

“Recognizing Our Blessings”

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I invite you to reach out forward, now place your right hand just under your left shoulder, and now your left hand just under your right shoulder. Now as you resume this position may we allow our Spirits to be open to receiving this prayer:

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Dearest God, we are reminded this day that we are truly a part of your creation and that you have given us a gift. That precious gift was to allow your son, Jesus, to grace our presence as he has people through the ages. We are reminded today that not only has he reached out with his healing touch but that others have reached out to touch him. May we as one of his disciples feel that touch moving through our arms, our hands, and into our shoulders, penetrating our very existence. We thank you for showing us the power that exists through placing our faith and trust in you. May we continue to recognize the blessings that you bestow upon us. In the name of the one whom we follow, Amen.

I would like to share with you another version of our Gospel lesson today. Unfortunately I did not write down the author this paraphrased version which uses the phrase “you have it made” rather than blessed,. The reason that I am sharing this is because of the way in which it is written, the picture is painted for us to visualize the event; no video needed.

Jesus and his twelve closest followers came down from the mountain and ran into a huge crowd of people on the flat grasslands below. Many of them were already followers of Jesus and many more were just people who had heard of him and had travelled there to hear him speak or to see if he could heal them of various chronic illnesses. They had come from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and even from the coastal towns of Tyre and Sidon. There were people there who were plagued by toxic spirits, and Jesus cleaned up the problems for them. Everyone was crowding in, trying to touch him, because there was a powerful healing energy surging from him and everybody wanted a piece of it. Jesus obliged and healed them all.

While they were there he taught his followers, saying:

“You who own next to nothing have got it made,
because you are already at home in the culture of God.

“You who don’t have enough to eat now have got it made,
because you will be filled with good things.

“You who are grief stricken now have got it made,
because you will be all smiles and laughter.

“And if people hate you and shut you out, treat you like dirt and drag your name through the mud because of your association with me, then you really have got it made! You’re in great company because in every generation they’ve done the same thing to all God’s faithful messengers. So sing! Dance! Celebrate! Heaven is coming and you will be rewarded beyond your wildest dreams!

“But the writing is on the wall for you who have got it all now. That’s it for you. You’ve got nothing more to look forward to.

“And the writing is on the wall for you who consume to excess. You’ve had your share. You’re going to go hungry.

“The writing is on the wall for you who think it’s all a big joke now. The smile is going to be wiped right off your face.

“And if everybody is fawning over you and saying how wonderful you are, then the writing is well and truly on the wall. They come from a long line of people who fawned over every religious charlatan that ever tickled their ears.”

We see Jesus coming down from a mountain, a place where he often went to pray. He is now on a level with those who came to be a part of his presence. It is here that the healings take place, where he could reach out touch and where those in the crowd could touch him. Luke does not share whether a word was even spoken at this point.

Often we place Jesus on a pedestal, there away from us out of reach, out of touch with our humanity. Why? Do we place him at such a distance so that we can rationalize why we don’t become more like him? Here he is walking through the crowd with his apostles allowing people to become a part of his power. When we allow Jesus to walk along side of us his power and energy for life can truly become a part of who we are or might become.

Luke purposefully mentions that those in the crowd were from various regions and therefore a mix of socio-economic groups and yet here they were, in the same crowd, actually brushing up against one another, wanting to be near this man who they heard about, wanting to feel God’s Spirit pouring forth. This should be the way that all churches proclaiming to be Christian should look, diverse in all ways. A church should never be exclusionary! We miss the point of Jesus message if we concentrate on the words that first appear to be separate one segment of society against the other; instead he is building up the downtrodden and the difficulty that those who have attained their rewards here on earth need to wake up and change their ways to assist those who lack current physical comfortableness. These words today are promises to those who are suffering in this world that God still sees them, loves them, and is intent on their thriving. Those of us who reside in comfort need to pay attention to Jesus’ words, they are warnings that we need to live with more attention and generosity toward our neighbors.

How many of you feel blessed! WHY?

Usually we feel blessed because of those things that we have; material things, family relationships, and health.

What about our relationship with God?

Here Jesus has done all of this healing and casting out demons...now he lays it upon them, and us; no matter what you have or feel you lack the true blessing are found in the presence of God.

This week I had the opportunity to visit with a woman who is dying of cancer. I did not know her before this visit so as she lay there in her bed she began by saying: "I'd like for you to get to know me." She pointed out all of the pictures around her room, dating back to her parents and coming into the present with her children and also her friends. Then she began to talk about how her faith has allowed her to take this journey toward the end of her earthly life. I lost count of the number of times that she said that she was blessed. Her son, who was in the room, also commented on his Mother's faith; he said to her "Tell him about your cloud angel." "Tell him about the prayer card."

I left after prayer and giving her and her son communion. I stood in the driveway for a few seconds and this feeling of being Blessed surrounded me. A gift had been given to me that afternoon.

How often do we stop to recognize those times which we receive God's Blessings which are bestowed upon us throughout our lives.

This month we have been concentrating on Discipleship, a reaching out to others and sharing our faith and inviting our family, our friends, our neighbors, those we meet into God's Spiritual circle.

I was blessed this week by being a part witnessing one of God's Disciples.

I wonder if this was the feeling which those standing on the plain with Jesus felt that day as he shared God's blessings? Hopefully we will recognize our blessings....and share them with others.