

July 11, 2021 St. Peter Lutheran Church, Doss, TX Blessed to be a Blessing

Ephesians 1:3-14 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment--to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession--to the praise of his glory.

Take a minute and think what blessings have you received lately? We do this at Thanksgiving time most often, but you are blessed 24/7, 365 days a year. But in this hymn of praise Paul begins our second lesson showing us countless blessings for those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior. How has God blessed believers? *For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of*

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What does the promised Holy Spirit do? The Spirit convicts, comforts, and guides as Jesus said in John 16 (8-14). *When he-the Spirit- comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.*

The Spirit is present with us and helps us to do good, to worship, to stop sinning, and comforting us and challenging us as well. Challenges often mean growth and some of the challenges we get we don't like, but they are there before us and we can rise to them

or not. Jesus said, (John 16: 8-14) *When he – the Spirit- comes, he will convict the world of guilt THEN he will guide you into all truth. ... he will speak only what he hears, ... He will bring glory to JESUS.*

There are treasures that Holy Spirit gives us – gifts that we can use to build up the church like preaching, teaching, faith, miracles, helping, administrating, healing and the list goes on. God has gifted us with talents – think about what you enjoy doing because it comes naturally and succeeds in what you want to accomplish. How can you use it to advance the Kingdom?

There are fruits of the Spirit too so that you know He is in your life when you are being loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, self controlled, faithful, gentle, and generous. That's the work of the Spirit in your life. Satan wants to take those away from us and so counters them as we hear in a paraphrase of Galatians 5(19-21) ¹⁹⁻²¹*It is obvious what kind of life develops out of trying to get your own way all the time: repetitive, loveless, cheap sex; a stinking accumulation of mental and emotional garbage; frenzied and joyless grabs for happiness; trinket gods; magic-show religion; paranoid loneliness; cutthroat competition; all-consuming-yet-never-satisfied wants; a brutal temper; an impotence to love or be loved; divided homes and divided lives; small-minded and lopsided pursuits; the vicious habit of depersonalizing everyone into a rival; uncontrolled and uncontrollable addictions; ugly parodies of community.* But instead of works of the flesh, go after the fruit of the Spirit. The paraphrase describes it in this way: ²²⁻²³*...GOD brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard—things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely.* The Holy Spirit empowers us to be disciples. Disciples need power and

we receive power from the Holy Spirit. It is vitally important to share the Good News of the Gospel, not being afraid of talking about what Jesus means to us. No one can argue that. We could take it a step further and say, 'Let's show the Gospel in our love for others.' An action of love can't be disputed but people will argue religious beliefs all day long. You can define that care for others out of your own experience which again is not debatable since it is your experience. God's Spirit is here with us. Are you aware of your spiritual blessings? If so, what is your plan for this week?

If you had to describe in everyday language your spiritual blessings given to you, what would you say? (Pause) I would say what I pray when I take Communion to someone's home and we finish the confession. I thank God for His forgiveness, for eternal life and for salvation, for His Church and His Holy Word, and Holy Sacraments, for family and friends and the nation we live in but most of all for Jesus.

A final question that jumps out to us from this text is how you can say 'thank you' to God this week for what He has done for you. For me, it is by including thanks in every prayer and by trying to apply Jesus' example in all that I do in the week ahead. Why are we called according to Paul? Our text says, *with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory*. Praise is our highest call but it needs to come from a life of mercy and justice. It's a package of thankfulness and courage that our love for God shows through us to others. We can truly go in peace and serve the Lord. Amen