

Blessed To Be A Blessing

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[0 : 0 0] So, if you have a Bible, which I hope you do, go ahead and turn to Genesis 11, 27.! If you don't got one, no worries. We're going to have verses up on the screen as well. We finished our parable series, which was amazing, and we're about to start in our 1 Thessalonians series, which we're going to begin next week.

But we're going to put that on hold. We're going to do a little one-off sermon today, partly because we just want the whole community group term. As you guys dive into 1 Thessalonians, it just pairs well if we start next week instead of this one.

So, community groups are starting this week for sure, but often this first meeting for community groups is a get-to-know-ya, and it's a bunch of other stuff. You don't really dive into the sermon as much.

But we're going to do that the following week, or next Sunday. So, that's why we're starting in 1 Thessalonians. But this isn't a wasted Sunday. Please don't get up and walk out because of that.

That would not be a good thing. I'm really excited, actually, about today's sermon. And it's something God has been stirring in me as a pastor. One of my jobs is to pray for this church and pray for you individually, pray for, like, what God's purpose is for us and what he has for us as City Grace.

[1 : 1 0] And one of the things I do in praying for you guys is, yes, I pray for your physical health, your relational health, and healing you may need, and also that your love for God would increase. I desire that we would be a church full of people that love him, enjoy him, know him, walk with him, trust him, all of those things.

And when we do that, we glorify him more and more and more. And that's what I love to see. And in short, what I'm praying for is his favor to be on you. I want you to know his grace, and that grace that is abundant.

It's grace upon grace that he gives to each of us. But not that you would just know about it intellectually. You would experience it and live in it and live out of that. And it's one of the beautiful things that we prayed for this morning before the service.

Chris and Angie led our pre-service prayer, and it's just like, man, they landed us in just the beauty and the majesty of the grace of God. And it was just like an exhale for my soul before we even began this morning.

And I was like, wow, I just so needed to, I so need to be reminded of that all the time, and we all do. And this idea of living in and out of the grace of God, it's a reason why we settled on that name, City Grace.

[2 : 1 4] It feels like it represents who God wants us to be as a lampstand, as a church in this community and beyond. And we're called as individuals to be disciples of Jesus, who are full of grace and growing in grace.

But we're also called to be a united body of members, a collective that come together displaying God's abundant grace. And so it's a beautiful thing, and it's a huge privilege.

So today I want to explore in Scripture how we steward God's favor, how we steward this grace that comes to us. Because God blesses us so that we can be a blessing.

So we're going to look at that, starting in Genesis 11, verse 27. Before we get into that, just a quick context to know where we're at in the Bible. It's the early days of human history, and it's the early days of God's redemptive plan.

This is post-fall. This is also post-flood. And it's also post-tower of Babel. And all those are like major important plot points in God's redemptive purpose. And this text we're in today, it's not too far, too many generations from the Tower of Babel.

[3 : 17] And up to this point, what we're seeing is that, man, God created, we sinned, God judged. And he did this kind of creation reset with Noah and his family and the flood, purged the earth of all the evil that was in it with his waters of judgment.

And then Noah's offspring comes out and he says to Noah, it's like, man, what I want you guys to do is I want you to spread out across the earth, multiply it, and fill it all over the place.

And they promptly didn't do that. Instead, they decided it would be better to unite with a common purpose, language, geographic location, right? It kind of sounds like the perfect nation, to be honest, but not to God.

They were in direct violation of God's commands. And they existed to bring glory to themselves. And the Tower of Babel that some of us may know about is this tower that they were creating and building.

And what it was, it was simply a manifestation of their national disobedience and pride that shook their fist at God and said, we could become like you. And so God comes down and he confounds their language.

[4 : 16] He brings division. And so the peoples of the earth spread out into their ethnic enclaves and common languages across the globe. And you look at that and you say, okay, that's another step in his redemptive plan, but God hasn't given up on people.

God hasn't given up on his image bearers. And now we see in this text, what we're going to see is God narrow his redemptive purpose to a particular family in a particular place.

