

The Unseen Blessings

Անտեսանելի օրհնությունները

Philippians 4:12-13

I love the song that goes, “Count your blessings and name them one by one.” I sang it all the time. I sang it in Armenian, now I sing it in English. How do you count or measure your blessings? How do you know if you are truly blessed?

I guess I can put a checkmark on the things I do have. I have a spouse, check; I have kids, check; I have a job, check; I have health, check; I have a home, check; I have a car, check; I have a church, check; I have friends and community, check; I have savings, check...We sometimes think a blessed person is the one who can check all these boxes.

Today I would like to look at blessings from another side. I will call them, “**The Unseen Blessings.**” Here let me give you a few other titles for this sermon: “**Blessings in Unexpected Places; The Blessing of not Having it All; Blessings in Disguise.**”

What am I talking about?

I am continuing my sermon series about growth, **Christian growth**. We did cover growing downward-- to be rooted; we covered growing upward-- to be fruitful; we covered growing inward-- to be strengthened in the faith. Today I will cover growing outward as we overflow with thankfulness. Our theme verse is from Colossians 2:

rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.” (Colossians 2:7, NIV)

Paul ends this verse saying that after growing in all areas, one thing is left. We will be **bursting out with a thankful heart**. In Armenian, the word “overflowing” is translated as ***djokh***, “abundant, lavishly abundant.”

Are you thankful this morning? Not just thankful, but are thankful with an overflowing heart?

Many of us will say, if we check all the previous boxes, then of course we will be overflowing with thankfulness.

But here is a new challenge to you and me. **Are you blessed because you do not have this or that?** Are you blessed because you **lack something**? Can you see your unseen blessings? Can you find your unseen blessings?

Let me start with simple examples. Can you feel blessed because your home does not have a **dryer**? Can you see yourself going out with you basketful of clothes into the fresh air? Piece by piece you can lay them on the string, seeing God's presence there, remembering your family's old days when you used to do this with your mother. Or perhaps when you were outside your neighbor needed you and you reconnected. Can you see that not having a dryer can be a blessing?

Can you say in this Thanksgiving week: **I am thankful for not having...?** Can you see blessings in the unseen?

It is very tough to do so. We are programmed the other way round. We evaluate blessings with *having this or that*. How can we feel blessed when we do not have it?

Illustration: We used to have four cars. Then we lost one of them in an accident. It was Sevan's car. We felt terrible about losing it. Four of us had cars; we were independent from each other. Are we blessed by not having this car? We are. We first realized God saved us family from a dangerous accident. Then we learned to depend on each other. We learned sharing and compromising; we learned prioritizing; my wife started to teach at home; things changed and we saw the blessings of not having it... We saw how God can teach us to be content when we do not have it all.

Is there a blessing in not having a job? Is there a blessing? I believe for Christians, it is a training in how we look at things. When we lose something we use to have or when we do not have something, God will use us in a new way. We will see

new things. We will see the unseen world. **God will use you whether you have job or not.** But when you lose something, God can help you learn to trust HIM further in your life. You learn to thank him for not having everything. I will say it again, you **LEARN to THANK Him for NOT Having...**

The best place I learn about this is the Word of God.

-Paul is a great example.

Almost all Paul's letters start with thankfulness. "**I am thankful....for so and so....**" He is thankful for the life of new Christians being rooted in their faith. Paul is thankful that "baby" Christians are growing and maturing. He is even thankful that they are facing suffering and trials. He is thankful that he can write his letters from prison where he is chained to another man.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge—even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you—so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, (1 Corinthians 1:3-7ESV)

Paul is writing this letter not because the church of Corinth is making great financial profits. If you read the letter you can see how many things were lacking. Yet, he is saying to them that he is thankful to God for them, **because of His Grace**, the grace of salvation, the grace of Jesus Christ and because they do not **lack any gift**. Can you see that all the gifts are given? Do I have eyes to see that? Do I have the right heart to see that?

-Here is the introduction to another of Paul's letters:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing... (Ephesians 1:3)

What are the spiritual blessings Paul mentioned? **We were adopted to be God's children. We were called to be IN CHRIST, to walk in Him, to live in Him.** These

are not boxes you check. They cannot be. These are blessings in the unseen world which shape our lives and transform us into His image (Being IN Christ is the best blessing).

-Peter, like Paul, says in his greeting:

May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence. (2 Peter 1:2-3 ESV)

God **granted us all things** that we would **know him** and live a godly life.

Both Paul and Peter stress that we have “every spiritual blessing,” and we are “granted all things.”

-The author of Hebrews makes it clear in chapter 11:

And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect. (Hebrews 11:39-40 ESV)

By faith, all the heroes mentioned in Hebrews 11, experience God’s promises. However, there is something better waiting for us. This means His promises continue being fulfilled throughout eternity, where the best is. Let me quote from the ESV commentary:

Most of those (promises) mentioned in this chapter saw only preliminary glimpses of what was specifically promised (see [v. 13](#)), and all were anticipating a greater future hope ([v. 16](#)). In light of [chs. 1–10](#), **something better for us** refers to the **new covenant** realities of the superior Son of God, with his superior priesthood, and the consequent eternal perfection of the faithful.

The best is yet to come.

Illustration: In his death bed, a Christian asked to be buried with a fork in his hand. People were wondering why he wanted to have a fork in his hand. He said, "In all the church banquets and I attended, after the main dish, someone would announce, 'Keep your fork.'" I was my favorite item because I knew something better was coming, the dessert.' I know that the best is yet to come."

Let me bring back the main question again. **Do you see blessings when you do not have...?**

I saw a funny yet a sad post that describes the American Thanksgiving:

"Thanksgiving is when Americans give thanks for everything they have so that next day they can go out and buy everything they don't have."

Human greed can never be satisfied. If you are only thankful whenever you receive something, **it is time to see the blessings of God when you do not have it.** This means external circumstances do not limit your contentment, thankfulness, happiness, joy, and peace.

I would like to finish with Paul's attitude about this one more time:

I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:12-13 ESV)

In all circumstances Paul learned to see God's blessings- all circumstances. The secret is not in him, the secret is having Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Then all things can be seen in a different view. (Like Romans 8:28-29)

Enjoy this week your family and all the blessings that has God granted you. Also think if **one thing you lack**, and thank God for it!

Grow outward, overflowing with thankfulness.

Amen

The hymn: Now Thank We All Our God:

In order to understand where this hymn came from, I would like to offer a very different image: A minister and his family sing this hymn before dinner to thank God for the scraps of food they have on the table in their meager home in a desolate refugee city that is afflicted with famine and disease and war. Since the earliest projected date for this hymn is 1636 and the oldest known date is 1663, this hymn was certainly written during or soon after the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648).

Martin Rinckart (1586-1649) was an accomplished musician who studied at the University of Leipzig and then spent most of his career as a musician and archdeacon in the city of Eilenburg during the Thirty Years' War. British Hymnologist J.R. Watson accounts that as one of the last surviving ministers in the city, Rinckart had to stretch personal resources to take care of refugees and spend most of his time performing nearly fifty funerals per day at the height of the plague. This experience during the Thirty Years' War had a profound impact on Rinckart's poetry, just as it did for his hymnwriter contemporaries. Lutheran scholar Carl Schalk observes that unlike the objective hymn texts of the Reformation period, the "cross and comfort" hymnody of the time reflected life situations of the people with greater metrical regularity, smoother language, and a theology relatable to everyday life.

(<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-now-thank-we-all-our-god>)