

8.4.2024 Sermon

We are Blessed | Psalm 139

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

blessing, god, bless, esau, thought, isaac, plan, lord, life, rebecca, loves, desperate, push, womb, forget, systems, jacob, hear, agree, firstborn

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Rev. Sandra Anderson

Today is about blessing. I couldn't help but think of David when I thought about blessings for today. So, I want to share this psalm. I want to start off with this psalm so that you can be reminded of how blessed we are.

David says this: "Lord, you know everything there is to know about me. You perceive every movement of my heart and soul, and you understand my every thought before it even enters my mind. You are so intimately aware of me, Lord. You read my heart like an open book, and you know all the words that I'm about to speak before I even start a sentence. You know every step that I would take before my journey even begins."

"You have gone into my future to prepare the way, and in kindness, you follow behind me to spare me from the harm of my past. You have laid your hand on me. This is just too wonderful, deep, and incomprehensible. Your understanding of me brings me wonder and strength. Where do I go from your spirit? Where can I run and hide from your face?"

"If I go into the heavens, you are there. If I go down into the rim of the dead, you're there too. If I fly into the wings of the shining dawn, you're there. If I fly into the radiant sunset, you're there waiting. Wherever I go, your hand will guide me. Your strength will empower me. It's impossible to disappear from you or to ask the darkness to hide me, for your presence is everywhere, bringing light into my night. There is no such thing as darkness with you. The night to you is as bright as the day. There is no difference between the two."

"You form my animals shaping my delicate inside and my intricate outside, and wove them together in my mother's womb. I thank you, God, for making me so mysteriously complex. Everything you do is marvelously breathtaking. It simply amazes me to think about it, how thoroughly you know me, Lord. Even when I was formed in my mother's womb, you formed my body and created me in the secret place. Carefully, and skillfully, you shape me from nothing

to something. You saw who you created me to be before I even became me. Before I even saw the light of day, the number of days you planned for me were already recorded in your book.”

“Every single moment you are thinking of me, how precious and wonderful to consider that you cherish me constantly in your every thought, oh God. Your desires toward me are more than the grains of sand on every shore. And when I wake up each morning, you are still there with me. Long before you laid the foundations of the earth, you had your hand in me. You settled on me as the focus of your love and to be found holy and accepted by your love.”

“Long ago, you decided to adopt me into your family through your brother, Jesus Christ. What pleasure you took in planning this. I entered into the celebration of your lavish gift given by the hand of your beloved son. You thought of everything, provided everything that I could possibly need, letting me in on the plans that you took such delight in making—a long-range plan in which everything would be brought together and summed up in you. It's in Christ that I find out who I am and what I'm living for.”

“Long before I first heard of you, you had your eyes on me. My life is a part of your overall purpose. You are working out into this marvelous plan, this wonderful gift of salvation I received when I heard your truth and belief. This precious gift has set me free, signed, sealed, and delivered by your Holy Spirit. This is a down payment from you. This is the first installment of what is to come, a reminder that I will get everything you have planned for me.”

We are blessed, and that's what today is about. This is a day of blessing and affirmation of what God thinks of us, how He loves us, and his plans and purposes for our lives. What a blessing to know that God thinks so much of us. Blessings shouldn't be just reserved for days like this. Blessings are something that we should do on a daily basis, like words of affirmation, we speak into each other's lives and tap into the conscious and subconscious mind to motivate, challenge, and push us until our full potential in life.

Blessings are such a gift that sometimes I head to church and I'm in desperate need of a blessing, and I say, "God, see me today," and I know he sees me every day. But sometimes I come and I say, "God, I need you," and because he loves me, just like He loves you, he does things like placing songs on Jonah's heart, and she says, "I got some for you today." I get a long, extended hug from Mal because God wants to wrap his arms around me today. Oh, I see Brian, and the presence of this man brings joy. To be seen and known by God, to see a painting from Piper, our presence matters. That's what blessings are about. You are blessed. So, we bless others, and no matter how small and minute we may think it is, somebody is longing and desperate for that hug today, somebody is longing and desperate to be seen today, somebody is longing and desperate to hear from God today.

That's why blessings are important because when we're desperate, God says, "I see you and I hear you," and I bring to you what you need because he's always with us.

When I was younger, my parents would always speak blessings over us and tell us what they think of us, or what they feel God has called us to be. For me, I always needed extra confirmation. It's always been that way—you know, parents always going to say good stuff. They're always going to tell you, and you say, "Yeah, yeah, that's good." But I used to long to know what God thought of me. It's okay what my parents and my friends think, because people will think what they want about you, whether good, bad, or indifferent, but to wonder what God thinks of you is something else.