Ur of the Chaldeans. Ur of Babylonian fame. And idol worship. And it seems like a strange place to start a sermon on being blessed to be a blessing, but God's redemption purposes always start in the most unlikely places.

So let's jump into it. Chapter 11, verse 27 of Genesis says this. Now these are the generations of Terah. Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

And Haran fathered Lot. Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his kindred in Ur of the Chaldeans. And Abram and Nahor took wives. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah and Iscah.

[5 : 25] Now Sarai was barren. She had no child. And Terah took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife.

And they went forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled there. The days of Terah were 205 years, and Terah died in Haran.

Now the Lord said to Abram, we're continuing on in chapter 12. You're allowed to do that, just so you know. Now the Lord said to Abram, go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you, and I will make of you a great nation.

And I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. This is God's word. So what does it mean to have God's favor?

What comes to your mind when you think of God's blessings towards you in your own life, right? We think of many things, right? At the dinner table, we give thanks because we are taking time to honor our heavenly father who gives seed to the sower and bread to the hungry.

[6 : 34] And we say, man, Lord, the food we even have on our table, we want to make sure we give thanks to you for that, that we get to have in this country, many of us, not all of us all the time, but having three square meals a day is a huge blessing.

We recognize he's a sovereign Lord who can make fields fruitful but can also bring famine. And we give thanks to you for the stuff that we have, like the shelter, our homes, the clothing on our backs, the family that we have sometimes, probably, not all the time on that one.

But what we do is, and it goes beyond that. I mean, we got to give thanks for many things. God, he pulled us out of the miry pit. He set our feet on a solid rock. We give thanks for his work of salvation in our lives.

And those are good and important things. But we can go a little bit deeper, I think, when we consider the blessings of God in our life.

We should follow the blessings back to the source, which is what we do when we give thanks. But then we have to ask the question, why does God choose to bless us at all? That's a good question.

[7 : 42] And Genesis 11, 27 to 32, those verses, I think what they do is, I think they beg that question to be answered. Those verses, they're all focused on Abram's father, Terah. They're not focused on Abram at all.

God doesn't, but it's all about Terah, but God never comes to Terah in any significant way. He comes to Abram. Why? And that is probably one of the best questions we could ask. And also, I want to say one, we are never probably going to get a very satisfactory answer beyond this.

God chooses to bless whom he wants to bless. He didn't come to Terah and say, I'm going to make you a great nation. Nor did he come to Abram's brothers.

Nor did he come to any other of the families of Abram's generation. Clever people across history have twisted their brains into knots trying to figure out the depths of God's sovereignty and how he carries out his plans and his purposes.

And why would God bestow such favor on just one man rather than everyone? And I could pontificate to you that we should start at Jesus' incarnation and work backwards from there.

[8 : 48] That was the fulfillment of God's purpose, right? Doesn't it make sense that if the fulfillment is in one man Jesus, that that one man Jesus was going to be born to a particular family of a particular place, of a particular nation?

And that particular family would have divine promises connected to them. And that was true because he was of the lineage of King David, who was also of the nation of Israel.

And this Israel, this same nation of Israel, was of the family of Abraham. Their great father, their common father, was this man, Abram, who became Abraham.

And you can say, wow, that makes a lot of sense, but it still wouldn't satisfy the question, why Abraham and not Torah? Or anybody else before him? Why would God wait until now in this place at this time and with this particular man?

And that is where you get as far as you can go, to be perfectly honest. And then you just have to surrender to the fact that, you know what? He is divine. He is creator. I am the creature. He is God.

[9 : 49] I am not. It's kind of where you land. And faith, what it requires of us, it has to trust. It has to trust without having all the answers.

It has to trust without fully understanding all of God's ways. Some of his ways are going to be hidden, and they're going to remain hidden from us. Torah versus Abram.

Dad, no. Son, yes. In a sense, you can say that God bestowed blessing on Torah. We see that in some ways. But with Abraham, it was very particular, and it was much different.

