

Jesus Loves the Little Children

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[0 : 00] If you'll open up your Bible to the book of Mark, the gospel of Mark, we're in Mark chapter 10. Last week we looked at a fairly challenging passage and topic related to divorce and remarriage.

This one, this passage that we'll look at today, hopefully is not quite as challenging, but today we're going to be looking at, I think, something that we see a lot in the Christian culture, especially if you have children and you buy books for your children.

A lot of books for children have a depiction of what we see here in what we're going to read today in Mark, and that's when the little children come to Jesus.

So I'm thinking of a title for this message, and that song comes to mind, Jesus Loves the Little Children, so I thought that would be an appropriate title.

And children do need to know that Jesus loves them, don't they? There, you know, this is kind of an aside, but there are some Christians out there that don't believe that Jesus loves everyone.

[1 : 27] Well, Jesus loves some people, and he died for just some people, and others, he does not love them, at least not in the same way. He loves them enough to create them and, you know, put them in the world and all that, but he does not love them with an eternal love and a hope for their salvation and that they would have a relationship with him.

But that's absolutely not the case. Jesus loves everyone, even little children. And how does the song go? Red and yellow and black and white, they are precious in his sight.

Jesus loves the little children all around the world. Today, as we look at this passage, we're going to kind of look at it from two different perspectives. One is the perspective of the kingdom.

Jesus mentions, as he does so many times, the kingdom of God in this interaction that he has with the children. We're going to look a little bit at what he says about that.

And then we're going to look at kind of what he did in his blessing of the children and how we can look at that from our own perspective and how we can really emulate Jesus Christ and what he did in both receiving the little children and blessing them as he did.

[2 : 41] So Mark chapter 10, we're just going to read a few verses. Mark chapter 10, verse 13, and it says this. Then they brought little children to him that he might touch them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them.

But when Jesus saw it, he was greatly displeased and said to them, Let the little children come to me and do not forbid them. For of such is the kingdom of God.

Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it. And he took them up in his arms and he laid his hands on them and he blessed them.

So Jesus had just had some private ministry, as we talked about last week, with his disciples. And now he's back in the public eye and he was challenged by the Pharisees on this question of divorce, which was controversial, as much controversial back then as it is today.

And so this is a continuation of his public ministry. And there are crowds gathered around who are listening to Jesus. He's teaching. We also read that he's healing them, as per usual is his ministry, teaching and healing and proclaiming the kingdom of God.

[3 : 58] And in this situation, there are some adults, some people who are coming to listen to him and they bring their little children to Jesus. And it says here in this first verse, verse 13, that he might touch them.

Another passage that I think in Luke says that he might lay hands on them. And then actually, we actually read in, I think it's the account in Mark, that he would pray for them.

They want Jesus to lay hands and to pray for their children. In looking at the Greek, and the Greek's not always helpful, but sometimes it is.

You might ask the question, how old are these kids that are coming? Sometimes in depictions of this, you have kids of different ages. They might be 10, 12 years old, some of them younger. So I thought it was interesting.

The word used here, and we won't get into what the Greek words are, but the word used here in Mark is a word that is used to describe any child that is from, you know, just born to about 12 years old.

[5 : 02] Not yet at the adult stage. You can think of, you know, we have different ideas of what an adult is, 18 years old, but really a 13 was kind of a key age in which you start to come into at least manhood and womanhood.

And so this is for children that are, you know, they're pre-adolescent, if you will. But actually in the parallel account in Luke, the word that he uses is actually many times translated infant.

And it's a word that's actually used to describe little, little children. Infants, toddlers. In fact, it's a word that is even used, it's a word that was used to describe Jesus lying in the manger, just born. It's also a word used to describe John the Baptist when he was still in his mother's womb. Little baby.

And I found that interesting, you know, we don't call little babies infants in the womb, but we do call them babies, right? Some people try to dehumanize little baby boys and girls, and they don't like to call them babies.

[6 : 18] They like to call them, what, a fetus, a more, you know, technical name, which is, you know, fetuses is a, is a, an accurate description, but it certainly lacks the warmth, you know, of a baby.

And so we like to call little babies inside the womb, babies, just like after they're born. So, because Luke uses this more focused, this, this more descriptive word for little, little, little kids, infants, toddlers, I think that's probably what's going on here.

We'll see maybe a little bit more evidence for that in, in a few verses later on. But they're coming because they want Jesus to lay hands on these children.

That's a common method, especially of blessings, lay on hands. Whether it's a rabbi or a priest of Israel or something else, that was a common thing, to lay hands.

And laying hands is a big thing in the Bible, and we'll look more at that also in just a bit. And then, like it says in Matthew, to pray for, for these, for these little children.

[7 : 27] And, um, the disciples, their reaction was to rebuke. No, guys, get the kids away from Jesus. You know, he's, he's in the middle, he's trying to teach and heal people, and he doesn't need to be bothered with these, these little kids.

And in verse 14, here is Jesus' reaction. But when he saw it, he saw what his disciples were doing. It says that he was greatly displeased. Many other translations use the word, he was indignant.

And I think that's actually probably a better translation if you look at the different places where that same word is used. He was indignant. Think of it more along the lines of not just, oh, you guys, come on.

He was upset. Come on, guys. And you know what I think he was thinking when he saw this? Because we just read this two weeks ago at the end of Mark chapter 9 in which Jesus was teaching his disciples in a private setting, in a home, not publicly, but in private.

And he was talking about how important it was. They were talking about, well, what are we going to get? You know, are we going to have great power in the kingdom? You know, who's, who's, who's the greatest?

[8 : 50] And that'll come up later in Mark chapter 10. And Jesus taught them and he says, whoever's first shall be last and whoever's last will be first. And talked about the importance of humility and not seeking prestige or power or even wealth in this current time because when it comes to the kingdom, the humble, the meek, they're the ones that will enter in.

