for your kingdom.

So we thank you for these blessings that you've given us and these children and these teachers and these servants. We lift up all these things. Your son, Jesus, holy name.

[5 : 35] Amen. Watermark kids are dismissed. Youth are dismissed with Eric. Yes, youth. You get some too. And Mil and I have one for you. So don't worry. Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay. Just going to come now to a time to pray at this New Year time.

It's great to actually think of how God has blessed us and then how we can be a blessing to the city. So if you'd like to just bow your heads and pray with me.

I'm going to start praying, thanking God for the blessings he's given us. And then we're going to go to move in to pray for families and our city. Let's pray. Father, we thank you that you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing.

Thank you that we are forgiven. Thank you that we are adopted as your children. Thank you that we are so loved by you. Thank you that you have poured out your son and your blood on that cross, Lord, which means we don't have to live in fear any longer.

We don't have to live proving ourselves any longer. We don't have to live, Father, as slaves any longer because your grace is enough for us.

[7 : 05] Lord, please help us to remember your blessings as we are in this new year, Father. Father, and let's just have a moment where each of you can think of the way that God has blessed you.

And just kind of under your breath, just thank God for the many blessings that he's poured out in your life. Let's just stop and pause and thank him for the things he's blessed you with.

Father, we're so grateful that you are a God who loves to bless. You're a God who loves to give. You're a God who is so faithful to us. Thank you. Let's now turn to pray for, particularly for families in Hong Kong at this new year time.

Father, I just want to thank you that you have called us to be a blessing into our families, Lord. And I pray that as watermark, as people are going out today to be with their families, where there may be tension, where there may be brokenness, where there are hurts, Lord, I pray that we as your people would be a people of blessing, a people who do not hold grudges, a people who do not hold on to the things that have happened in the past, but a people who are demonstrating, even as we eat today, as people visit their relatives today, that they would see and they would hear something of your blessing, Lord, in their lives.

I pray, Lord, that you would make us a people who are concerned that people might come to know your blessing, the blessing of being in Christ, Lord.

[8 : 46] Please, as watermark, I pray that we would not just be a church which is here for ourselves, not just here to kind of get and take from this city, but we'd be a people who are here to pour out our lives, Lord, into our families, into the relationships that we have around us, so that they might know you and know the wonderful grace of Christ.

Amen. Let's just come to pray now for this city that we're in. Father, I thank you for the many blessings that we can see in this city, Lord, for the wonderful food, the great culture that there is here, Lord.

But Lord, we also recognize there is much brokenness in this place. We pray, Lord, that as a church, we will be a people who reach out to the marginalized and the broken.

We pray, Lord, your blessing upon the elderly, the people who are lonely at this New Year's time. We pray for those who are homeless, those who are refugees, those who are struggling, Lord Jesus, just to make ends meet.

Lord, we pray that as a church, we might be a people who are reaching out to these people, Father. We pray for churches across Hong Kong, that we would be known to be a people who are pouring out our lives to see the broken healed, to see lives transformed.

[10 : 19] We pray that your gospel would go through this city, Lord, that people would come to know you wherever they are. We pray, Father, for those who are consumed by money and materialism.

We pray that we as your people might live radically different lives, where the blessing we seek is not just a material blessing, but it's that peace and that joy and that relationship with you, which is far beyond anything else, Lord.

And I pray that that will make a difference as we go into our offices, in our workplaces, in our homes, in our schools, that we would be so different that people would want to know who is the God who has blessed you so much.

Lord, I pray, make us this people. Bless this city. Bless our families. Would you get all the glory, Lord Jesus? Amen. The scripture reading today comes from the book of Genesis, chapter 12.

Please follow along in your bulletins. Now the Lord said to Abram, Go forth from your country and from your relatives and from your father's house to the land which I will show you, and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great.

[11 : 43] And so you shall be a blessing. And I will bless those who bless you. And the one who curse you, I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.

So Abram went forth as the Lord had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew, and all their possessions which they had accumulated, and the persons which they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan.

Thus they came to the land of Canaan. Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem to the oak of Moreh. Now the Canaanite was then in the land.

The Lord appeared to Abram and said, To your descendants I will give this land. So he put an altar there to the Lord who had appeared to him.

[12 : 53] Then he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel. And he pitched his tent with Bethel to the west and I to the east.