And so it is for the true sons of Abram, born by faith in Jesus, God's son, as Romans tells us. God blesses us. God's blessing is that he comes to us to bring us into his divine purpose.

As it was with Abraham, so it is with us. Now, that's a mouthful, but essentially what it means is this. God's plan for you is also much bigger than you.

[10 : 50] You are the recipient of God's blessing. You are the recipient of his divine favor that he chooses to bestow on you, but you also have to realize, as much as you are the object of that favor, you're also not the end point.

Think about this promise to Abraham. On the surface, it looks like it's all about him. God comes to him and says, I'm gonna make you a great nation. I'm gonna bless you and make your name great, and then, so that you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you, I will curse. And in you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed. There it is.

Blessings, it seems like, man, so Abraham focused, that he's the object of these things, but if we consider it and ponder it a little bit longer, we also see it's much bigger than Abraham. It's much bigger than Abram.

He would walk Canaan his whole life as a pilgrim, never settling anywhere. The land that God said, hey, I'm gonna take you to this place. He was never going to settle there.

[12 : 00] And he says to him, I'm gonna make you a great nation. He has one son, Isaac. Not a great start for a great nation. But this blessing that God promises to Abram, it gets fulfilled generations later.

Abraham never sees it, but as the writer of Hebrew tells us, he still walks it out in faith, believing that one day it would happen, that God's promises that he makes are yes and amen.

Abram was brought into something much bigger than himself. And there's a big difference living this way. There's a big difference in living for immediate results versus living to something like, man, a hundred year plan that spans generations.

You know, if we choose to lead this church to build a name for ourselves, it will be reflected in our choices. If we want immediate results, we are gonna lead a certain way. But if we're thinking, man, we want this to be established for generations upon generations to come, what can this church look like in a hundred years?

It's gonna change how we do things. It's gonna change how we build. And I would say my concern, as I look about today, and one that many political pundits share today as well, is that Americans' vision for itself doesn't go beyond the next election cycle.

[13 : 16] We become a government, we become a leadership, a way we lead of just quick solutions in order to maintain political power. That is what we do. We become a voting population, to be perfectly honest, that votes with that same limited view.

We don't see beyond four years. And our modern moment is a fruit of living for immediate results. Will we learn the lesson, or will we try to assimilate that into the kingdom of God?

So let's get back to God's kingdom, and his purpose for you and me in this church. What would it look like for us to live for things that are gonna continue beyond us?

We may work in them, we may seek to establish them, but the fruit of those things may be realized in generations to come. What does that look like for you and me to live in that way? And those are the blessings of God that are really worth living for.

And quite frankly, the kind of blessings that will require us to sacrifice for as well. Because God's blessings will carry us away from comfort and into his calling. Is it a little bit scary?

[14 : 22] Sometimes, yes, but God's call over us, it's fun, it's exciting, and it involves some unnerving faith adventures. What does God say to Abram before the amazing promises of blessing?

He says to him, go from your country, and your kindred, and your father's house, to the land I will show you. Abram, leave everything that is familiar, everything that is normalized, everything that is comfortable, everything that you know.

Leave all your familial and economic ties. Leave the city that brings you and your family safety, security, and culture. Leave the place of the language that you know, how to speak to others.

And I'm going to take you into a land you've never seen. You don't know if it's good or bad. And you're going to live among people you don't know. You probably don't even have a common language. It's going to be hard to figure out how to communicate with them. You don't know if these people are going to be hostile to you or friendly towards you.

Who knows? God says, Abram, leave your sure thing for mine. Trust. Trust. Trust in me. God's calling.

[15 : 30] He calls us into some fun, crazy stuff. It might not be comfortable. In fact, it can be uncomfortable at times. It can be inconvenient at times, but it won't be boring. But in that place, in that calling and following him, in that great adventure, we see God's blessings that don't stop with us because God blesses us to be a blessing.

Why does God interrupt our lives like he did with Abram? Why does he come to us? Why does he interrupt us? Why does he save us? Why does he call us out of darkness into his marvelous light? Why does he make us his sons and his daughters?

