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9:00 a.m. Christian Education

**10:00 a.m. Worship**

Children's Sunday School during Worship



**"Blessed to Be a Blessing:  
The Trail of Blessing"**

**Galatians 3:1-14**

**Rev. Ron Holmes**

**June 6, 2010"**



We begin today with a short, two-sermon series entitled "Blessed to Be a Blessing." Like the word "Trinity" from last Sunday's worship, the phrase "Blessed to Be a Blessing" never appears in the Bible. I thought it did, but I couldn't find that specific phrase "blessed to be a blessing." Yet, also like the word "Trinity," the idea of being "blessed to be a blessing" runs throughout Scripture. An early such reference is in the blessing God gives to Abraham in Genesis, chapter 12—God blesses Abraham and says that "you will be a blessing...all nations will be blessed through you." Pretty close, but not exactly the phrase "blessed to be a blessing."

It is that story of blessing that the apostle Paul is referring to in our Scripture passage for today, Galatians 3:1-14. Listen to the word of God. (Read Galatians 3:1-14)

Make a thorough examination of the various ways in which you are blessed and you will undertake a lengthy process. Sit down and write out the various ways you've been blessed by God and you will come up with a long list. Do that even in the midst of difficult times—perhaps especially in the midst of difficult times—and you will have a lengthy list...if it's an honest, thorough examination of the ways we've been blessed. The length of general categories themselves would be fairly lengthy—blessed with family, health, the beauty of creation, the country we live in, the redemption given to me through Jesus Christ, and so on. Then, begin to break those down into more specific blessings—I am blessed to have Kim for my wife, I am blessed with three great kids, a wonderful son-in-law and now a granddaughter. The blessing of creation: the mountains, creeks and rivers that run through the mountains, glorious days like today, the distance of 90 feet

basepaths in baseball (for surely, arriving at that distance was divinely inspired by the Creator!) etc. I could go on with more specific details about why I am blessed to have Kim for my wife, why 90 feet basepaths are a divinely created blessing. To construct such a list in order to offer God a prayer of thanksgiving would result in experiencing the reality of praying without ceasing! Truth be told—if we really, really think about it, even in difficult times—we are blessed.

Which begs the question—for what purpose are we blessed? Why us? Why these particular blessings? To what purpose does God so richly bless us?

To one degree, certainly, God wants us to enjoy life. John 10:10b, Jesus says, *"I have come that they might have life, and have it to the full."* God wants us to enjoy life to its fullest. The journey of faith is figuring out exactly what that looks like. There is much in life that we think will bring us enjoyment when that is not God's plan for us at all. Finding the "abundant life" of following Jesus as Lord is the blessing God wants us to discover. But, bottom line in that discovery, God wants us to enjoy life to the fullest—which is only found in His will for us. So, God blesses us for our enjoyment of life.

But that is only a part of the journey of blessing. For God blesses us that we might be a blessing to others. In fact, an essential part of experiencing the abundant life is to receive God's blessings, then, in turn, be a blessing to others. The Bible doesn't use that specific phrase—"blessed to be a blessing"—but it is a theme that runs throughout Scripture. It is at the heart of Jesus' teaching that whoever wants to be great must be the servant of all, *"just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many,"* (Matthew 20:28).

So, count your blessings. Name them. Write them down. Thank God for them. But understand an essential part of God's purpose in so richly blessing us—He wants us to be a blessing to others.

And that, in a nutshell, is what being "missional" is all about. Let me simplify the missional process for you. We are on this journey to bring life transforming change to us as individual followers of Jesus Christ and as His church. There's still a lot of questions out there about what exactly that looks like. Frankly, that's part of the journey. We don't know what that is going to look like until we get out there and find out.

