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Lent 1 B – Treasure Principle Series – Feb. 18, 2024

“Blessed to be a Blessing”

Read: Genesis 12: 1 - 8; Memorize: Genesis 12: 2 - 3

This is a story about a remarkable man. Forget the fact that he was able to father a child at 99. The most remarkable thing about Abram was that he was willing to believe God.

God called him to a journey. He set out on that journey to an unknown land, without much security. All he possessed was the promise that God would take care of him. How many of us would take on such a commitment, no matter what our age?

Now, it may have sounded pretty rosy at first: Abram was promised that he would become a great nation, get new land and blessings would be given to him. One was that anybody who blesses him would be blessed, while those who curse him would be cursed. A lot of people think of stuff when you talk about blessings. It sounded like there would be a lot of that, so what did he have to lose?

Several things do come to mind: a sense of stability, worldly comfort, such as it was; family ties and perhaps a few other things. If Abram was thinking about retirement, there would be no bridge games, golfing or playing the stock market with retirement funds.

On the other hand, a lot of retirees like to travel. Abram would get to travel but there would be little luxury in it. Unfortunately, American Express, Visa or MasterCard had not been invented so there were no reward points and no going back. So, how many of us would take the deal?

Abram, despite his age, physical condition; the riskiness of pursuing God’s promises said, “yes” and left for the land of Canaan. He had some possessions, some family and a bag full of promises from a God that he didn’t really know very well.

Abram worshipped idols. He was not chosen for his goodness. It was simply this: When God asked him, He was willing to obey God. So why are we talking about Abram today? This is supposed to be a sermon about the *Treasure Principles* by Randy Alcorn.

Before we start dipping into the book, I think it’s important that we understand one critical issue. If we don’t understand that, we will miss the whole point of the series. God came to Abram and made him a deal: if you will follow me, I will bless you. But that was only part of

the deal. 1. And here's the point of this sermon: Abram, and we, are blessed to be a blessing.

I wonder if Abram really caught that larger vision. Like us, I suspect he clearly saw the promise: the gift of a great nation, new land and many descendants. That sounds like the prosperity gospel: whatever you give to God, He will give back to you many times over.

Did Abram grasp the larger picture, the one most of us often don't see and even fewer of us pursue? Did you hear this master plan and purpose in God's word to Abram? Did you discover the "overview" of the Old Testament, indeed the key theme of the whole Bible?

It's contained in Genesis 12: 2 - 3. Let me read it to you and see if you can pick it out: (I'm reading from the New Living Testament and you can read along on the monitor) "I will make you a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you." What's the big picture of the Bible? 2. God wants everyone to be blessed.

God was not trying to make Abram or the Hebrews great. He was not rewarding them for their goodness. He did not call them as His chosen people to honor them, serve them or please them. God was blessing the world through the Hebrews.

To put it simply, the Hebrews were blessed to be a blessing. They were not favored sons and daughters but to ensure that all the people of the world would be truly blessed. 3. Their mission was to insure that even the least of all would feel the showers of God's blessings.

Abram's mission was more than to father an heir or claim a territory. His mission was to set into motion God's creation plan, the blessing of every last creature who lives! Now, that is a task worthy of taking a risk and leaving retirement plans behind. That is a purpose worthy of ultimate commitment.

This was his commission. It was, and still is, more than the survival of a family or nation. It is to be the flourishing of all families. Abram must also be concerned with how to bless all people. Unfortunately, in what is happening now in the Middle East, I suspect Abram's mission may have been forgotten, which is sad because that is contrary to God's will.

The charge that was given to the Hebrews, to bless all people, became Jesus' mission, for He came to be "a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for the glory of your people Israel." And here's a little key that we need to remember. That charge has been passed on to the Church, the New Israel, by Jesus. It is expressed in Jesus' final words to His disciples in Matthew 28: 19: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name

of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.”

4. So, the great charge, first given to the Hebrew people and now to us, is that we are entrusted with blessing all people. We are called to minister to the needy and the vulnerable, not simply to aid the worthy and the influential, who might be able to help us. This flies in the face of what many claim to be God’s blessings of our country. They believe God has chosen us above all others. God never calls anyone to be superior to others.

We dare not see ourselves as privileged because we deserve it. Don’t get me wrong, I believe that God has blessed America. Our problem may be that we are confused as to why God has blessed us. It is not because we are owed it. Nor do we have some corner on God. It is not a result of our hard work, ingenuity or shrewdness. God does not discriminate. He loves all people and wants all to be blessed.

We are blessed. Even the poorest among us has much more than most people in the world, but we are blessed for the reason God blessed Abram: blessed to be a blessing. How we carry out that role is important. That we carry out that role is vital because God loves obedience. Remember, Abram was blessed because of his obedience.

5. I believe that to whatever extent we have been blessed, we are called to be a blessing. We are not asked by God simply to count our blessings but to share them. I know that that might not be a popular message. The whole idea of sharing speaks to an issue that we’ll deal with a lot in the coming weeks.

6. Mr. Alcorn will confront us with a question: to whom do the blessings we share belong? Because, when we answer that question rightly, it may give us a whole new perspective. In our world the perception of many is that you need to get, and keep, as much as you can. It comes from a viewpoint of scarcity, which leads us to think sharing is bad and keeping is good. That was never God’s order.

If we evaluate God’s blessings based on Gross Domestic Product, we’re on the wrong path. God called all of His creation good and chooses to bless it all. The question is how do we participate as part of that creation?

Would you be surprised if I told you that Genesis 12 is not just the story of Abram; not just the story of the Bible, not just an intent of Jesus’ ministry and not just the purpose of the church? Would you be shocked if I insisted that Genesis 12 is our story, the story of every living being because it gives us our purpose.

Have we not been blessed to be a blessing? If not, then why have we been blessed? Remember that it was not that Abram was good; neither are we. I know there are some

who say we are better than others but we fool ourselves if we think that we are blessed because we have sinned less. As Isaiah reminds us “all we like sheep have gone astray.”

Are we, like Abraham being challenged to take some risks; make some sacrifices? Isn't more required of us than simply keeping a running total of our blessings? Yes. God blessed us with time, talents and treasure. Would we be expected, even with limited resources, to be a blessing? Yes, we would and yes, we could.

Could we spend less time and energy blessing ourselves and more in blessing others? Would we struggle with that? Yes, we would. Scarcity wants us to fear that we will lack if we give to others. By being blessed to be a blessing we are reminded that God's provision is always sufficient. By accepting that, we learn contentment

Many centuries ago, an old man received a call. Surprisingly, he left his home and ventured out with only the promise of future blessings. He began with a tired, broken-down body, a barren wife and some possessions. But God blessed him. From that nation came a savior; from that Savior came the church; from that church, came people committed to continuing Abram's mission to be a blessing.

I have no doubt that we are blessed. I pray that we will bless others even more by the grace, mercy, peace and care that God has shared with us. This is now God's call to us. It is a journey not a destination.

It calls us to give of ourselves, of all the things that we think of as ours but really are just on loan to us. God has given them to us to be the blessing He intends for us to be. 7. When we obey God's call to be a blessing, we are blessed beyond all understanding.

Join us each week as we take this journey of blessing, to grow in our understanding and love of a God who has blessed us to be a blessing. Come share the joy of that mission.

Count me in: How will you bless people this week?