Why does he do those things? Why does his blessings call us out into things that go beyond us? Because he has a redemptive plan, and if nothing changes, nothing changes.

God's redemptive purpose means that until it is finally fulfilled, one day into the future when Jesus finally returns, until his redemptive purpose is done, change is here to stay.

Get used to it. All right? God calls us into stuff. All this sounds like massive, life-altering changes, like moving to uncharted territory that is in hospital to the gospel, right?

[16 : 44] I remember growing up, and they're kind of the big pitch, follow Jesus, he's gonna carry you to places you don't wanna go. My first thought was like, man, God's gonna put me in jungles, in some crazy place, a bunch of cannibals.

Or in the Middle East. And it's kind of like what's offered to you in this, is like going to God adventure, and by the way, which way do you wanna die for Jesus? You wanna be stabbed, or do you wanna be somebody's stew for dinner?

You know, it's like, it feels like those are just the two options before us. And look, God calls some of us, some of the crazy, some of us that are really crazy, into those kind of places, into those kind of callings.

And that is awesome, that is wonderful, and those things need to happen, and those people are special, and those people are rare. Okay? And we need him to do that. But then there is the legitimate, living, quiet, peaceful lives, in the local place that God has planted you.

And you know what? That can resound, the gospel can resound out of that, and affect a whole region. And we're about to get into 1 Thessalonians, where it proves my point, it actually says that.

[17 : 56] Little free preview of what's to come. In the following weeks. Quiet, peaceful living. Really? Yes. And that is also being faithful to God's call.

And that can also be a wonderful faith adventure, in its own way. And it can be different sizes, and sacrifices. And I'm just saying that, because God's call for you and me, and this quiet, peaceful lives, that we could live here in New Bern, in the surrounding cities.

It could be much more of a faith adventure, than you realize. I'm gonna have some folks to come up right now. Jim Lytle, Allison Davis, Otis Stevens, Julie Spikerman, they've been doing some things, I've been talking with them, and I just wanna put on display, and the reason I'm calling them up, is they can show, kind of the way that you can live, quiet, peaceful lives, and yet be attentive to the call of God, all at the same time.

Do we have a microphone? Can I have that microphone, please, Ellie? Cool. Thank you. Can we get one more chair? Yep. Kirk, you're on it, man.

Beautiful. You're good? All right. So again, the reason I've got them up here, is they've been doing some stuff in the community, and I kind of just wanted to have them talk about, the thing that they are doing, so you can hear about it, and you can hear, like, oh, there's some opportunities out there, some low-hanging fruit, for us to get involved with.

[19 : 24] So, Mr. Jim Lytle, why don't you tell us, you've been involved in this place called Viridian, assisted living home. Why don't you tell, kind of the opportunity that you have there? Let me give you a 250-mile move in 30 seconds.

As many of you know, our daughter passed away two years ago, a little over two years ago. And shortly after that, my wife and I started thinking, maybe we ought to move. And when my son, Elliot, came to me and said, Pop, hey, won't you move down there where I'm at, and I can take care of you?

Well, I'm not dumb, and that was as great an offer as I could ever have. So, we started deciding to move. One of the problems in that move, well, two of the problems, I was passionate in church, but I knew that that was coming to an end.

So, that was not a real problem. But I had a 103-year-old mother that we weren't going to leave in Western North Carolina and us living down here. So, that became the issue of getting here.

And it was never an issue. The door opened at this assisted living place down at Carolina Colors called the Viridian. We were able to get her in there with no problem.

[20 : 30] They opened the doors. It worked out to be a great place for her for the last nine months of her life. But in that move, we met a man named Steve Mabee. Some of you in here know him.

He's the transportation guy at the Viridian, but he also runs their worship service on Sunday morning. Well, I had already thought of things that I might be doing when I came down here.

I never thought that I would be totally not doing anything. I always knew God would have something for me, but it was not this. But in getting to know Steve, one day he came to me and invited me to come and speak at their Sunday morning service.

