

Union United Methodist Church

Sermon Outline: **Blessed to Be A Blessing, Part 1**

January 8th, 2023. Pastor Michael Larbi

Readings: **Jeremiah 1:4-10; Matthew 3:13-17**

1. **Jesus, the Christ, anointed at baptism**

○ **2 Key things occurred at Jesus's Baptism**

Matthew's account of Jesus's baptism highlights two important things that happened that day.

○ *God affirmed Jesus' Identity and Purpose*

"a voice from heaven said,

"This is my Son, my Beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

Matthew 3:17 NRSV

○ *Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit*

"And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water,

suddenly **the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him."**

Matthew 3:16 NRSV

○ **Jesus is both our Savior and Model**

If the Lord Jesus himself needed a clear identity and purpose when he took on the form of a man, as well as empowerment to live in that identity and fulfil his purpose, then we surely do, too.

When he washed his disciples' feet, Jesus had this to say to them:

"You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. 14So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. 16Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them."

John 13:13-16 NRSV

2. Identity & Purpose

- **God's overall purpose**

Since the fall of Adam and Eve, God's overall purpose has been to redeem humans from sin and its consequences (including eternal damnation), and to restore us to fellowship with the Lord. This is the primary purpose of all God has done in the earth since then, and this is the running theme of all scripture.

- **Jesus has a clear identity and purpose**

Jesus is the Christ (Messiah, Anointed One) and Savior of the world. That is his identity.

He described his purpose in the words of the prophecy in Isaiah 61:

**"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."**

Luke 4:18-19 NRSV (quoting Isaiah 61:1-2)

- **We're Blessed!**

Each of us also has a divinely assigned identity and purpose

- **In our natural life and existence on this earth**

As the Apostle Paul told the people of Athens:

24The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, 25nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. **26From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, 27so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. 28For 'In him we live and move and have our being.'** Acts 17:24-28 NRSV

Some call where we were born and the parents we were born to the “ovarian lottery.” According to this scripture, this is false. There is no accident about when and where we were born, our parents, where we have lived, etc. God designed all that for each individual.

- **God’s had a purpose for us even before we are born**

An example is Jeremiah’s call in Jeremiah 1:

**“Now the word of the Lord came to me saying,
“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
and before you were born I consecrated you;
I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”**

Jeremiah 1:4-5 NRSV

Excuses won’t wash! See what happened with Jeremiah:

6Then I said, “Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy.” 7But the Lord said to me, **“Do not say, ‘I am only a boy’; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you, 8Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord.” 9Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth; and the Lord said to me, “Now I have put my words in your mouth. 10See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms”**

Jeremiah 1:6-10 NRSV

What are our excuses today for not living as God designed us to be and in God’s purpose for us?

- We are all human
- I’m too young
- I’m too old
- I am not qualified
- I can’t speak well, ...

None of these will work with God.

- **A Note for Parents and Grandparents**

If the children and grandchildren we were given by the Lord all have a divinely assigned purpose, one of our primary tasks is to help them find that purpose.

Scripture is very clear on our responsibilities:

Proverbs 22:6:

"Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray." NRSV

**"Train up a child in the way he should go,
And when he is old he will not depart from it."** NKJV

Jesus said:

"Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones; for, I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven. "

Matthew 18:10 NRSV

What if we have fallen short?

With God's help we can make amends. This is what the anointing can do. In the same passage in Isaiah 61 that Jesus quoted in Luke 4, it states:

"The spirit of the Lord God is upon me

...

**3to provide for those who mourn in Zion -
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.
4They shall build up the ancient ruins,
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations."**

Isaiah 61:3-4 NRSV

This is what Jesus was anointed to do! And this is what Jesus has anointed us, sent us the Holy Spirit, to do. We are His representatives and witnesses on this earth.

- **Our Identity in Christ**

We covered this quite a lot in last Sunday's sermon. Please see the outline and sermon itself on our website. It helps to listen to this again and again, and meditate in it.

3. Living Blessed:

Living into Your Identity & Fulfilling God's Purpose for You

- **Know thyself**

Meditate on the above scriptures until they become your way of thinking. Know your true identity in Christ.

- **Hunger**

As Paul put it,

"he [God] allotted the times of their [our] existence and the boundaries of the places where they [we] would live, **27so that they [we] would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him**—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. **28**For 'In him we live and move and have our being."

Acts 17:26-28 NRSV

- **A Life of Prayer**

"Thus says the Lord who made the earth, the Lord who formed it to establish it—the Lord is his name: **3Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known.**"