

“And all the peoples of the earth will be blessed through you” (Genesis 12:3b). Last Wednesday I presented the first time the Gospel, the good news about Jesus and the cross is mentioned in the Bible. Genesis 3:15b, “And He will crush your head and you will bruise his heel.” This was part of the curse language. Through Adam and Eve sin entered the world and is with us to this day and will remain until the day of Jesus Christ. In the midst of the curse language God spoke the Good News, the solution to the problem of sin evil, disease, and death. Jesus would conquer all on the cross and this plan was set in motion thousands of years before Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a perfect life, was crucified for our sins, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. God the Father set the solution in motion from the very beginning. To put it simply, last week we covered why Jesus had to come and what his coming would accomplish.

This week we look at Jesus from a different vantage point. Last week we see him as our Savior. This week we see him as our Blessor. Two thousand years before Jesus was born God told the man Abram, whose name was later changed to Abraham, that through Abram all the families of the earth will be blessed. This means that through the family line of Abraham, the Messiah would be born. God knows the future. God knows exactly what will happen even before it happens. God sees all of human history in one swoop. He sees the beginning, he sees the middle of time, and he sees the end of time all at once. And yes, God sees us in the present.

One insight I receive in this verse goes like this. Your obedience today can and will prove to be a blessing or blessings to lives in the future, even generations from now, and maybe even centuries later. Do not ever think that your obedience unto Christ is a waste of time. In Genesis 12, God called Abram to leave his place of comfort and go to the land that God would show him, the Promise Land. Abram obeyed God’s calling on his life. Abram’s obedience was essential to the entire plan of God for from his loins would be born the Messiah who would save

us from our sins. Two thousand years after Abram's obedience, it bore fruit and will bless us for all eternity. Two thousand years later the Messiah was born from the family line of Abraham. This is absolutely true. God has his call on every Christian's life, and it is absolutely essential that we stay faithful to that calling. To do so is to bless generations to come by our faithful acts unto Christ today. You will be impacting more lives than you ever thought possible. Every Christian today is impacted by the obedience of Abraham. He is considered in the Bible to be the father of the faith, the faith that saves us for all eternity. Abraham believed in God and God saved Abraham and gave to him the righteousness of Jesus Christ. I watched part of the funeral today of President George Herbert Walker Bush. Yes, he was the patriarch of his family. The human patriarch of all who are saved by God's grace through faith is Abraham whom the Bible calls the father of us all. Romans 4:11b, "So then he is the father of all who believe. Genesis 15:6, "And Abram believed in God and it was credited to him as righteousness." Friend, please hear your calling and respond with trust in God. By doing so you will be saved for eternity and will impact people for generations to come.

A day does not go by that I think about some of the major people who impacted my walk with Jesus Christ. Of course I think of my parents, my grandparents, Mrs. Winkvist, Bob Blessing, Corrie Ten Boom, Billy Graham, and the list goes on. People's acts of obedience that we have never even met impact our lives more than we know. The obedience of Martin Luther is one of the reasons we are sitting in this church today. Please never underestimate the smallest act of obedience unto the Lord Jesus Christ. God can and will use them for God's purposes for years to come if not centuries. My great grandfather was born in Norway. He died long before I was born but he prayed every day that one of his sons would become a Lutheran pastor. I was and am the first Lutheran pastor in the family and I know I have received the benefit, yes the blessings of his prayers. I can't wait to meet him in heaven and thank him for praying so faithfully. Your prayers today for your children, grandchildren, and great

grandchildren may be answered in future generations so keep praying. God will be blessing future generations through your prayers that you pray today, blessing people you will never even meet until we are all together in heaven one day. I so look forward to meeting Corrie Ten Boon in heaven and telling her what a blessing her obedience was to us who read her books and took in her godly wisdom born in life's darkest moments of the German Nazi concentration camp of Ravensbruck. Acts of obedience today are never wasted according to God's plan. Your obedience today helps fulfill God's plan for future generations.

God spoke directly to Abraham and it is the promise spoken to Abraham that saves believers for all eternity. This covenant given to Abraham may be the most important covenant ever given. God is always true to His word. The Savior of the world, the only Savior, the one who would save us from sin, death, Satan, and hell would be born through the family line of Abraham. The life of Jesus would either directly or indirectly touch the life of every human being. Every person's eternal destiny will be determined by either being in relationship with the Savior or rejecting the one and only Savior.

