



The First United Methodist Church of LaGrange

The Eighth Sunday after Pentecost
July 18, 2021 • 11:00 am

New Sermon Series: 'The Power of Genesis'

As I was preparing for our current sermon series, "The Power of Genesis," some important lessons just couldn't quite fit into our three-week series. One of those revolved around God's blessing upon Abram in Genesis 12.

Feeling blessed is in vogue nowadays, isn't it? A quick look at Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter shows how many people today feel **#blessed**. In our world that is very concerned with the image we project to others, saying you're blessed can be a type of "humble-brag" in which you show the world just how great things are going for you. College scholarships, beach vacations, cute family photos, and even the front parking spot at Chick-fil-A are all tagged with the same description—**#blessed!**

Of course, as Christians, we often speak of being blessed as well. We rightfully pray for God's blessings and attribute undeserved gifts to the blessings of God. We pray for blessings for our loved ones and ask God that our ministry at First Methodist will be blessed. From our benediction in worship to a simple courtesy when someone sneezes, we hear wishes of God's blessing so often that I worry we rarely take the time to reflect and consider what this phrase means. I'm afraid that our culture and sometimes the church as well has lost sight of what God originally meant by the term "blessings."

For believers, is the blessed life synonymous with a life of success that checks all the boxes of prosperity? Where do God's promises and blessings end and our responses begin? Where does God's will meet our will in the divine-human encounter? These are deep questions without easy or simple answers. For over 2,000 years the church has had to wrestle with these types of questions regarding the divine-human relationship.

I don't pretend to know all the answers, but I believe God's interaction with Abram in Genesis teaches us two key things:

1. **Blessings begin with God:** There is no promise without a promise-maker. There is no real Genesis, no new beginning for barren people, apart from the reality of our almighty God.
2. **We are blessed to be a blessing to others:** The central purpose behind the blessings of Abram and Israel are to bless the world. In the same way, God does not bless us for our own sake. Instead, God blesses us so that we can be a blessing to others.

Do you remember standing on the side of the lake as a child and skipping stones on the water? I was never very successful, but I was always impressed with my brother who got up to 10 skips almost every time with the right rock! Picture it with me. When you skip rocks on a still pond or lake, the ripples in the water vibrate out so much farther than just the immediate area of impact. The ripples continue and concentrically spread throughout the surface. It's the same way when we bless others. We consciously decide that every time we are blessed, we will in turn bless others, and the circle of blessings ripples and spreads. Blessings originate with our heavenly Father, extend to us, and then we in turn bless others.

If the blessings stop with us, we miss out on our opportunity to be a part of the reverberation of God's blessings throughout eternity. That's the power of God's Blessings. And that's a power I hope our church is willing to continue to live into and display to our church family, to our community, and around the world!

I hope you know how much I love you—and love serving alongside you to be a blessing to others! It's an honor to be one of your ministers.


Pastor Ben

We're Better Together!