As an aside, here's a quick update as to where we are. The Session has spent a time of discernment over the information that came out of the listening conversations many of you were involved in. Some focus has come directing us to connecting with the apartment complexes to our south and east, Gemini House just a few blocks away, and a yet-to-be-determined school. What "program" are we going to implement to connect with those three areas of focus? I can't tell you that. The first step is putting a team together to go and listen to the people involved in those various places—seeking to learn how we can be a good neighbor, how we can be helpful to them. At this point, we don't know what that looks like until we hear from them! In fact, the consultant we're working with in this missional process uses the term "Action Team" for those teams we'll be

sending out. At its last meeting, the Session decided the term was misleading. Action implies coming up with a plan, a program to put into place, to put into "action." We decided a more appropriate term for where we are is Exploration Team. We need to send out a team to explore these various areas of focus, to talk with them and hear from them how we can be a good neighbor, not hearing from us what we think we can do to be a good neighbor. So, you'll be hearing more soon about our Exploration Teams.

Ok, that's the "aside." Now, here's the missional process simplified.

First of all, think of the word "missional" as "mission-all." It's for everybody. That word, mission-all, came out of our pastors meeting last Thursday. It's a mission-all process. Whoever God sends across our path, God wants us to touch with the good news of the gospel. Recalling the Six Great Ends of the Church, God wants us to "exhibit the Kingdom of Heaven" to that person.

Then, even more simplified, God wants us to be a blessing to whomever God brings across our path. We are to be a "blessing people." That's our job—to bless people. That's where the trail of blessing takes us. From Abraham—*"I will bless you...you will be a blessing...all nations will be blessed through you"*—to Paul in our passage today—*"those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham...the redemption we have through Christ brings the blessing of Abraham."* We are blessed...that we might be a blessing to others.

I challenge you to take that idea—blessed to be a blessing—and hold it before you this week. Consciously think, pray "How can I be a blessing to this person?" and act upon that.

Let me give you two examples.

First of all, I've begun to think of that as I'm driving. Seriously! I participate almost daily in what I call the Union Avenue Game. That is, driving south on Union Avenue between 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Alameda Parkway. It's three lanes. Eventually, I need to be in the right lane in order to turn right onto Alameda Parkway—I and a whole lot of other drivers during rush hour. The game is, one doesn't want to get into the right lane too soon. Someone ahead of you might turn right before Alameda Parkway, thereby slowing you down and letting other game players in the middle lane get ahead of you. However, another tricky part of the game is that those in the right lane might not turn right, thereby making it difficult if not impossible for those who chose the middle lane to get over in the right lane in the one block they have before Alameda Parkway. It's really quite a game. You ought to come play it sometime if you've never experienced it. Anyway, I used to participate in the game like my manhood was at stake. Where can I take the advantage and get ahead of those other drivers playing the game? Can I squeeze in here? Can I cut off that guy there who stayed too long in the middle lane? Seriously. That's how people drive in the Union Avenue Game. But, I've decided I'm not going to do that anymore. I've decided I'm going to drive like one who has been blessed in order to be a blessing. Who can I bless in the Union Avenue Game? Now, I find myself getting into the right lane sooner—let someone in the middle lane behind me move up a space. Now, I find myself

looking for the inevitable right turn signal from someone in the middle lane desperate to get over before the exit onto Alameda Parkway. Who can I bless today in the Union Avenue Game? I'm not perfect at it. Sometimes I find myself slipping into old habits—I need to make a label for my rear view mirror that says "Be a blessing!" And, the truth of the matter is, I doubt the other driver realizes they've received a blessing from the Lord, let alone a blessing of any kind. But, in some ways, it's more about creating in me an attitude of blessing. So...that challenge for you, however you want to implement it. How can you be a blessing for someone this day?

And then, a simple way to be a blessing person—from an idea I heard from a speaker at a recent conference I attended. First of all, he's intentional about connecting with people in some way—the same waitress at a restaurant, the same Starbucks where he now knows the name and some of the story of each barista—that kind of thing. But, he also regularly asks them a question. *How can I ask God to bless you today?* Not, how can I pray for you today, but blessing language—how can I ask God to bless you today? He shared some amazing experiences from that practice—which I don't have time to share today. Perhaps another time. But, a simple question in a simple connection you've made with someone in your life—the same checkout clerk at the grocery store, the same waitress at your favorite restaurant—how can I ask God to bless you today?

Think of the missional process as simply that: It's "mission-all." And our job in it is to leave a trail of blessing for those God brings across our path.

Let's take a moment of Silent Reflection on how we might do that.