

Union United Methodist Church

Sermon Outline: **Blessed to Be A Blessing, Part 3**

January 22nd, 2023. Pastor Michael Larbi

Readings: **Romans 1:11-17; Matthew 4:12, 17-23**

1. **Recall from last 2 weeks: Identity & Purpose**

- *January 8: Identity & Purpose*
 - We each have a unique God-assigned identity and purpose
 - Where, when, and to whom we are born is not an accident (Acts 17:24-28) – important part of our identity
 - We have an added identity in Christ - redeemed, blessed, called, etc.
 - God has a purpose to save the world (John 3:16), and for each of our lives (Ephesians 2:10)
 - *January 15: Divine Calling & Divine Grace for the call (1 Corinthians 1:1-9)*
 - God has a call for the universal church, our local church, each of us as individuals
 - We're called to be saints, to fellowship with Christ, to do God's preplanned works for us, to live in God's plan – in line with God's purposes for us
 - With the divine call comes divine ability (grace) to do what is required to fulfil the call

2. **Blessed with the Gospel of Christ**

- **God's Power To Save**

The Gospel of Christ is God's power made available to the world to save everyone who believes. Salvation here refers to both salvation from eternal damnation and a present salvation in this world in which we experience the life and power of Christ through the Holy Spirit. All of us who are Christians are blessed with this Gospel.

In Romans 1, Paul states that he was eager to preach in Rome for two reasons:

- "that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong" -v11 NIV
- "I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish" - v14 NIV

The Reason for Paul's eagerness to preach?

16For **I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes:** first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. **17For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”** Romans 1:16-17 NIV

Thus, the gospel of Christ is a great blessing to us and all who will believe. When Jesus preached that the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, in Luke 4, he was preaching the power of that good news. He was quoting some of the blessings in that gospel as recited by Isaiah 61 -

- good news to the poor,
- recovery of sight to the blind,
- the oppressed becoming free, etc.

As Paul also says:

“The message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” 1 Corinthians 1:18 NRSV

- **The Kingdom of God is Near**

John the Baptist came preaching, saying to Israel:

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” Matthew 3:2 NRSV

After his baptism and temptation in the wilderness, when Jesus was informed that John had been arrested, he also started preaching the same message as John:

“From that time Jesus began to proclaim, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”” Matthew 4:17 NRSV

The Kingdom of heaven is the domain of the reign of God. It refers to

- the present reign of God in heaven,
- the future reign of Christ on earth,
- and the reign of God in human lives in our present reality as we yield our lives to Christ.

As Paul points out:

“For **the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit**, 18because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and receives human approval.”
Romans 14:17-18 NIV

And Jesus said in this discourse:

“Once Jesus was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, and he answered, **“The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; 21nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There it is!’ For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among [within] you.”** Luke 17:20-21

3. We Are Called To Fish for People

After preaching on the Kingdom of heaven, Jesus called his first disciples.

“As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for **they were fishermen**. 19And **he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.”** 20**Immediately they left their nets and followed him.**”

Matthew 4:18-20 NRSV

It is amazing to me how God works. Jesus did not call the most educated men in the world or the wealthiest or most powerful. He called lowly fishermen.

What distinguished them? **OBEDIENCE**

“Immediately they left their nets and followed him”

As Paul says,

“Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. 27But **God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; 28God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, 29so that no one might boast in the presence of God. 30He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption”** 1 Corinthians 1:26-29

We are all called to bless the world by sharing the gospel.

Jesus is the source of our life, our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification (holiness), redemption. We can do all this because of the power of God in us. No excuse will do. We are carriers of God’s blessing to others.

4. The Gospel - Entrusted To Us

- Remember: We are called to be Ambassadors of Christ.
“All this is from **God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors**, as though God were making his appeal through us.” 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 NIV
- **We have an obligation to preach the Gospel**
As Paul said about himself,
“If I proclaim the gospel, this gives me no ground for boasting, for **an obligation is laid on me, and woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel!**”
1 Corinthians 9:16 NRSV
- **God’s love should urge us on to share the Gospel, not live for ourselves**
14For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. 15And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.”