

Jesus Was Sent for This

Opening text: Acts 3:26 - *To you first, God having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.*”

God raise up Jesus from the dead! Last Sunday, we celebrated the resurrection of Jesus. He is alive!

When Peter looked inside that tomb, he found it empty ... except for some empty grave clothes Jesus left behind. In those blood-stained cloths that Jesus left behind we find the evidence for the price paid for our salvation, for our healing and of the chastisement that brought us peace.

Jesus left something behind – it was not accidental, I am sure, but a little reminder of that moment, a reminder that the price was paid once and for all, and a reminder of how much Jesus loves us.

In fact, Jesus left so much with His disciples: His teachings, the example of His life, the promise that He was going to send the Holy Spirit, the promise that He was going to return etc. And today I want us to look at another thing Jesus left behind.

I think of something that the prophet Joel said,

Joel 1:14a – *“Who knows if He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him”...*

Indeed, Jesus came also for that purpose - to release a blessing upon all that would believe in Him, to leave a blessing behind – so we would walk in it!

Acts 3:26 - ... *“God having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.”*

1. The blessing Jesus left behind.

Jesus blessed us in changing the trajectory of our lives. That is powerful.

- a) However, he also blessed us in so many different ways! To see what that means we need to start with the very definition of the word ‘blessing’:

According to the Strong’s Greek concordance the word used for **blessing** means,

‘to distinguish with favour, to cause to prosper, to make happy’.

God raised Jesus and sent Him into our lives so we could be ‘distinguished with favour, caused to prosper or to make happy’.

At the cross Jesus redeemed us from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:13) and when Jesus was raised, a blessing came! - *“God having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you”*

Ephesians 1:3 - *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.*

2. How big is a blessing from God?

I don't know if we fully appreciate what it means to be blessed. Blessing is a deposit of divine grace, a declaration from God of His favour over our lives, it is a decree that cannot be overturned.

b) Here's a short description of what happens when a blessing comes:

1. It stays and can't be cancelled.

Nehemiah 13:2 - *because they had not met the children of Israel with bread and water but hired Balaam against them to curse them. However, our God turned the curse into a blessing.*

God's blessing is a decree from the highest of courts that cannot be cancelled or overturned.

2. It imparts value and worth.

Proverbs 10:22 - *The blessing of the Lord makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it.*

He enriches our lives in so many ways.

3. It causes that which is barren, to become fruitful.

Haggai 2:19 - *Is the seed still in the barn? As yet the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have not yielded fruit. But from this day I will bless you."*

In 1 Samuel 2:19-21, we read how Eli spoke blessing over Hannah and she conceived 3 sons and 2 daughters, apart from Samuel.

4. It brings increase.

Psalms 107:38 - *He also blesses them, and they multiply greatly; And He does not let their cattle decrease.*

Ezequiel 36:9-11 - *For indeed I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you shall be tilled and sown. ¹⁰ I will **multiply** men upon you, all the house of Israel, all of it; and the cities shall be inhabited, and the ruins rebuilt. ¹¹ I will **multiply** upon you man and beast; and they shall **increase** and bear young; I will make you inhabited as in former times and **do better** for you than at your beginnings. Then you shall know that I am the Lord.*

That is why we can believe that our best days are not behind us but ahead of us, that is why we can set our faith to believe that better things are coming in 2024!

Even the devil knows the power of God's blessing. He complained to God about His blessing over Job:

Job 1:10 - *Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? **You have blessed** the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.*

3. What to do with a blessing?

It is wonderful that God raised Jesus so He could bless us. Equally, that to *be blessed* means so much and it is so powerful! However, sometimes we don't handle our blessings very well. We need to talk about that.

Adam and Eve were blessed from the moment of their creation but didn't handle their blessing properly. King Nebuchadnezzar was blessed but boasted foolishly and thought that he was a 'big deal'. His pride was his downfall (Daniel 4:30-34).

a) The blessings are often greater than our ability to steward them.

When the Lord starts elevating you, lifting you up, opening doors, can you handle it? Can you keep your focus on the blessing-Giver, rather than on the blessings? Can we still remember God?

Hosea 13:5-6 - *I knew you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought. ⁶ When they had pasture, they were filled; They were filled and their heart was exalted; therefore they forgot Me.*

Deuteronomy 8:18 - *“And you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.*

Don't ever forget that God is the source of every blessing!

John 3:27b - *“A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.*

James 1:17 - *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.*

Don't forget God when He blesses you and don't let your blessings become your idols. Don't forget God and think you got on your own either. No let us stay humble and grateful.

b) Also, don't forget that we are only blessed to be a blessing.

The blessings were never meant to stop with us. Blessings come with a purpose attached to it, and stewardship is involved (*to whom much is given much is required*). We don't hoard blessings.

Genesis 12:22 - *I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and **you shall be a blessing.***

Zechariah 8:13 - *And it shall come to pass that just as you were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I will save you, and **you shall be a blessing**. Do not fear, let your hands be strong.'*

Sometimes the blessing is to be shared with other people and sometimes it is to God Himself:

Joel 2:14 - *¹⁴ Who knows if He will turn and relent, and leave a **blessing** behind Him— a grain offering and a drink offering **for the Lord your God?***

Deuteronomy 16:16-17 - ... *“they shall not appear before the Lord empty-handed. ¹⁷ Every man shall give as he is able, **according to the blessing of the Lord your God which He has given you**”.*

We are only giving God what God has also given us. 2 Corinthians 9:10 says that God *gives seed to the sower*.

1 Chronicles 29:14 - *But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? **for all things come from You**, and of Your own we have given You.*

Let us recap

Acts 3:26 - *To you first, God having raised up His Servant Jesus, **sent Him to bless you**, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.”*

- Jesus is alive and He left a blessing behind Him. Let us always remember where we stand: we are a blessed people who cannot be cursed. He has distinguished us with favour.
- With all His blessings let us remember where they came from – let us be passionate, thankful, and humble towards the Giver of the blessing. Let blessings never become our idols.
- Finally, remember that we are blessed to be a blessing. The blessing wasn't ever meant to stop with us. Let us be diligent as stewards and generous givers. Let us give in every direction: give to others and finally give God what belongs to Him.