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SERMON TITLE: Sharing Your Blessing from God: Love

SCRIPTURE: Colossians 3:1-2, 10-17

DATE: July 25, 2021

View online service at www.fpcd.org/live-stream

Read also Numbers 6:22-27

Why the blessing from God? God loves us. So when we return that love to him, blessing spills over. God wants us to know that. So God gave the very first priests a command to bless God's children. It means this:

The Lord bless you – give his power for success
And keep you – guard you, keep you in mind, watch
Make his face shine upon you – set one's attention on you
And be gracious to you – graciously provide
Turn his face toward you – let you be aware of him at work for you
And give you peace – wholeness, intactness, wellbeing, calm, ease, without worry

God adds: "[The pastors] shall put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them" (Nu 6:27). God loves you and me.

When Jesus came he said: "The Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God" (John 16:27).

Those whom God loves, God blesses.

God even blesses those who right now are still enemies of God. God's attitude is called *common grace*— "For God makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous" (Matthew 5:45). That's why in addition to "love your neighbor as yourself, Jesus said, "Love your enemies."

So how does God bless you and me and people in the world? How does God get things done in the world?

God blesses people through people.

Do you have to be perfect for God to get things done through you? No!

God gets things done through flawed people.

Let's hear about God's people who carry God's name. READ (Col 3:1-2, 10-17)

What are our qualities?

- ~ Focused on the reality of a living Christ
- ~ Working toward becoming like Christ
- ~ Tenderhearted mercy and kindness
- ~ Humility, gentleness, and patience

- ~ Forgiving and making allowance for others' faults
- ~ LOVE
- ~ Peaceful
- ~ Thankful
- ~ Singing praises to God

We are to be like Jesus. Let's remember what Jesus did:

- ~ He brought good news to the poor;
- ~ He comforted the brokenhearted;
- ~ He proclaimed freedom to those who were in bondage;
- ~ He gave the LORD's favor to those who mourn;
- ~ He proclaimed God's anger against their enemies;
- ~ He gave a crown of beauty for mourning ashes;
- ~ A joyous blessing instead of sorrow;
- ~ Festive praise instead of despair.
- ~ He taught the people righteousness so they stand tall, for God's glory.

Jesus was called "a friend of sinners." (Mt 11:19) This was not looked on highly.

Yet every one of us, if we think back over our lives has a story of being blessed, even when we may have considered ourselves far from the Lord.

So how does God bless you and me and people in the world? How does God get things done in the world? *Through you and me.* Remember the song, "And they'll know we are Christians by our love."

I began to look for examples. I talked to old friends, my old boss, some people at a church, and I thought about FPCD. I remembered some of my own experiences. As I tell these stories, think about how someone loved you. Here are what people said:

STORY ONE (told by my old boss) A Dallas-area Company:

Southwest Airlines was the epitome of supporting their Employees in ways that were actually Christian tenets, generosity, stability, going the extra mile. Our Leadership believed if you treated others as you would want to be treated, you would have their loyalty and their desire to work hard for the company and for themselves. The "good letters" sent from the President's office constantly told of employees going the extra mile for our customers. They would drive someone to another airport to pick up a flight that they couldn't catch at a Southwest Airport. The employees would purchase food from money in their own pockets when the flight was delayed and people started getting hungry (just like feeding the 5 thousand!). The leadership on their part for the employees would make sure that when they heard about an

employee having a hard time, they would find out how they could help on a practical basis...food, money, clothing, etc. For instance, during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, every single Employee that was affected by the storm was found and their issues or needs were addressed. It was a massive undertaking, but it meant so much to those employees.

How does God bless people in the world? God blesses people through people. This is an example of how you, as an employee, might express your faith to love your neighbor. What assets of faith were expressed? [Generosity, kindness . . . ?]

STORY TWO (as told by Naomi V.)