And listen, you pray for the man because he puts on a service for these people. They have bulletins. They sing. They do great things. And so I got to go down a couple months ago.

I started down there. And on a Sunday morning, 10 o'clock, that was the greatest thing that could have happened to me from a spiritual and a servant's position in serving the Lord Jesus Christ.

[21 : 39] The greatest joys I've ever had is in serving God when he's put me to work and done things with me. And so that was not a place that I thought I was going to wind up. But it's a place that I belong.

And I thank God for getting me there. One other question you asked. Yeah, I think in follow-up to that, what has that meant? I know it's been a blessing to you, but what have, how has it been a blessing to the folks there as well?

Well, like I say, if the smiles on my face and the smiles on their face is an indication, God's in it. God's working in it. Because they come up to me. We had a Lord's Supper. They had not done a Lord's Supper in months and months and months.

And I was able to conduct a Lord's Supper for them last week. And they come up to me and told me that that was something that they had missed and that they really enjoyed. But their smiles and their say, listen, there are 80 and 90-year-old people in this place, but they can sing.

And so that's a pretty good indication that God's with us in this place. I can tell you that. That's beautiful. Thanks so much, Jim. I appreciate that. Yeah. So next we have Julie and Steve Spikerman.

[22 : 48] And you're holding a bag. Why don't you tell us what that bag is and why you make them? This is the bag that's holding the bags. So it could be a surprise.

A number of years ago, someone at our church in California wanted to make little gift bags for the neighbors. So we reluctantly joined in to help them make the bags because we did it in our community group.

And we called them the stupid little bags. Because we had no idea what the impact would be. So we make these stupid little bags in California and we ended up doing it all around the neighborhood of our church.

And we were making over 1,200 bags for people in the church to purchase and to give in their neighborhoods as well as to do with our whole neighborhood around the church.

Then we moved. We moved more than... A long way. Yeah, we moved a long way. And we have just a circle. There are 16 homes. And we thought, you know what?

[23 : 55] We're going to do some little bags. So I had a bunch of extra stuff and I made the bags. And it's not a valuable bag except that it helps us to get...

to know our neighbors here and to have relationship and we have something to talk about. They go, oh yeah, you left that little bag on my porch. Well, I didn't have to start the conversation in words.

I started it with the bag. So we've been doing that and that's been fun. And I just put little junk in the bag. Not bad junk, but fun junk.

Like a pencil with an eraser. Like Welch's fruit snacks. Mints. Little, little stupid toys that people who are retired don't care about, but they got grandkids.

So anyway, little ring. But just little things and it brings a smile to their face. And so we do this about every couple months. The bags, it costs about, I don't know, \$2.25 a bag.

[25 : 03] But it's worth the investment and that's what we've been doing for a long time. I just want to say, what are the results of the bags?

And there's one word I can probably just say. Relationships. People don't expect this little stupid bag on their doorstep that says, we care about you.

It's kind of like God looking down at us going, I know where you live and I love you. This is a simple way for us just to go to our neighbors and say, we know where you live and we care about you.

And as we get to know these people through just walking through the neighborhoods, eventually you go, how can I pray for you?

The more you understand somebody, the more you can go, what are your needs? And then you go, can I just pray for you? That puts them on the spot. I've never had anyone say no to me.

[26 : 09] And they even get freaked out when I pray for them right then and there with them. It's like, what's this guy doing? But it's about relationships. And it's a simple way to bridge the gap.

It's like the cross for us, bridging the gap for us and God. This is just a stupid little bag that bridges that gap that starts relationship.

And the response that you get back is absolutely overwhelming. They love it and we actually love doing it for them because did they deserve it?

No. Do we deserve God's love? No. But there it is. It's awesome. Wonderful. Thank you. All right. What I love about that is there's probably going to be some six-year-olds that are like, mom and dad, they said the S word in service today.

I love that. All right. Miss Allison Davis, so you did recently something with your family and with a ministry called Backpack Blessings.

