

We Are Asbury (3): Blessed by God **Psalm 1 / Matthew 5:1-12**

Blessing?

Good morning Asbury. I feel a little strange this morning because physically, I am not in the church but technologically I am here with you to share the gospel message this morning. Technology enables us to be in two places at the same time. I know sometimes, it makes our lives more complicated, but new technology has been a blessing for us, especially during the time of the Covid-19 pandemic. With a grateful heart, let us continue to reflect on our mission statement, focusing today on “B”, Blessed by God.

[ppt] I bet you have seen this letter in a Chinese restaurant. This letter means ‘blessing or good fortune.’ But you may have often seen this blessing letter upside down. It means blessing has arrived. After you dine in a Chinese restaurant, you will always get... a fortune cookie. When you get a good one, it feels good though you don’t really expect anything to change. But our understanding of blessing as Christians is quite different from the cultural understanding of blessing or fortune.

When I served a young adult group of a Korean church in Boston, I had an honest conversation with a newly joined member. He was not a Christian in Korea nor interested in the church at all. But one Sunday morning, after his morning exercise, he happened to walk near the church building and heard Korean singing. As an international student, he missed Koreans and he just entered the church building and that’s how he came to join the church. He was still not familiar with Christian vocabulary and worldview. The only thing he quickly learned was falling asleep during preaching.

One day, He told me that “Christians are sometimes very odd. When a good thing happens, Christians say it’s God’s blessing. If they pass some examination or job interview, Christians say it’s God’s blessing. When something bad happens, Christians say, ‘God has some plan for us.’ He could not understand this strange mentality Christians have. For him, most of the good outcomes in his life are the result of his hard work and sometimes pure luck. But Christians believe everything is God’s blessing. Right?”

We are blessed!

We may seem odd people, but we know we are blessed! We experience illness and life challenges just like everyone else, but we know we are blessed. Sometimes, we are down. Sometimes, we are almost on the ground, but we still know we are blessed because we are walking with God, the fount of every blessing. For Christians, blessings are not random luck or unexpected good fortune. This does not mean that everything goes well and we don’t encounter any bad luck. No. As you know, Juhee got Covid-19 and she generously shared it with me! so now we’ve quarantined just like everyone else does. We didn’t want it or expect it, but it happened. It’s a part of life. Christian blessing is not about living happily ever after or getting what we want. Christian blessing is all about the One, “with whom we stand.”

In the Bible, there are many types of blessings. Land, wealth, health, longevity, and children are considered God’s blessings. They are something we receive from God from whom all blessings flow. But what’s more important is walking with God and living in the presence of God. Receiving what we want should not be equated with God’s blessing itself.

God is our blessing. In Psalm 1, the Psalmist sings that “Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of

mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night.”(v 1-2) Walking with the Lord day and night is a blessing. As we walk closely with God, God’s grace restores us and recreates us. So Biblical understanding of blessing is not simply about how much we get from God, but how we become the persons God wants us to be.

In his sermon on the mountain, Jesus taught the beatitudes. Each verse begins with “Blessed are...!” Blessed are the poor in spirit, Blessed are those who mourn, Blessed are the meek, Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, Blessed are the pure in heart, Blessed are the peacemakers, Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. For Jesus, a blessing is about our character rather than what we get.

On January 16th, I attended a Martin Luther King Jr. breakfast meeting. Hundreds of clergy and laity, governor, congress men and women, senate and mayors of our towns gathered together to remember and celebrate the legacy of Martin Luther king Jr. Do you think Dr. King is blessed? Yes. he is. But we also know that his life was not easy because of his thirst for righteousness. But he was blessed and became a blessing, not only to his generation but afterward. That’s what it means to be blessed.

When God called Abraham, God promised him a blessing. “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” God didn’t just promise him a great blessing. God promised him to be a blessing and all people on earth will be blessed through you. This is the meaning of Christian blessing. We are blessed to become a blessing for all people. When we embody Jesus’ teaching and love, we are blessed and become a blessing.

Become a blessing!

During the church council meeting, we discussed making ABC bags, standing for “Asbury Bag of Caring.” We will collect various items such as hygiene units, trail bars, Lip balm, energy bars, toothpaste and brush, water, a form of protein, like tuna, socks, and snack items. We will put together bags that you can carry in your car. When you see people asking for help, you can give them a bag with your blessing. I would like to invite you to join this Lenten spiritual practice and be a blessing. Some of you may think, this is so small, but remember what priming water can do. A small bowl of priming water can help people to connect to the overflowing well spiring of life.

My Asbury family. We are abundantly blessed by God to be a blessing. So, don’t just wait for God’s blessing, but be a blessing! We are Asbury; abundantly thankful to God, saved by Christ’s resurrection and blessed by God. Enjoy the blessing and be a blessing. Amen.

