

THE PEOPLE AND POWER OF THE BLESSING

Part ? of LUKE, Luke 7:1-10.

Peter Foxwell. The Cornerstone Church. October 3, 2021.

INTRODUCTION: THE BLESSING

Are you ready for some deep thinking this morning? Here's where I'm coming from: To understand Jesus and his ministry in Luke chapter 7, we have to see him in light of the biblical idea of "the blessing." Let me explain.

When God created the world, he blessed the man and woman - Genesis 1:28. The blessing was a sign of God's favor. It signified his relationship with them and his commitment to protect and provide for them (Genesis 1:26-29).

Unfortunately, the first man and woman rebelled against God and "the curse" entered the world (Genesis 3:14, 17) along with death and disease, sin and evil.

In response, God promised "the blessing" for all nations. The blessing restores us to God and his life, protection and provision. Genesis 12 reveals God's plan to do it:

(Genesis 12:1-3) The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. 2 "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and **all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.**

Ultimately, the blessing comes to the nations through Jesus, the key descendant of Abram.

(Galatians 3:14) He <Christ> redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus

So, God's promise to bless all peoples on earth through Abram is fulfilled through Jesus. This explains what is going on under the surface of today's passage in Luke 7.

THE CONTEXT OF LUKE 7

In Luke 7, Jesus returns to Capernaum, the fishing town by the Sea of Galilee, and then moves around the region preaching and doing wonders. The chapter contains four stories: Jesus heals the sick, he raises the dead, and he forgives sins. These are all signs that God brought the promised blessing to people through Jesus Christ.

The fourth story concerns John the Baptist. He sent two of his disciples to ask if Jesus really was the Messiah, the one through whom - according to Jewish tradition - the promised blessing was to come. Jesus replied with a list of signs of the blessing:

(Luke 7:20-23) When the men came to Jesus, they said, “John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, ‘Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?’” 21 At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. 22 So he replied to the messengers, “Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. 23 Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.”

Today, we'll study Luke 7:1-10 where Jesus brings the blessing to a Roman soldier and his household.

What Jesus said and did has implications for our lives. Today, I want to explore the people of the blessing - who receives the blessing - and power of the blessing - what does the blessing do. Then, we'll discuss how we should live in light of the blessing.

Let's read Luke 7:1-10 now.

LUKE 7:1-10.

When Jesus had finished saying all this to the people who were listening, he entered Capernaum. 2 There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. 3 The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. 4 When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, 5 because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." 6 So Jesus went with them.

He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. 7 That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. 8 For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

9 When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel." 10 Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.

THE PEOPLE & POWER OF THE BLESSING

1. THE PEOPLE OF THE BLESSING - verses 1-6.

The people of the blessing are pictured in the interaction between the Roman centurion and Jesus. Something unheard of happened.

The centurion was a Roman citizen who led 100 soldiers drafted from regions conquered by Rome. The centurion took his orders from the Roman Empire's puppet king - the Hasmonean, Herod Antipas. The point is the centurion is an outsider, a Gentile (non-Jew), an enemy, and an unwelcome intruder among God's people, Israel.

The Jews would have kept their distance from him. First century Judaism's man-made rules taught them that contact with a Gentile, and even more going into his home, would defile them and make them unholy and unfit for God.

But this is a special case. You see, in order to win over the hostile Jews, the centurion had become a patron or benefactor to the town of Capernaum. He paid to build a synagogue. This put the Jewish elders - sort of like the town council - in his debt. That's why they came to Jesus to ask him to visit the centurion's house and heal his slave. It was a social obligation owed to their patron.

(Luke 7:4-6) When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, 5 because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." 6 So Jesus went with them.

"Jesus went with them." That phrase is the key. Jesus was willing to have close contact with a Gentile because he knew that **the people of the blessing are people from every nation, not just Israel.**

This was an answer to the prayer of Psalm 67. The elders forgot it, but Jesus did not:

(Psalms 67:1-5) May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine on us—2 so that your ways may be known on earth, **your salvation among all nations.** 3 May the peoples praise you, God; may all the peoples praise you. 4 **May the nations be glad** and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples with equity and guide the nations of the earth. 5 May the peoples praise you, God; **may all the peoples praise you.**

Jesus came into the world to bring the blessing to Israel and the nations so that all peoples will praise God. When Simeon met the baby Jesus in the temple, he declared this over him:

(Luke 2:28-32) Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: 29 “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. 30 For my eyes have seen your salvation, 31 which you have prepared in the sight of **all nations**: 32 a light for revelation to the **Gentiles**, and the glory of your people Israel.”

From the story of the Roman centurion and his slave, we can conclude that the people of the blessing are:

- Jesus, who is the channel through which God's promised blessing comes to us.
- People from all nations, every person who turns in faith to Jesus.