A Friend's Testimony:

Many years ago, after suffering trauma in my childhood and losing my mother, I married at 17 and began a family. I also was driven to start a career that was fun and exciting and took me from home every week. As time went on, I began to feel quite melancholy every time I left my family for a trip. Then I found myself pregnant once more. At four months, while on a trip, I had a miscarriage. It was a very traumatic time. I began to suffer from depression and major anxiety. I went back to work and tried to continue flying, but I was in the grip of fears of all kinds. The most prevalent was that I was going to die and leave my children. I knew I was in trouble because all I did was cry!

Within days of my distress, my wonderful Christian friends from my church Community Group made love turn into action. My friend, Ginger, began to look for a facility I could go to for help and she helped my husband make some difficult decisions. My friend Esther came over and cut up fresh fruit for me and fed my children. The rest of the group was praying steadfastly. Ginger kept telling me I would be okay. I didn't believe her at first. However, once I got to the facility, and got some rest and treatment, I began to hear her words to me. She kept at it until hope returned! My foster parents, the Heisings, took charge of my kids and I was able to recover.

Now some 40 years later, I marvel at the love that was shown to me by these humans. They were the hands and feet of Jesus to me. It has spurred me on to be that for others that the Lord has put into our paths. They will know we are Christians by our love!

What Christian traits were expressed? [Friendship, caring, helping, serving] It is hard for me to read my own name in Naomi's story. But, all I did was be a friend and try to help. She and her husband also helped me at the same time.

STORY THREE

A Church's Testimony:

Bill Patterson's son, Dale, was pastor of Hackberry Creek Church. However, Bill was not a believer. But he loved to play golf. Each year the Hackberry Creek men went on two retreats—a spiritual retreat and a golf retreat. Bill was not interested in the spiritual retreat. He didn't even go to church. But the men's golf retreat was another story. He felt comfortable and had fun. He joined the retreat every year, admitting that he felt accepted. But, he was still resistant to Christianity. That is, until after about 15 years. Someone shared their faith and it all began to click. That

person invited him to accept Christ and he did! That person was his grandson, Andy, who felt compelled to stop by and talk to him one day and he led his grandfather to the Lord. Bill Patterson says it was the golfing men who met him where he was who taught him who Jesus is.

How does God bless people? Every person has a story about how they have been blessed by someone. Sometimes it is the easiest things that make all the difference.

STORY FOUR (as told by Jocelyn B.)

FPCD's Sandwich Ministry:

On February 16, 1984, Father Jerry Hill, co-manager of Stewpot Street Ministry in Dallas, spoke at an FPCD Women's group in the home of Evelyn Pike. He spoke about Austin Street Shelter and how churches were beginning to provide sandwiches nightly. From that first introduction, we began to provide sandwiches monthly. We choose the 4th Monday of each month and started with 30 dozen sandwiches each month. Our goal has always been to provide the same amount.

A woman named Andrene Hull coordinated the effort as a church-wide project. Different folks took the sandwiches down to the shelter on Austin St. Not only did we deliver the sandwiches but we handed them out to the folks waiting for them. Later as the shelter expanded, procedures changed and we just delivered the sandwiches. From then on Andrene made sure the sandwiches were delivered. After the Hulls moved, Mickey Jespersen took over the responsibility for many years until he was no longer able to do so. Mickey was very much involved with the folks in charge of the shelter. He was a dentist and often did work pro bono. Bob Harrison currently takes the sandwiches to the shelter.

Later, when church membership declined, Bob found another local church willing to provide sandwiches with us. They no longer do this, however, our goal is still 30 dozen each month. I'm sure there have been times we didn't make that goal and I'm sure there were times we exceeded it but if you use 30 dozen each month for 37 years, that's 160,840 sandwiches!

How does God bless people? God blesses people through people. This ministry has carried on through thick and thin. For the person who receives it, it means a lot.

Life is hard. When we bring a blessing, we bring a bright spot to someone. Maybe this is even a step out of their hopeless situation.

How does God get things done in the world? God uses flawed people. Don't be hesitant. Share your blessing. You are making a difference.

AMEN