And there he built an altar to the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord. This is God's word. Okay, well I debated whether we should even do a sermon today.

Maybe you will after you hear the sermon also. As we think about coming together before the Lord and what does it mean to be blessed by him.

One of the questions I've been thinking about a lot is what does it mean to live within God's blessing? What does it mean to have God's blessing upon you today?

We talked about may God bless you. What does that really mean to you sitting here? What does that mean to you as you walk out of here? What does that mean to you when you go to your families today to eat meals with them?

[13 : 53] I've had friends tell me sometimes that that's the worst part of their day going to their families. And they're compared with their relatives of how they, Why haven't you had this done yet? Why aren't you at this place yet? Why aren't you married yet? Why don't you have kids yet?

And instead of a blessing, it becomes a curse. But I think that we all want to be blessed. A friend showed me this today. This is in the, this week, this is in the local parking shop.

And so this is the sign for the blessing there. And as a guy, you can't see it, but you go in there today. It's still there. And as a guy pushing a cart and he says, Wishing you a blessing, a year of earning more and more and more.

And so for him, that's what, or for parking shop, that's what blessings mean. I guess maybe that means that they want you to buy more and more and more.

We all want to be blessed. About a year ago, I tried an experiment. I'm not making this up. Something inside of me said, okay, I need to start blessing people. And so at the end of every time I had this conversation, especially with people who weren't churchgoers, I would say something to the idea of, God bless you.

[15 : 08] Or the Lord bless you. And I have to admit, at first it was very awkward and very weird and very difficult. It sounded kind of archaic saying those words.

Because we don't talk about being blessed very much or blessing people. But what I saw was that everybody perked up when I said that to them.

And often they would say, thank you. I really appreciate that. Even after we had talked about God and Scripture and they weren't Christ's followers, everybody was always encouraged.

Until last week. I got in this conversation with this guy for about two hours. Christina was laughing because we were talking and she was doing some things. And she was, you know, and we were talking.

And at the end of this time, he was Jewish. And at the end of the time, I said, I was just trying to think of, should I say it or shouldn't I say it? Should I say it or shouldn't I say it? I said, I'm going to say it. And I said, you know, may the Lord bless you.

[16 : 08] And he looked at me with a frown on his face. He said, I can't take your blessing. And I'm like, is it because I'm a Gentile?

He goes, no. It's because I'm angry with God. And I don't even know if God exists.

And I know that if I take your blessing, I have a responsibility. And that responsibility is to pass that blessing to somebody else.

And I don't want to do that. I'm too busy. I'm too busy to receive God's blessing. I'm too busy to be involved in other people's lives. In fact, I would rather just make my own blessings.

I thought about that. And I realized, you know, that's probably how most of the people in the world are today.

[17 : 15] They don't want God's blessing. They want to make their own blessings. And the passage today, I think, is like the seminal passage about blessings.

And it's going to teach us two things. It's going to teach us a ton of things. This isn't the first time we've looked at it. It's not going to be the last time we've looked at it. We're going to come back to this over and over and over again. We looked at this two years ago. We're not going to talk about the same things two years ago.

But this is what I want us to see. I learned two things about blessings in the passage in the book of them. The first thing is, is that all blessings come from God.

We see it in Scripture. In Genesis 1 and 2, God creates. And if you read the creation story, three times he blesses his creation. He blesses the animals and the plants.

He blesses the man. And he blesses the Sabbath. The idea of that blessing was a relationship with God. The blessing flowed from a relationship with God.

[18 : 18] Blessing flowed from you and I having a relationship with God and being obedient to him. That's a word we don't use often today because it's not sexy and it's not fun.

But Scripture says our blessings flowed from God in our relationship with him as we obeyed him. In fact, the Bible says, Genesis 1 and 2, that God created you.

I know this is going to sound weird because we don't talk about this and we're kind of anti this here because we don't talk about sexy things. But God created you to bless you. Did you know that?

Genesis 1 and 2 says God created you to bless you. And that blessing primarily comes from a relationship that he wants with you. Well, in Genesis 2 and 3, the fall happens and the blessing is broken.

And for the next 10 chapters of the book of the Bible, Genesis, the very first book, you and I, our father fathers, we all try to produce our own blessings. Some of them try to build a big city.

[19 : 30] Some of them try to build a big tower. Some of them try to make their name great. Some of them try to become powerful hunters before the Lord, Nimrod. Great and mighty men. Just like many people in Hong Kong today.