What happened next will help us to discover the power of the blessing.

2. THE POWER OF THE BLESSING - verses 7-10.

The centurion found out that Jesus was on his way, so he sent his friends to ask Jesus NOT to come to his house. This is likely because he assumed that Jesus was following the man-made rules of Judaism so he wouldn't want close contact with a Roman. Jesus might refuse to come to his house and that meant his slave would die.

The centurion's message boils down to this: "Jesus, I know you have the authority to heal my slave from wherever you are. Just give the command."

Sure enough, verse 10 tells us: "Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well." That's the power of the blessing.

In this story, the power of the blessing is Jesus' power to heal the sick, but as we look ahead in the Gospel of Luke, we discover that the blessing is even more than that. Jesus beats back the darkness of the curse by raising the dead, casting out evil spirits, forgiving sins, and bringing salvation and restoration to God. That's the power of the blessing.

THE POWER OF THE BLESSING TODAY

Let's take a moment to consider the power of the blessing in our lives. We have the rest of the New Testament to paint the whole picture. What we learn there is ...

By his crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus has made the fulness of the blessing available to people from every nation. Ephesians one is the key passage:

(Ephesians 1:3-7,13-14) Praise (blessed) 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. 4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins ... 13 When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance

The blessing is restoration to God and all he has for us:

- Our new nature: holy and blameless.
- Our new identity: sons of God.
- Our new freedom: forgiveness and freedom from sin's power and penalty.
- Our new destiny: we inherit the Kingdom of God - the new earth.

United to Jesus by faith, we are already living in the the blessing but the best is yet to come. When Jesus healed the soldier's slave, it was only a tiny foretaste of the full dimensions of the blessing that will be revealed when Jesus returns:

(Revelation 21:3-4) "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

Ultimately, the most important feature of the blessing is our total restoration to God. God will live among us. He will be our God, our life, our provider and protector. It is a reverse of the curse, a return to Eden:

(Revelation 22:1-5) Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. 3 No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. 4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5 There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

LIVING IN THE BLESSING

How do we live in the blessing?

BY FAITH. It doesn't always look like we're in the blessing. We still get sick, life is still painful, we will all die (unless Jesus returns soon). John the Baptist was in a dungeon about to be executed. He couldn't see the blessing and his confidence in Jesus wavered (Luke 7:18ff). It's the same for all of us; the fulness of the blessing won't be clear and obvious until Jesus returns, so we must live by faith in what we cannot see - Jesus - until then. According to Hebrews, this is normal:

(Hebrews 11:13a) All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance

BY REST. The blessing is a gift. We can't earn it and we can't earn more of it by striving and working harder for God. Jesus "earned" the blessing for us. He's done all the work. Trust him and rest in his power to keep you in the blessing.

(Galatians 6:14) May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

IN JOY Happiness comes and goes depending on our circumstances, but joy isn't about what's happening. Joy is the profound, permanent, and positive emotion of security and satisfaction that comes from knowing we are blessed.

(Philippians 4:4) Rejoice in the Lord **always**. I will say it again: Rejoice!

We are united to Jesus the source of all blessing so whatever happens, we never need lose out joy.

IN WORSHIP. According to Psalm 67, the purpose of the blessing is that all the peoples praise God. When we worship today, it is a foretaste of the future. One day you and I will join in a worship service with the redeemed from all nations along with angels and living creatures and the twenty-four elders around the throne of God and of the Lamb:

(Revelation 5:13-14) Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!" 14 The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.

IN OUTREACH. We are blessed to be a blessing by sharing our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Right now, would you think for a moment about who in your circle of family, friends, coworkers, and neighbors, is outside the blessing. Pray for an opportunity to share Jesus with them. On the book table, we have these little 2+ Prayer Cards for you to use. The apostle Paul's prayer is a good one for all of us to use:

(Ephesians 6:19-20) Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

Here's a great way to begin every day this week. As you wake up, tell yourself this beautiful truth: "I am blessed in Christ, I live in God's promised blessing forever."

WORSHIP CELEBRATION

Sunday, October 3, 2021

1:30 Welcome & invocation-Peter**0:00 Prayer-Alex****0:00 *Doxology*** [Worship Together in D: ladies]
Julia**6:21 *Freedom*** [Jesus Culture in G: original]
Alex**0:45 Pray & Dismiss Kids- Alex****3:00 Bible Reading- Exodus 2 -Janie****5:34 *Good Good Father*** [Default Arrangement in
Julia**3:00 A.C.T.S. Prayer- Bonnie****25:00 Teaching-Peter****5:52 *Way Maker*** [Leeland in E]
Alex**0:00 Pray - Nickie Laney****1:30 Updates-Peter****0:30 Blessing-Peter**
