

Pentecost 8 / July 14, 2024

Ephesians 1:3

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.”

God Blesses us with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus

There’s an old hymn entitled, “Count Your Blessings.” It’s written from the perspective of discouraging times, when it seems that even God’s kindness has departed from us. It begins, “When upon life’s billows you are tempest tossed, when you are discouraged, thinking all is lost, Count your many blessings, name them one by one. And it will surprise you what God has done.” It challenges us to ask ourselves what God has done for us? What has God done for you? When we ask that question quite often, we think of material blessings and benefits in time. God blesses us with everything needed for life in the world. He is the source of every blessing!

The Psalmist sang, “You cause grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate that he may bring forth food from the earth and wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine and bread to strengthen his heart.” When we count our blessings we give thanks to God for our possessions, our families, our friends and for the provisions He provides for daily living. He is the source of life and of our lives in the world. However, as great and necessary as they are, these are not the greatest, most important or lasting blessings. We need them to live in time, but they pass away with time. The blessings of the spirit endure forever. God blesses us with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus!

Jesus cared for people’s physical needs. He provided food and drink. He healed the sick. He gave the disabled freedom of motion. He raised the dead. Most importantly He forgave sins. He fed five thousand people from five loaves of bread and two fish. The next day some from that crowd came seeking further blessings. Jesus surprised them saying, “Do not labour for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.” The food that perishes is important. Most important is the food that endures to eternal life, which God gives us in Christ Jesus. God gives great gifts in time. He gives the greatest gifts in time and for eternity in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In Christ, He blesses us with adoption as His children through baptism into His death and resurrection. He blesses us with forgiveness for the sake of His blood shed on the cross, by which He reconciled all things to Himself in heaven, on earth and under the earth. He blesses us with the Holy Spirit, as a guarantee of our eternal inheritance in a share of Christ’s resurrection. Day by day, through the word, the washing of baptism and the nourishment of the sacrament of the altar, He sustains our faith. In these and through the fellowship of the faithful, He keeps us in His grace until we receive the fulness of blessing in our inheritance to eternal life in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. God is the source of every blessing. God blesses us with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus.

Paul begins our text saying, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It sounds odd to bless God. Shouldn’t it rather be the other way around? God certainly is blessed in and of Himself. He has no need of us to wish Him anything further, as if He were in any way deficient, or needed improvement. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. He is the fulness of blessedness, steadfast love and kindness. He is the source of every blessing. God blesses us with life, light and salvation. He has no need of anything from us. Whether acknowledge or not, we depend on Him for all our needs. We bless God by acknowledging Him as the source of every blessing.

We bless God by acknowledging our dependence upon Him for every blessing of body and spirit. “In Him we live and move and have our being.” We bless God especially, by acknowledging our spiritual needs and the blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who satisfies our every spiritual need. In Christ we receive the fullness of the riches of His blessings in time and eternity: Adoption as children. Reconciliation with Him through the forgiveness of sin. The gift of the Holy Spirit as a seal, guaranteeing the fulness of blessing to come in our share of Christ’s resurrection.

Paul blesses God for spiritual blessings, particularly for the kindness of His love in Christ Jesus. There are many things for which we can give thanks to God. None greater or more important than the blessing of His love in Christ Jesus. Like Paul, King David blessed the Lord, singing, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul and forget not all His benefits.” What are the benefits of the Lord? Certainly, life in time and everything He provides us with in time. Most importantly, the blessings that affect our spiritual well-being.

King David names them, singing, “He forgives all your iniquity. He heals all your diseases. He redeems your life from the pit. He crowns you with steadfast love and mercy. He satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” The fullness of blessing of which David sang and Paul celebrates, is revealed in Christ Jesus and received through faith in Him as God and Saviour. God forgives our iniquities for the sake of the blood of His cross. God adopts us as children through baptism into His death and resurrection. God continually washes away our sin and covers us with the garment of Christ’s righteousness. God gives us the Holy Spirit as a seal of His promises and as a guarantee of the fullness of blessing to come in our share of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. God Blesses us with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus

The first and greatest spiritual blessing is our adoption through Christ Jesus. In conversation with the Pharisee Nicodemus, Jesus addressed our most important spiritual need saying, to enter the kingdom of God, “You must be born again...born of water and the Spirit.” God is the Father of all people by virtue of creation. But because of the sin of the world, all people are conceived and born into a broken relationship with God. We need to be reborn into a new and healed relationship to be God’s children in the truest and fullest sense of the word. We receive the second birth, the birth of water and the Spirit, when the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to see our sins, opens our hearts to receive Christ as Saviour and washes our sins away through baptism into His death and resurrection.

In the second chapter of this letter to the Ephesians, Paul speaks to our dire spiritual condition before God sent Christ into the world and the Holy Spirit brought Him into our hearts. He says, “You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked.” He says you were “sons of disobedience...children of wrath, without God and without hope in the world.” Hard words! Tough to take! When times are tough and life is hard, we sometimes comfort ourselves saying, ‘It could be worse.’ Sort of a backwards way of counting your blessings. There is nothing worse than being without God. We think of hell in terms of physical pain and punishment. The essence of hell is to be without God and without hope. Without God there is no hope. The good news of the gospel of Christ Jesus is that there is hope.

There is hope, because Christ has taken away the sin of the world and paid the debt for every human soul. There is hope, because Christ has reconciled the world to God. Now is the season of salvation. The gospel is the proclamation of hope, offered for all to receive, given to all who believe. There is hope for those who believe, because in Christ Jesus, God no longer counts our sins against us. There is hope, because all who receive the gospel through faith in Christ and the washing of Holy Baptism, are reconciled to God as children. God blesses us with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus.

Most importantly, God blesses us with reconciliation with Himself in Christ Jesus. All who are reconciled to God through faith in Christ Jesus, sealed in the promise of baptism, receive adoption as children of God. As God’s children, adopted for the sake of Christ Jesus, God no longer sees us as disobedient sons and children of wrath. He sees us through the obedience of Christ. He sees our sins and covers them in forgiveness for the sake of Christ Jesus. For the sake of Christ and His righteous blood that covers our sins, He calls us His children, dearly loved. God blesses us with every spiritual blessing, the greatest being, adoption as His children, in Christ Jesus.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.” In Jesus’ Name. Amen