They produce, they make, they want a big name, they want to be great before men. But the scripture says that every one of these things that people try to get their own blessing failed.

And finally in the passage in Genesis 12, we're told that God comes to Abraham, a man who is a pagan, he isn't seeking God, he's probably a Canaanite, he's far, far away from God.

And God renews that blessing to Abraham again. God starts the blessing. All blessings come from God. All blessings flow through God. All blessings come in a relationship with God.

In obedience. So Abraham obeys. And he forsakes everything and he follows the Lord.

[20 : 36] And this passage is really amazing because Abraham had a choice. Just like you and I have a choice. Am I really going to trust God? Is God really good enough for me?

Does God really care about my life? Does he really have his act together? Does he know where I need and what I need and when I need it? And will he be there every time? Or will he let me down? And probably it's better that I just produce my own blessings.

Abraham had a choice. And we all have a choice. But the passage says that as Abraham obeyed God and trusted him, God took him into this amazing journey and land.

The second thing we see from this passage. All blessings flow from God in a relationship with God when we're obedient. The second thing we see is that blessings are never meant to be kept with us.

God blesses Abraham so that he can bless everyone around him. God blesses Abraham. Some of us, I think, we forget that.

[21 : 49] Some of us are like the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea, if you go to Israel with us in May, it's there. It's amazing. You can float in this much water. There's no way you can drown in the Dead Sea because it's so buoyant. The Dead Sea has all these fertile rivers flowing into it, the Jordan and everything.

But the difference about the Dead Sea is that it receives all these blessings from all over Israel, all over the good land flowing with milk and honey. It has no outlet. It's dead. And so it's dead.

A lot like many people in church today. They receive God's blessings. They receive God's goodness.

They receive God's mercy. And they keep it to themselves. And ultimately what happens when a church does that is it dies. It becomes stagnant.

It becomes dirty. It becomes filthy. It becomes unattractive. And the grace and the gospel lose its meaning. And so Abraham had a choice.

[22 : 52] And you and I have a choice. Are we going to trust the Lord? Are we going to be in a relationship with Him? Are we going to obey Him?

And as He pours these blessings on us, primarily these blessings are a relationship with Him. It's interesting when you look at the passage, Abraham realized very few of these blessings.

Do you understand that? I mean, God promised Abraham this amazing land. And when Abraham died, the only piece of land that he has is this little tomb in Hebron where he buried his wife, Sarah.

Ten feet by ten feet. So as he was alive and he walked in faith towards the blessing, all he received was ten feet by ten feet. But generations after him, his children's children's children's received amazing blessings because of his faithfulness and his obedience.

And so the question comes to us today, are we living for that ten feet? We're trying to produce it on our own.

[23 : 59] Or are we going to walk with the Lord? Allow His blessings to flow through us as we obey and walk with Him. And bless those people around us today.

What does that look like as you go out to your lunch today with the people who cause your life to be miserable as they compare you to your relatives and the cars and the degrees and all these things?

I don't know what that looks like for you. It might look like just going there and being present and taking the hit. It might mean be praying for them as all those things are happening.

What it meant for Abraham in this passage was, Kerem Bashem Yahweh. That wherever he went, he built an altar.

And he called on God's name. And he told everybody around him how great God is. If God is great, no matter where you're at, no matter what you're facing, you can trust Him.

[25 : 05] You can trust Him. All blessings flow from God. They flow primarily from a relationship we have with Him.

This relationship often is controlled and works through our obedience and walking in faith with Him. Blessings aren't meant to be kept by us. But blessings are meant to be spread out to those around us.

The main way we do that is by telling people about Christ in us. How wonderful and beautiful He is. In your chairs, there's a little card.

We wrote it out for you. What we would like for you to do as the worship team comes up is just basically this. We want you to sign your name and your address here. No one else is going to see this.

I promise. As your pastor, no one's going to see this. Just you and God. Write your name and your address here. In one year's time, we'll mail this back to you.

[26 : 07] If it gets returned to us, we'll just bring it to church. And you can pick it up one Sunday at church. Your name and address here. On this card, it's a Chinese saying.

My heart's desire for the new year is. We would like for you just to write down. What is your heart's desire for this year? What are the things that you're hoping that God will do in your life?