[27 : 17] Why don't you tell us about that? Just over the summer, we happened to come across a pre-existing ministry called Backpack Blessings that's over at Garber and it's led by Ruth Powers and she's a bit of a legend.

And the goal is just to reach middle school and elementary students who are living in food insecure homes. So these kids go to school and through the school year, the school meals are the most consistent and nutritious meals that they get.

And so when they go home on a Friday, they may go home to an empty pantry and not have food again consistently until they get back into school. So the ministry goes, over the summer, looks different than through the school year and we were able to do one of, or two of summer, one regular.

And it's over 120 pallets of food that get put into the hands and bellies, I guess, of Eastern North Carolina kids, Craven, Jones, and Pamlico.

That's really awesome. So what did it take for you guys to get involved? My friend Mandy and I were trying to figure out something to do with the kids over the summer to kind of open their eyes beyond their cozy, cushy little lives.

[28 : 31] And so we signed up together. Essentially, it's just on Facebook. You sign up on a meal train type website. And so we showed up for the first time not knowing what we were doing, what to expect.

But our kids had a blast. And so we got to serve with our kids and my kids got to serve with their friends. And I got to serve with my friends too. So essentially that, we just showed up.

They have boxes and bags of like actual groceries that go home over the summer. So like rice and potatoes and chicken and deli meat and fruits and vegetables and stuff.

So that's what the summer one looked like. So we showed up for an hour. And in an hour, the group that showed up had packed 100 like reusable grocery sacks to be distributed throughout the counties.

And then just recently, Phil was able to join us for the back to school build. So we got to serve as a family. Wow, Phil. We have little kids running around just excited to put food in bags to bless other people.

[29 : 33] And so my kids are 11 and 13 and they could potentially be at the age to be like, uh, I don't want to do this. But they're excited to do it. They jumped in. We had people who were like complimenting Keller on his packing skills.

So essentially, you're just walking in a circle. And if you can walk in a circle and put food in a Ziploc bag, you're qualified. I think I can do that. Thank you. Finally, finally something I'm qualified for.

Amen. No, thanks so much, Allison. I appreciate that. And, um, finally we got Mr. Otis Stevens here.

And so you guys served dinner at RCS. Tell us about that. So for our community group, we, um, at the beginning we always assign a person to figure out a community service.

And this term was my sister glamorous. Um, she had to find a community service and she came to us and said, uh, hey, we're gonna do the, uh, RCS.

[30 : 34] Um, we're gonna help cook the food and serve the people. Sweet. And, um, what did, what did you guys do? Um, like together, was it, was it like, uh, coming on an evening?

It was, yeah, so we picked a night, one of the open nights. We wanted to do it on a, uh, we had chose to do it on a night that we normally would do community group. So we went on a Wednesday, if I'm not mistaken.

And we went there, we had to be there at a certain time. We had someone watch the kiddos and we went in, uh, they gave us aprons and from scratch we had to cook all the food.

Uh, we had to put all the plates and utensils and all the stuff out. We had to put the tables and stuff down. Um, and the people came in and was in the line and we served them.

We gave them the food. We went out and talked with them. Um, and at the end they helped clean up, um, a lady, I was washing dishes. Oh, all right. So a lady came in and she helped me wash dishes.

[31 : 37] She helped me wash dishes with the big pots and things like that and just shared, um, she wasn't even from this area. She's a, she was from, um, two hours away and she heard about this, um, place that helps people who don't have a home and things like that.

So she hitchhiked or whatever and got down here so she stays there and she found a job and she works in the community and now she's just trying to build up a resource so she can get back out of her home.

