

Sermon 5-3-20 Blessed to be a blessings  
Central Church  
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Welcome to Central Church's online worship experience for May third. My name is Kim Fields and I am one of the pastors at Central Church.

Last week we talked about the importance of being carriers of joy, of sharing Christ's joy with those around us. We pointed out that even in difficult times like these we can find joy if we look through God's eyes to see that the glass is half full and not half empty. One way to do this is by focusing on the blessings we receive from God instead of our losses or our fears.

That said, as I tried to do that, as I tried to follow Paul's admonition to rejoice always, to give thanks in all things, I discovered a new challenge that set me back for a time. Perhaps some of you experienced something similar. As I reflected on my many blessings: the beautiful Spring weather, a family that puts up with me, a spouse who supports me, a job that provides a paycheck, a supportive community, the relief of not having lost anyone close to me to the COVID virus, and of having plenty of food on my table. (Perhaps too much food, as evidenced by the fact that almost everything I wear these days has an elastic waist.) As I reflected on all those things, I could not help but think, "I am so blessed." We are so blessed in so many ways, yet... and this is a big yet, there are others who don't seem as blessed.

So many people are struggling right now. All you have to do is turn on the news to see how tough it can be out there. The curve may be flattening but there are still **hospitals filled** beyond capacity; **refrigerator trucks** filled with bodies; pictures of **grieving widows** and widowers mourning a spouse who died all alone in ICU; long lines of unemployed waiting for **boxes of food**; restaurant owners who have **lost the businesses** they worked their whole lives to build. It is hard not to feel blessed when we hear stories of doctors, nurses, and first responders who have given their lives to save others or of grocery clerks who risk their lives every day, while Lorraine and I shelter safely in place. There is so much I have to feel grateful for, so many ways that I am blessed.

I deeply appreciate all my blessings. But those very blessings leave me asking hard questions. Even as I thank God for the blessings I have received I cannot help but think of all of those who are struggling and suffering and wonder why am I so blessed when others are suffering?

Please don't misunderstand me. I am not being ungrateful. I am deeply thankful for the ways in which God has blessed me. I am both blessed and thankful. But I can't help but wonder, even as I give thanks, why God blessed me, but not those others?

I am not saying my life is perfect. Like all of you this past couple of months has brought its share of challenges and inconveniences. I had hoped to see my grandchildren this Spring. I was excited about having the orchestra in worship, about Easter, Growing Deeper, and the Kids' Fun Run. **Grocery shopping** has become a challenge. I miss my church family. Many of us are at high risk for the **Corona virus**. I worry about you, my congregation. I worry about my staff. I worry about my family. I know a few who have been diagnosed with the COVID virus and I am especially worried for them. But these are minor inconveniences and worries. I truly am blessed. Most of us are blessed.

But, again, that leaves us asking **why are we so blessed** when so many of our neighbors are struggling? Oh, we are Christian. Certainly we prayed to be spared from the ravages of the COVID virus, from unemployment, from the losses others have experienced. But I have good Christian friends who have lost loved ones, loved ones they prayed for. Church leaders that I worked with when I was a District Superintendent have died. I have heard stories of Christian doctors who have died caring for patients in

their ICU units. I know of a pastor who was struck down by COVID. I have friends who have lost their businesses. They were all Christians. They all prayed. So why didn't God bless them too? Why didn't God bless them like God blessed me? It is one of the perplexing questions of our faith. Some might even call it a paradox.

I know that if it had been within my power I would have spared them all. Yet, God, with his infinite power and infinite wisdom, for reasons I don't understand, let the virus completely disrupt the lives of folks who are no different from us, even as most of us were largely spared. Why was that? Why is that?

Don't get me wrong. I am not blaming God. I have not lost my faith in God, or in God's goodness. I am not saying God is the bad guy here. Still, a part of me wants to understand. I want answers.

Having said all that, I fear that what I am about to say may disappoint you, because I don't have a fully satisfying answer to my question. I can't tell you why God spares some of us but not others. All I can say is what Paul said when confronted with the mystery of God. He wrote:

**8 Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. 11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. 12 For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.**

**13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.**  
— 1 Cor. 13

There are questions I have no answers to, questions we have no answers to. Which is why, with Paul, in my limited understanding, I choose to trust in faith, and hope that one day this will all make sense, but in the meantime I trust that God is acting out of love.

As I then pondered what love might mean in a time like this, an answer of sorts came to me. It came from the story of God's call to Abram found in Genesis 12. As you may recall, God made several promises to Abram. God promised that if Abram would leave Ur and journey to the promised land he would bless him. First, God promised that he would bless Abram. He then promised that he would make Abram's name great. And, finally, he promised that Abraham would become a blessing to others.

Let me read the passage to you.

**1 The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. 2 "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. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."** — Genesis 12:1-3

Think about what God said for a minute. God blessed Abram and then God made Abraham a blessing for others. In other words, God was saying to Abram, "I am blessing you to be a blessing." God didn't say "Aren't you lucky because I have chosen to bless you." God didn't even say "Because you have been so good I am going to reward you by blessing you." God didn't say, "Because I love you more than the others I am going to bless you so that you can enjoy those blessings." No, God said "I am going to bless you so that you in turn can bless others."

Note that this passage does not attempt to address the question of why bad things happen to some and good to others. It does not explain why Abram and Sarai were blessed with the promise of children when many other childless couples in Ur were not. But it does say something about why God blessed them and what God, in turn, expected them to do with the blessing they received. God blessed them for a purpose. God blessed them so that they in turn could bless others. **God blessed them to be a blessing.**

So, ask yourself, “Do you feel blessed today?” I would guess that most of us do. As you look around at others and the struggles they are experiencing do you feel, for whatever reason, that God has blessed you? Could it be that if God has blessed us, that we have been blessed for the same reason that Abram and Sarai were blessed. Could God be telling us that we too have been blessed to be a blessing? I cannot help but think that that is true in my case. Perhaps those of us who find that we are blessed are being called to look for ways to use our blessing to bless others. It is like Jesus preached in Luke:

**From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more. — Luke 12:48**

What does that mean? I think it means that we have been blessed for a reason. I don't think we have been blessed as a reward because we are better people or better Christians than those who lost their jobs or were stricken with the COVID virus. I don't think it means that God loves us more than them. As I read Scriptures it seems to me that we have been blessed so that we can be a blessing to others. That does not mean that we should not appreciate and enjoy our blessing. Jesus tells us that God wants us to enjoy the good things he gives. But it is equally true that we should share those blessings with others.

So, let me ask again what that might mean? I think the answer to that questions varies. It varies with opportunity and how we are blessed. Certainly we are somewhat limited by the governor's shelter-in-place order and the need to keep safe social distance in order to protect others. That said we can all pray. We can pick up our phones and call a neighbor or a church member who is all alone. We can send cards. We can sew masks. Central Church is working with our Lunch Buddies and Martha's Cupboard ministries to reach out to our struggling neighbors by providing personal care packages to those who have been identified to have special needs. Contact Julie McDonald or Fran Stanley for a list of items needed (or pause this video and copy down what is on the screen) or if you feel called and are at low risk ask them about volunteer opportunities. Or you can give a check to Central Church specifying that it is for COVID relief. If you feel at lesser risk you can pick up groceries or meds for those who can't safely go out themselves. The list of what we can do is as long as the list of our blessings and the needs of those around us.

All I know is that I have been blessed and I believe that God wants me to share that blessing with those around me. Friends, I believe that I have been blessed to be a blessing. How about you?