I was about 10 or 12 when this prophet came from Russia and spoke into my life, and it shifted my life because I held on to those words. For the first time in my life, I heard what God saw in me. I heard what His purpose and plans were for me. When I became desperate, depressed, and sad, I would pull that recording out and play it over and over again to remind myself of what God has called me to be. That no matter whether I saw it or whether my circumstances said something different, I knew that God keeps His promises, and if He said it, it would come to pass.

And that's what we need to do with our blessings—hold on to those. Here at Cornerstone, we believe in communal blessings. We understand and agree with God regarding a person's worth, their destiny, and their call, and we proclaim God's truth that each person has a divine reason for being. We verbally profess these truths over them to help them grow into their divine personhood and purpose. It's not just these blessing services.

I remember last year I was double blessed. I was ordained as a reverend, and I was affirmed as an elder. In those times of communal blessings, the leaders and the community—and my family and friends, you guys—came and affirmed the calling that God had on my life. When that stuff happens, it awakens something in you to say, "Hey, what I may have dug deep inside somebody else sees that. God sees that." And it shifts something in us to help keep pushing you to your destiny.

The more you call out to people, "Hey, I see you dancing. I see you painting. The more you call out to them what you see God has called on their life, the more that shakes out that noise they keep in the background that says, 'No, you can't do this. No, you're not worthy.' Because those voices are loud, but as we continue to every day say, 'Hey, I see you. God sees you. I love you. You have a purpose and a plan,' the more we do that, the more they feel blessed, and the more they feel blessed, the more that activates in them that, hey, I got a purpose and I got a reason for living. And that's what we're called to do.

When we understand that we start from a place of blessing, we develop an abundance mindset that says there is enough. I don't have to fight for a blessing, and we can freely bless others from that abundance. When we bless others, we agree with God's plans for their lives. I can't help but, you know, I had to throw something biblical in this. So, I thought of the story of Jacob and Esau, and we preached this through our Hebrews series that we're still on. So, if you don't know the story, I'm going to briefly explain it to you.

Isaac is married to Rebecca, and they have two twin boys, Jacob and Esau. Isaac is getting old and blind, and he tells his son, Esau, "Go out and prepare a dish for me, and when you come back, I'm going to bless you." And blessings were important, especially to the firstborn. So, Esau was the firstborn, and it was his right to get this firstborn blessing. Well, Rebecca, his wife, overhears this and she says to her son, Jacob, the younger, "Hey, we gotta do something about this," and they create this plan to trick their father, Isaac, into blessing Jacob instead of Esau.

And the plan works. Esau comes back and he's like, "Hey, Pops, I got your food. Come on and bless me." And Isaac says, "Who are you?" And Esau is like, "What do you mean, who am I? You told me to go get the food. I get the food, and I come back. Now you're acting like you got amnesia. It's me come and bless me. I did my part. Now you do your part and bless me." And he says, "I've already given your blessing away." And at that moment, Esau burst into bitter weeping and uncontrollable sobbing, and his father was angry and trembling.

Esau says to his father, "Bless me. Oh, my father, do you only have one blessing? Bless me too." Can you imagine thinking that there's only one blessing and it's over to you and your father tells you, there's nothing I can do. I've already given it away." And Esau continues to say, "Father, bless me. How many of you been there when you're like, father? See me."

"Do you only have a blessing for James? Can you only heal somebody else? Bless me too." But we've been brought up to think that there's only so many blessings to go around that everybody's not going to make it to heaven. It's a certain number. And guess what? You got to be good enough to make it. So, for the rest of us, we're not favored. We got to play musical chairs and bump somebody out the way, off, push somebody down because I want this blessing, because there's only so many blessings. But little do we know that we're all blessed and we don't have to fight and push and deceive people in order to be blessed. From the foundations of the world, we're blessed. When God created us, he said we're good.

And the Greek blessed means God. God blessed us. When He created us, before you were formed in your mother's womb, He said you were good, and there's nothing that nobody can do to change that, nothing nobody can do to take that away from you.

And I said, and I wondered, "Why would Rebecca do something like this?" And until the other day, I thought, well, that was pretty messed up, and I had an aha moment. Now you don't have to agree, but this is what came to me. Rebecca, in this time to me, did a Moses thing. She believed so much in this blessing that she realized that God is going to honor this blessing.

