

November 25, 2012

**Scripture Lessons** *Psalm 24:1-6*  
*1 Peter 3:8-12*

When I was deciding what I should talk about today, the first thing that came to my mind was blessings. Why would that come to mind? I thought it could be because we were celebrating Thanksgiving this week and a person tends to think of the things we are thankful for or the blessings in our life. George and I were blessed to have our grandkids (and their parents too, of course) visit us for a week. Oh to have the energy of a 3 year old again! But when we say that something is a blessing do we know what it really means?

Webster's 1<sup>st</sup> definition of blessing is biblically important. A blessing is the act or words of one who blesses. What's the nature of a blessing? It's approval or encouragement. In a blessing, we give approval and encouragement to someone. A true biblical blessing is the affirmation and approval of a person. In the Bible, the most important form of blessing was when a father chose a son as his successor to head the household and the most common form of blessing was when parents complimented their children. God blesses us by confirming and affirming us, encouraging us, and adopting us as His own. It's in Christ

that we are blessed. It is because of Christ and in Christ that God's richest blessings are ours.

Blessings can't be earned, they are a voluntary gift. However, what we as Christians do is important. God wants us to be holy, he wants us to live right and he wants us to serve in His body. He doesn't want us to serve to earn our blessings, or to serve out of guilt and fear. God wants us to serve out of love. We need to remember the words of 1 Peter 3 that Jim read to us today. "Have unity of spirit, sympathy, and love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called; that you might inherit a blessing."

Our church is rich in the blessings that we give to others. We help our community in many ways by giving to Rural Resources, Crime Victims Services, Y.E.S., and the Tree of Sharing to name a few. We reach out to the world by giving to O.C.W.M., UNICEF, and the Shoebox Ministries. We do this out of our love for our fellow people.

We are a welcoming, friendly place for the people that come to visit us. We are blessed when these visitors stop being visitors and become a part of our church family. We are blessed by the love that is felt as soon as we walk into this place.

As I was struggling with what to write, I opened a book called Abundant Gifts which is a book of daily devotions and this devotion was on the page I opened the book to. The title is “A Sneeze and A Blessing”.

Standing in the crowded aisle of an airplane, waiting to deplane, I sneezed. “Bless you,” “bless you” rose a small chorus of voices in automatic response. “Thank you,” I said. Why wait for a sneeze? I thought. Just as the voices of perfect strangers rose to bless me, I began to bless them silently—first the ones who blessed me, then everyone else I saw or passed. God bless that one, and that one, I silently prayed. Work in that woman’s life. Lift that man’s spirits. Show that family you’re real. I’ll never know how God will answer my prayers for those strangers. But I believe they will be answered. A ring of blessings coming full circle. It started with a sneeze. But it doesn’t take a sneeze to spread the blessings.

If we love one another, we will bless those that we love and we will be blessed in return. May your lives continue to be blessed and may you continue to bless the lives of others.

Amen.