

Read also Matthew 5:3-12. Check out the service at [www.fpcd.org](http://www.fpcd.org).  
(Before beginning, please read the story of Balaam and Balak found at the end of this sermon.)

What is the greatest blessing you can imagine?

- Being respected by a family member?
- A clerk giving you good customer service with a smile?
- A friend caring when you are down?
- Your spouse remembering your anniversary?
- Someone taking you out for your birthday?
- A compliment about something you do well?

Do you feel blessed this morning? Has it been a good week? Or perhaps you feel more like Balak—worried about something. For him, it was the state of the nation.

But he learned that God was more focused on blessing.

There are several levels of blessing:

1. The words or acts of the person who blesses:  
*Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise Him all creatures here below.  
Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!*
2. A special favor, mercy, or benefit:  
The blessing of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness in the United States
3. A favor or gift bestowed by God, thereby bringing happiness

King Balak wasn't focused on blessing. He saw the enemy, they were huge, as numerous as the sands of the sea . . . he was afraid! And so he hired a curser.

What would he have done today? Gone around the governmental offices and bad mouthed his enemy? Tried to find inflammatory information? Laughed over half-truths? Publicized hatred?

King Balak wouldn't give up. He could see no other option than to curse his enemy.

A curse in those days by a professional was considered binding. It's like putting it out there on public record and it was accepted as reality and people and nations were ruined because of it.

But King Balak didn't understand that in this case, he would have to contend with God.

God is not that far off from the world. All around us, even though we can't see it, the spiritual realm exists. You can't see your mind, but it's there. You can't see the inner workings of your heart but it is there. The spiritual realm is the same. We cannot see it, but God is the God-of-Heaven's-Armies. And when someone seeks a curse against God's people, you don't mess with God!

But to King Balak God was just a name, not a reality, just the figment of Israel's imagination, not Someone with Power, and so he fought the best way he knew how—with a hired curser.

Do you ever get so mad about someone that you want to do damage? You wouldn't want to admit it, but that person sends you to a new low! This may not be a reality in this room, but a lot of cursing of one's enemy is a new reality in this country.

This sort of thing does not surprise God. God has dealt with it enough that Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven" (Mt 5:43-44).

King Balak didn't know that; he did what comes natural which was to curse his enemy.

But God was at work! God is capable of working in the midst of the world's ways. God had another agenda.

Balaam, the prophet, was minding his own business. He had a reputation. When he cursed someone, bad things happened to them. King Balak approached him with cash. "Curse my enemy!" he said. But that night God spoke to Balaam with his own message: "You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed" (Nu 22:12).

That's God's answer. Plain and simple. *My people are blessed.*

Do you feel blessed? There are times when things go bad; God's people need rescuing. There are times when trials come; sorrows arise; we are tested; or God disciplines us. Ultimately though, God's story is not about delivering God's people but about blessing. John Goldingay, professor of Old Testament at Fuller Seminary says, "God needs to take some emergency measures to put [his people] right by delivering them. But normal life is then about blessing. Even when Israel fails, God will never give up on the purpose to be achieved through this people, and it is good to remind God of that."<sup>1</sup> When you pray, you can remind God of the fact that God intends to bless you. Ask for blessing!

So God telling Balaam not to go should be the end of the story.

But King Balak was determined to curse them so he upped the ante. He offered Balaam more money and prestige. As they say, everybody has their price. Balaam went.

Maybe you have an enemy and you don't know what to do. Are you tempted to go the world's ways? How strong is your resolve to listen to God? Do you stick with God? When pressure comes, do you turn and curse your enemy and give up on God, taking things into your own hands?

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<sup>1</sup> John Goldingay, *Israel's Gospel*, p. 471.

Now Balaam's donkey had more horse-sense than he did. Balaam's donkey was spiritually aware when Balaam could be bought off. Balaam's donkey was quite the asset. It decided they needed to sit up and listen!

So God has ways of getting your attention. How many times has God spoken to you when you needed it? Perhaps you saw a billboard which had the answer you needed, or someone said something to you to give you the direction you needed.

The truth is God has control relationally. Yes, God can speak to you in many ways. God gives people latitude to make decisions. Balaam was free to go.. But God has the ability to intervene. When God's first simple words of *don't do it* failed to work, God spoke in a way Balaam would never forget.

Thank goodness the donkey had sense. Thank goodness a talking donkey still teaches us about the fact that because we are God's people, *we are blessed*.

God says do not curse them because they are **destined for blessing**. *God DOES NOT CHANGE THE MESSAGE.*

King Balak insists on cursing the enemy he fears. How many people in our nation insist on cursing the enemy they fear? How are you and I doing on blessing and cursing? Are you insistent upon cursing? How is that working for you?

This message of blessing is a fantastic gift to be applied in your own life.

Jesus said: (Mt. 5:3-12; 13:16; 16:17; Mk 8:4-8)

- God blesses those who realize their need for him.  
God blesses those who mourn and comforts them.  
God blesses those who are humble; they inherit the earth.  
God blesses those who seek righteousness; they will surely get it.  
God blesses those who are merciful; they receive it.  
God blesses those whose hearts are pure; they can see God.  
God blesses those who work for peace.  
God blesses those whom people persecute and mock for following Jesus.  
Be happy about it! Be very glad! For great reward awaits you now and in heaven.
- Blessed are the ones who seek and are given insight into God's kingdom.
- Blessed are you when you declare that Jesus is the Christ because God has revealed it to you.
- Blessed are you when you take a step of faith with Jesus, bringing what you have, even if it is as small as two loaves and five fish, or less than 100 people who want to let the Word of God be heard in the community. He will bless your efforts!

We as God's people are blessed. But it does not stop with us. (Story of Shavonne)

Blessing comes in the midst of all the shortcomings, losses, failures, trials, and triumphs of this life. It comes when we don't know what to do.

Here's another blessing. Last week Pastor Roy, whom many of you know, held a men's conference. He read John 17:20-26, where Jesus prayed for the unity of the future church. Roy writes: "I asked, *how can we demonstrate this?* And this white man who I never saw before walked up to me in front of everyone and bowed at my feet and wiped both of my boots. It tore the place up! Clapping! Excitement!"

Unity is destroyed by cursing; it comes through blessing. As God's people, we are blessed. In your family, who are you actively blessing? A nation that is satisfied with cursing will not be unified. Unity comes through blessing.

Consider your words for those you don't like. Blessing or cursing? Which is going to ultimately bring blessing to you?

After he was resurrected, "Jesus led the disciples to Bethany, and lifting his hands to heaven, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up to heaven. So they worshiped him and then returned to Jerusalem filled with great joy" (Luke 24:50-52).

You are blessed, Christian!

"And without question, the person who has the power to give a blessing is greater than the one who is blessed" (Hebrews 7:7).

Try blessing.

AMEN