Sweet, man. That's awesome. Thanks so much. Appreciate that. You guys can, thanks for being up here and answering those questions. so what are ways that you can be a blessing when you look at the early church in acts just think about it i mean it was multiplying like crazy new disciples reading added to the church all the time new people were hearing about the gospel of jesus christ and it was just pushing further and further afield it was awesome and you know that church they did that without having a missions board they didn't have planned outreaches it was just disciples shining the light of the gospel as they lived life they just took it where they went they saw the opportunities available to them and they just stepped into it that that was it and i'm you know i'm sure at some point city grace is going to have an our thing that is kind of unique way god uses us to be a blessing to our city and beyond but you know what also you should have a your thing i should have a my thing that god uses us to bring his blessings beyond us uh to other people and and i think it's really important that we have this in our lives and we live this out just just hear me out on this you and i we can get internal we can get very focused on ourselves both as a in our own families or even as a church we can become very insular and and we can do that to a degree that i think is is kind of unhealthy and when we do that we turn something good we can turn those things into our own kind of haran city that we settle into just think about the story that we just read you had terah who left earth the chaldeans and went to haran and settled there and that's the place abram was called out of and her on is it's a city literally it means crossroads it was a confluence of many trade routes of the day so it was a very wealthy influential city it was also the seat for the worship of the moon god sin like literally it's the the name of the moon god was sin can't make that up so i find just even in this story even the naming of that city it's some divine irony there that was a crossroads place of influence and idolatry and it's it was also a crossroads for for abraham and that divine calling that came to him may we be like abram who's abram he said in verse four it says of him abram went as the lord had told him abram went as the lord had told him what's god calling you and i out of him what is he calling us into as disciples of jesus we listen to that calling we heed that calling because it's what jesus did he was sent from heaven to earth for the ultimate redemptive purpose at it at his crossroads in gethsemane he said man lord father may this cut pass from me but ultimately he surrendered to the father's will not my will but yours be done and because of that because of jesus had that crossroads he chose the father's will that was the the fulfillment of genesis 12 3 truly happened where god says in you you abram in you in your offspring one of your offsprings all the families of the earth will be blessed in our privilege as jesus's disciples that we get to be the hands and feet of jesus to continue the work he began it says in acts one it's like all it says the the the apostle luke is writing to his friend theophilus and he's telling him all the things that jesus began to do he handed off to his apostles and

his church to carry on that work until he decides it is finished and he returns until that day his favor is upon us friends favor you and i don't deserve but his blessing is over us and upon us and we are blessed to be a blessing as the band comes up and we look to respond we're going to take communion in a moment and i want to say to you hearing this if you're not yet a follower of jesus before you come to this invitation that jesus gives to his disciples to come and eat of his bread and and blood his flesh and blood that point to his sacrifice before you come and partake of that you got to come to him those things just point to what jesus has done to what jesus has accomplished as he went to the cross and he died in your place to pay the penalty for your sin to break the power of sin and death and he's offering you today if you come in faith and you believe on him and you make him you surrender to him and make him your lord and savior at this crossroads this is your haran moment right now will you heed that call and by faith the blood of jesus washes away all that sin makes you a son and daughter of god most high your heavenly father you get to called into the most amazing faith adventures we're gonna have a prayer up on the screen for you to pray if that's you today now for those of us who are already followers of jesus we get to come to this table of blessing and to remember this favor that god has bestowed on us in jesus christ what he has done for us we're saved we're adopted we're given an internal inheritance because of jesus our ultimate blessing and by him and only in him can we be blessed to be a blessing to others so let me pray and when you are ready you can go to the table nearest you get the the bread and the cup and take it back to your seat and take it when you're ready join me in prayer father we come to you our great and heavenly father who sent your son jesus christ jesus christ our lord and savior our king seated on the throne in heaven ruling and reigning our great high priest he watches over us and recedes for us lord we come to you jesus we come to you in recognition that you invite us to your table to participate in communion with you relationship with you but a relationship that is just rooted in favor unmerited favor undeserving favor that we get to partake of the bread that points to your body that was broken for us and your blood that was shed for us and we get to remember these things that you've done the blessings that we have ultimately are found in you and because of you and we get to live in you which is an amazing privilege thank you for that lord as we take this may we be filled with faith maybe we filled with thanksgiving and gratitude and remember that we are blessed to be a blessing amen amen

Thank you.