



Version

Acts 13
44-48
New International

⁴⁴ The next Sabbath almost everyone in town came to hear the message about the Lord.^[h] ⁴⁵ When the Jewish people saw the crowds, they were very jealous. They insulted Paul and spoke against everything he said.

⁴⁶ But Paul and Barnabas bravely said: We had to tell God's message to you before we told it to anyone else. But you rejected the message! This proves that you don't deserve eternal life. Now we are going to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷ The Lord has given us this command,

"I have placed you here as a light for the Gentiles. You are to take the saving power of God to people everywhere on earth."

⁴⁸ This message made the Gentiles glad, and they praised what they had heard about the Lord. Everyone who had been chosen for eternal life then put their faith in the Lord.

[*Salt and Light*] You are like salt for everyone on earth. But if salt no longer tastes like salt, how can it make food salty? All it is good for is to be thrown out and walked on.

You are like **light** for the whole world. A city built on top of a hill cannot be hidden, and no one would **light** a lamp and put it under a clay pot. A lamp is placed on a lamp stand, where it can give **light** to everyone in the house. Make your **light** shine, so that others will see the good that you do and will praise your Father in heaven. **Matthew 5:13-16**

"Christians are made, not born." Tertullian

"The Degree to which I am blessed staggers me... the degree to which I take that for granted shames me." John Green



Sermon Notes

BEGIN with God

BELONG to Christ and the Church

BECOME fully Christian, so that you may...

BLESS your world

"I have placed you here as a light for the Gentiles. You are to take the saving power of God to people everywhere on earth."

Blessings are an **AWAKENING**

SUCCESS is what I can do for myself.

BLESSING is what only God can do.

Open my eyes, God. Help me to perceive what I have ignored, to uncover what I have forgotten, to find what I have been searching for. Remind me that I don't have to journey far to discover something new, for miracles surround me, blessings and holiness abound. And You are always near. Amen.

Every blessing is an invitation to ask, "Why me?"

Blessings reveal God's **ALTERNATIVE**

Purpose, Community, Future

Blessings are **AFFIRMING**

Every blessing is an invitation to ask, "Why me?"



Experience the Word

Blessings in Troubled Times

After being battered all day by a hot south wind, the squash vines and tomato plants in our garden drooped in the fading light. They practically cried out for water from the sprinkler. But the trees in the yard were green and flourishing, though they required far more water than the squash and tomatoes. The deep roots of the trees found a hidden source of water far below the surface where the garden plants struggled. Like those trees, people who trust in the Lord are not at the mercy of surface circumstances because we have deep roots to our eternal Source, Living Water.

When have you experienced God's strength in a difficult time?

Read Jeremiah 17:5-18

Discovering the Word

- What geographical and human conditions in Jeremiah's society are described in relation to one another (vv. 5-8, 11, 15-18)?
- Why will the person who relies on human strength be disappointed (vv. 5-6)?
- How does God provide for the person who relies on him instead of on human strength (vv. 7-8)?
- What is the state of the human heart before God (vv. 9-10)?
- What did Jeremiah continue to hope for (vv. 14-18)?

Applying the Word

- What "drought conditions" are you facing now?
- In what ways do you find it easier to trust someone or something else besides God to see you through those circumstances?
- How does God's promise in verses 7-8 give you confidence?

The Intimacy of the Table

The table is one of the most intimate places in our lives. It is there that we give ourselves to one another. When we say, "Take some more, let me serve you another plate, let me pour you another glass, don't be shy, enjoy it," we say a lot more than our words express. We invite our friends to become part of our lives. We want them to be nurtured by the same food and drink that nurture us. We desire communion. That is why a refusal to eat and drink what a host offers is so offensive. It feels like a rejection of an invitation to intimacy.

Strange as it may sound, the table is the place where we want to become food for one another. Every breakfast, lunch, or dinner can become a time of growing communion with one another.

You may have heard of product placement in movies. Movies actually get paid to insert the names of products into the story somehow. I just read this story this week. A company actually offered pastors the chance to win \$1,000 and a free trip to London if the pastor would send proof that they mentioned a particular movie in their sermon. I won't tell you what the movie was, but it's a good movie. It's connected to faith issues, but we live in such a commercially driven society that somebody is actually offering to pay pastors to do product placement in sermons! A perfect example of how consumed we are with our own blessings! That's not God's plan. God's plan is to give you a blessing so you can *be* a blessing.

See, the reason blessing is so central in the Bible is it's the answer to an ultimate, inevitable human question. The question

is this: What is the good life? Who has the good life? Is it people with money, people with looks, people with health? *Blessing* is the Bible's answer to these questions. Blessing is different than success because it starts with God. It doesn't start with me. It's grace. It's different than success because it's given so I can bless the world. It's not about showing how blessed I am.

"Count your blessings / Name them one by one / and it will surprise you what the Lord has done."

May the Lord God Almighty, in his mercy obliterate every word, statement, experience, and invisible barrier you may have constructed that is keeping his blessing from reaching your heart. May the unrelenting love of God pursue you and surprise you with his compassion for you. May the forgiveness of Jesus Christ restore and renew your hearts. May the living waters of the Holy Spirit fill you and flow through you to a struggling and broken world. May God's peace rest upon you, and may the Lord fill you with his joy. May his joy become your strength. In the name of the Father and the Son and Holy Spirit, Amen.