

Blessings from the Bridegroom



Sermon Text

Genesis 12



Big Idea

Without Jesus, we are naturally self-oriented, exploitive, and abusive. We see others as existing to serve and bless us. But when Jesus enters into the picture—when we are loved, served, and blessed by Him—we are freed from self-concern and enabled to truly live for others.

(1) The Blessing Promised (vv. 1-9)

What we see in these verses is that God's blessing is promised not only to Abraham and his family (Israel) here, but through him and them to the nations. We could, perhaps, sum up the promise like this: "I will make of you a blessed nation for the purpose of blessing nations." Here, Abram, and later, Israel, and now, the church in Christ, are called out of this world to be not only the recipients of God's blessing, but mediators of that blessing to the world.

Running underneath all of this is the question: Why do you exist? And closely related to it, a second question: Why do others exist? If, on the one hand, you exist for God—to know Him, love Him, follow Him, and be blessed in Him—well then others are here for you to bless and serve. But if, on the other hand, you exist as god in your own mind, well then it follows that you will act as if others are here to bless and serve you.

(2) The Blessing Distorted (vv. 10-16)

If the structure of the NT is best made sense of within the framework of the *already/not-yet*, well then the structure of the OT is best made sense of within the framework of the *almost/not-quite*. Abram is to be the one through whom blessing comes to all the families of the earth, and he can't even mediate blessing to his own family, to his own bride. In a pinch, to save his own skin, he says in essence: "Let it go well with me though it go poorly with you. Let my life be spared at your expense. It is my pleasure for your pain." He is getting rich while she is getting ravaged!

(3) The Blessing Realized (vv. 17-20)

What this text is telling us, indeed, what the entirety of the OT is telling us, is that God, not man, is our hope for true blessing, rescue, and transformation. He is the One who will see to it that we become a blessed nation blessing nations. And, of course, He will do it, by Himself becoming a man in the person of Jesus Christ. Abram is a picture of Jesus—he points us to Him, he prepares us for Him, but he is not Him. Almost, but not quite. Jesus is going to be similar in many respects and yet different in every way. Like Abram, Jesus leaves His Father, His land, all He's ever known to step out in obedience to God. And He's born a man. But unlike Abram, He will not falter in fear when faced with persecution and death. Like Abram, Jesus has a bride, the church, you and I. But unlike Abram, He will not ask His bride to sacrifice herself for Him. No! He will lay down His life for her. Like Abram Jesus is called to receive and mediate the blessing of God to His people and through them to the nations. But unlike Abram, His blessing will not be distorted with the self-concern. No! He will realize all that God had begun and left incomplete in Abram.

Reflection Questions



- What is your fundamental orientation towards other people? Are you here from God for them? Or are they here for you? How has this been playing out in your relationships this past week? How does Jesus reorient you in all of this?
- How does this text speak into our cultural moment? How is the mission of the #metoo movement ultimately realized in Christ and the gospel? Why are changes in policy and legislation not enough? What does Jesus do that these things can't? How have you personally experienced this?