What are the things you're hoping that God will change in you? What are you hoping that God will bless you with as you walk in obedience to Him?

As the worship team prays, write these out. On the back, if you're really, really daring, you might write.

And this is what I hope I do with those blessings. As God pours out His relationship and life into me, this is what I pray that I would be able to do for those around me that work in my apartment place, at home, in my family.

[27 : 22] When you're done, just seal it up. Make sure you write something. Write sure you get your address, your name, and everything in there perfectly. And there'll be little baskets on each other corner right here and right there and on the way out.

And when the service is over, we want you just to drop those out in those baskets as an act of worship. And trust in the Lord to use the blessings that He gives you to reach those who don't know.

Father, we thank You for this day. We thank You for Abraham, Abram, who walked in faith and received very little to confirm at that time.

And now we can look back 4,000 years and we can see so much more. We can see the cross and we can see the resurrection and we can see Easter and we can see all these things that continue to show you to be true to Your Word and to Your blessing and to Your promise.

And it's so much easier, I think, for us to have faith than it was for Him. We thank You for His life that's put before us, the good and the bad and the ugly, so that we might learn what it means to walk in a life that is obedient to You.

[28 : 36] So Father, I pray for us, I pray for this church that we would never become stagnant like the Dead Sea, that we never would become dead as we hoard the blessings, because Your Word says that if we do that, You'll just take them away.

But that You've given us everything we need. You've given us everything we need to walk with You. Lord, help us to be different.

Help Hong Kong to be different as we do that and bless those around us. We pray these things in Your Son Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Hey, thank you. I'm so humbled to be able to worship with you guys on this Chinese New Year as a family. Realize that this doesn't end. We'll do this in heaven as a family of God.

So it's amazing that you're here worshiping with us today. You know, in your bulletins, there are a couple of announcements. Just want you to look at those really quickly. There's a men's gathering on Monday. Monday, a week from now, women are doing an amazing outreach.

[29 : 47] There's going to be some studying of the Old Testament. We want to take people through the Scriptures and give them foundationally. And as we build into people this year, the year of equipping, and some other opportunities, we put together, the pastors of Hong Kong put together a devotion book for Lent.

So each day, starting on Wednesday, Ash Wednesday, there's a devotion written by some of the pastors in here. So the one per individual available on the table out there, just take it on your way out and pray that you would be blessed by that.

Make sure you put your letters with your names and your addresses in the boxes because we want to hold over those. We want to pray on those as a staff team. And then we want to mail those back to you in a year and see what God has done and how He has blessed you.

May God bless you. Father, I realize even as I say that, that there are some in here who are angry like David and do not want your blessing.

They want to produce their own blessings. They don't know if you're good or if you're true or you're faithful or you're strong enough or if you're wise enough to control their lives, our lives.

[31 : 10] Lord, I pray for my brothers and sisters here who are in that place. I pray that you would meet them, that you'd open their eyes, that you would heal their hearts, change their minds, help them to realize that true blessing isn't a 10 by 10 foot piece of land that they purchased, but it's a relationship with you which is so much greater and wonderful.

Father, I realize that as I share these words that there's some of us like myself in here who have the blessings, but often we trade them for a bowl of soup because we're so hungry or thirsty and we don't know if you're going to really come through for us and Lord, we repent of that.

We confess just not thinking great thoughts about you. We confess of not viewing you as you truly are, that you're wonderful and you're beautiful and that you control the universe and surely you can control our lives.

As a parent, Lord, I just confess trying to bless my kids in ways that probably are curses to them. Pray that we would come before you and allow you to bless these kids and our families and our friends and our workmates as we walk with you.

Lord, help us to be a river that flows from you to those around us and as we do that, you are blessed and you are praised. Lord, we need you.

[32 : 37] Just like Joshua said, if you don't go into the land with us then we're not going because we'll fail so we need you. We know that you promise to always be with us.

So we worship you this now, this moment, this time and as we go forth, may our lives this week be continual blessings and praise and worship to those around us.

Lord, we love you. We pray all these things in your Son, Jesus' holy name. Amen. God bless you. We'll see you back here next Sunday. Happy Chinese New Year.

Jesus' Lord of the ■■■ de master, His name is the Lord of the stars and sisters.

I think it's 53 ■■■ in the group. HappyLook in Your Toy of the distractors. HappyIC snow.