In this promise to Abraham is the call of God to spread the news of the Savior to every nation, yes to every family and person in the world. The birth of the Savior was promised in verse 3. The message of the Savior is to be carried out everywhere unto the ends of the earth until Jesus comes again. "Through you all the families of the earth will be blessed." The call to take the good news of the Savior everywhere is clearly part of the covenant given to Abraham. In this way the blessing of our Messiah will touch every nation and is at the heart of the call of every follower of Christ. People cannot come to faith in Jesus unless they hear the Good News. And they cannot hear unless someone is sent. It is up to us to support those who are sent throughout the world. It is an essential part of our call that was first given to Abraham and passed on down to us in the present. This message of the Savior has blessed us so we can give it away everywhere, at home and on foreign soil. Who knows, maybe God is calling right

now out of our church people to serve Christ somewhere around the world. They will be bringing the blessings promised to Abraham blessings that only come through Christ. The call to serve abroad can come quite early in life, even before one is a teenager. The Gospel is the power of God and it is so powerful that it saves people for all eternity.

The Gospel was first given in Genesis 3:15 that I preached on last week. Jesus and the cross were spoken of to Adam and Eve. This Gospel was further spoken to Abraham. At the heart of the Gospel is the blessing of forgiveness of sins. Our God is a God who wants us to be in relationship with Him but that is only possible through Jesus and the blessing of forgiveness that He alone can give. David sings in Psalm 32, "Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit." The blessing of forgiveness is why the Savior came into the world. God can never accept sin. God is totally holy, clean, pure, and bright as light, full of glory. In God is no darkness or deceit. Our sins make us dark indeed, unacceptable to God. The Good News is Jesus bore our sins on the cross and the blood of Jesus cleanses us from our sins, purifies us, and makes us acceptable to God. The power of the Gospel penetrating us layer by layer for decades actually helps reduce our desire to sin. Sin no longer has to control our lives for God has put inside of us the Holy Spirit to help us every day to grow closer to God. Talk about a great blessing. Our sins are completely gone and will never be held against us again. Heaven is ours and all of this because of the blessing of forgiveness. This too was part of the covenant given to Abraham in Genesis 12:3.

God gave to Abraham the grace to believe in God. Abraham proved his belief and trust in God through obeying God. The covenant blessing given to Abraham is the same blessing given to us. We receive forgiveness of sins because God gives to us the grace to believe in Jesus Christ. Without the grace of God, we would never believe in Christ. Left to ourselves we would only choose to reject Christ because of our lousy sinful human nature. Apart from a work

of God in our lives we would all be doomed. The blessing spoken of in Genesis 12:3 is the Good news of grace that will bless us by saving us for all eternity. We do not deserve grace, but God does His work of grace in our lives anyway.

The covenant given to Abraham that saves us by forgiving us, graces us, is also a covenant of mercy. God sees all of our struggles, our anxieties, our worries and God is still merciful to us. Mercy is God not giving to us what we do deserve. We deserve God's wrath. Jesus bore all of God's wrath for us on the cross and we get all the blessings. God's wrath will never touch us for Jesus bore it all. Talk about mercy. This too was promised to Abraham in Genesis 12:3.

The Bible does not tell us this and this is conjecture on my part, I believe when God established his relationship with Abraham, when God called Abraham to follow God, Abraham was introduced to the love of God. Our God is a God of love. Abraham was 75 years old and was no spring chicken. God's Word was so loving to Abraham that Abraham trusted God explicitly. I believe Abraham was immersed in God's love and that is why he chose to trust and obey God. To hear and know the voice of God is to have God's loving heart revealed to you. The promise of the Messiah coming through the family line of Abraham was spoken out of love. Every blessing given would proceed from the love of God. And the greatest gift of all, the Savior, would be the greatest bearer of love, the greatest giver of love, would be love incarnate, Jesus. The love of God is most clearly seen and experienced in and through Jesus Christ.

Yes, Jesus promised Abram whose name as later changed to Abraham that all the families of the earth would be blessed through him. We see this promise today being fulfilled in every nation as the Good News of Jesus Christ continues to go out every day through faithful followers of Jesus. Every person here has been touched by Jesus, all of us through His Word and so many through the Sacraments. God continues to touch us and bless us through our Christian friendships one to another. Christ is the blessing and Christ working through you is a

blessing to others, fulfilling the promise given to Abraham that through Christ all the families of the earth will be blessed. Amen and Amen.