And if you look back to when the boys were in her womb, they were fighting even then. She said, "Lord, why is this happening?" And He told her, "Your younger will be greater than the oldest." So, what do you do in a patriarchal system that asserts the oldest must be greater than the youngest, yet she knew what God had spoken to her?

Do I believe in the word God gave me, or do I trust the societal systems that dictate, "Hey, no, you deserve to be greater than you"? We don't have to agree with why she did it or how fast she made it happen. We understand the consequences of acting hastily. But consider that moment when she thought time was running out. Maybe she thought Isaac would one day remember what God told them. "Do you even recall that you're not the firstborn?" Isaac wasn't the firstborn, but God chose him to be in the covenant, thus he received the blessing.

In that critical moment, Isaac exclaimed, "Oh, I don't have another blessing. I only have one." He failed to remember his own non-firstborn status. How quickly we forget, because of the systems we establish in the world that say, "This is how it must be." Rebecca knew the system's dictates but held stronger faith in what God had said. She believed in His blessing and trusted that God keeps His promises and would honor the blessings bestowed upon her son.

Perhaps the only thing she felt she could do, considering maybe God made Isaac blind for a reason, was to ensure the right son received the blessing. Maybe she thought, "If he blesses the wrong son, what could happen?" I sympathize with her dilemma, caught between divine promise and societal expectations.

I've been there, stuck in religious constraints where they say, "You can't be a woman and be a preacher, and you certainly can't be gay and be a preacher." But I didn't force my way; it took years for God to place me here. From that 12-year-old girl who received the word, it took until I was 37 for God to fulfill that promise. No matter what system is in place, you cannot take away what God has placed on someone's life.

So, what would you do with these systems? Would you just go along with it, or would you challenge them and say, "I know what you say, and I know how it's set up, but what about what God says?" Are the systems bigger than what God wants?

I no longer view Rebecca as, "Wow, something is really wrong with you." Instead, I see her as someone who pushed against the system, believing in the blessing but believing in God more. She did what she felt she needed to do at that moment, whether it was the right thing or not. Maybe that's all she knew to do because God keeps His promises, and she may not have known how God could keep this promise if the blessing went to the wrong child. But each child received their rightful blessing. It didn't take manipulation to get there; nothing was stolen from him. It was already set before the predestined time. When you look at Matthew and the genealogy of God, it mentions nothing about Esau. When it mentions Isaac, it doesn't mention Ishmael or other brothers. Those are the people God divinely chose to put in that covenant to birth the Messiah. So, whether you're firstborn or not, if God has called it for your life, there's nothing anyone can do to change it.

What I've learned is that people are in desperate need of verbal blessings, and they'll go to any length to receive these blessings. Just last Friday, I struggled all night, wondering why Pastor Tracy assigned me this service. I tossed and turned, mired in turmoil. But I needed a blessing. I needed to know that I was headed in the right direction and that what God had for me to give to you would be the word you needed.

Yesterday morning, I received a text from Pastor Tracy saying, "I did this for a reason. Be who you are called to be." She spoke to my present and my past, and then added, "I see you even when I'm on vacation." That's someone blessed to be a blessing. I had cried out to God to see me, and like Hagar when she wanted to run away, He pushed me back and said, "I am the God who sees you." God sees us. Pastor Tracy had no business thinking of me on her vacation, but God loves us so much that He would stop the world, and stop people from having fun, because He thinks so much of you. So never think that God can't hear my prayers. I'm not worthy enough for Him to hear, even when you say it in your mind. That's why the hugs are important. Your presence is important.

I still struggle today. Brandon comes up to me, and prays for me. People touch me and pray for me because even when I still don't get it, He still shows up and chases me down with that word to say, "I'm with you." Joni sings this song, "I'm with you, and I'm for you, and I can use you." That's the power of a blessing. That's the power of God's love for us—that if He did it for me, He'll do it for you, because we are all blessed.

Lastly, I'm going to end with this blessing. Blessings have power, and laying on of hands for impartation is to receive those blessings. So, I want everybody to stand up, and I want you to partner with somebody and lay your hands on them. I'm going to pray this blessing over us: "I pray that you forget all the toil and pain from your past and find healing for your generational wounds through the power of Jesus. May you never forget the Lord is with you, He is for you, and His immeasurable favor and love toward you will never fail. May the Lord keep His

promises for your life, and may you fulfill them, walking in boldness in your identity in Christ. I pray that your future be greater than your past and that your family will walk in blessings from generation to generation. Bless you, so that you may be a blessing to others. May you be like Ephraim and Vanessa, may you forget the pain of your past, and may you be fruitful every day of your life. The Lord bless you and keep you. Make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace. Amen.