And so he had just taught them that. And now, and remember what he used as an example of somebody who was lowly, he invited a child to come and he used that as an image, as an illustration, that child.

And so now, actual children are coming to Jesus and they're, oh, get away from here. And so I can imagine he's thinking, you guys, I just talked to you about this.

Don't shoo away these kids. And this time, his object lesson is not just in private with his disciples but in public for all to see. And he says, let the children come to me.

Do not forbid them. And then he says this, for of such is the kingdom of God. Of such is the kingdom of God. You know, when I first read that, I think, what is that?

[10:04] The way that that's worded doesn't really, it's hard to sink in for me. And so I've looked at some other translations. One that I really liked was from the NASB, which I know a lot of you read from.

And it's translated this way, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. It's a lot easier for me to digest anyway. For the kingdom of God belongs to those who are like these, who are like children.

The kingdom of God is coming. He continues on this kingdom context. And he says, assuredly I say to you that whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it. And so, what's he talking about here with the kingdom? And it's easy, it's kind of common for people to equate the kingdom that Jesus references with whether heaven or just becoming a believer or a Christian.

But remember that when Jesus is talking about the kingdom, he's talking about a throne, a dominion, a land, a people, an earthly kingdom that the prophets had prophesied about for centuries.

[11:18] That a Messiah was coming, the Messiah of God who would come and put down Israel's enemies, lift up Israel and establish righteousness and justice on the earth.

So that's what's, and remember Jesus, he's preaching the kingdom of God and what did he say about the kingdom? The kingdom is something that will come a long time from now.

Is that what he said? Jesus said the kingdom of God is at hand and you all, all of Israel, you need to prepare for the kingdom. And the number one most important thing to receive the kingdom is to receive the king and that's him.

And so he was inviting people, he was telling people about the kingdom, so many of the parables are about the kingdom, the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven is like this. He was preparing them for the kingdom and asking people to believe in him as the king.

But here he mentions that receiving the kingdom, he says, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter into it. Remember, we talked a little bit about the sheep and the goats and it's very important to Jesus that people, especially his people Israel, because that's who the kingdom is meant for, that they enter in.

[12:46] There will be a separation of the sheep and the goats at the time when the king returns in his second coming. And so, what does it actually mean to receive the kingdom as a child?

Because there are lots of things that we can pull out. Well, what is a child like? Well, children are, they're cute. Is that how you need to receive? You just need to become really cute?

And that's how we receive the kingdom? Children are foolish, right? The Bible says that foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child. So, is that what it means? That we need to become more foolish in order to receive the kingdom?

I think we go back to what Jesus had taught in the last chapter. We need to humble ourselves. He says, I need you as Israel. Listen, there's a persecution coming, an intense tribulation.

And you can try to protect your livelihood and your businesses and put yourself in a position where you won't be affected by all these things.

[13:51] But I actually need you to put first the kingdom and entering into that kingdom. Humble yourselves. Don't worry about your jobs.

Don't worry about your businesses. Just worry about upholding who this king is in the kingdom. And you're going to suffer for it.

But it'll be worth it when the time, when the king comes again. So, entering in as a child, I think it's about being meek and lowly and humbling yourselves.

Not seeking for riches. Not right now, anyway. Not in this time. We'll look actually more about that specific topic next week because we're going to be looking at the rich man that came to Jesus and asked how he can gain eternal life and what Jesus said.

It's actually somewhat shocking, especially if, you know, you have our view of, well, what does it mean to, how do you get saved? Do you sell everything that you own to get saved, to earn salvation?

[14 : 55] But that seems to be what Jesus said and causes a lot of confusion. Albert Barnes, who's written a commentary on the Bible, says this in his viewpoint about what it means to receive the kingdom as a little child and he says this, he says, with the temper and spirit of a child, teachable, mild, humble, and free from prejudice and obstinacy.

That word obstinacy, you can think about especially the Pharisees. They were obstinate and they were obstinate and resisted what he said.

And then this, verse 16, it says that he took them up in his arms and he laid his hands on them and he blessed them. I think this is another indication that these are little children, right?

He took them up in his arms. You can imagine Jesus picking them up one by one and holding them as he blesses them, prays for them, loves on them.

And how did he lay his hands on them? Did he put his hands on their head? Was it on their shoulder? Was it on their back? Doesn't say. Well, actually look at the laying on of hands here in just a bit.

[16 : 23] And then he blessed them. And it doesn't say what he said. It just says that he blessed them. We don't know what words he used. Was it something, a blessing maybe from the Old Testament scriptures or was it just something that he came up with on the spot?

What did he say? We don't know. But in some manner he declared God's favor on them. The laying on of hands.

So let's talk about that for just a minute. The laying on of hands is actually this super common thing that we see throughout the scriptures from the very beginning to the very end. And I see from what I can tell there are three purposes for the laying on of hands.

One of them which is I think what we're seeing here is to declare a blessing. The other is to confer some kind of authority to someone.

We'll talk about that. And then another is to impart some kind of gift or a miracle. And we've seen that a lot with the life of Jesus here. So let's look at examples of each.

[17 : 32] The first declaring a blessing. So if we go back to the book of Genesis we see this account with the patriarch Jacob and his sons. This is right before his death and he wants to bless Joseph his son Joseph and Joseph's two sons.

So if you turn to Genesis chapter 48 Genesis chapter 48 we'll look at a portion of this passage. The whole chapter is about this blessing and kind of it's not all blessings when he gets to the rest of his sons if you read through the whole thing.

But Genesis chapter 48 and we'll look at verse 14 and read a few verses from there. Then Israel that's Jacob remember Jacob's name was changed to Israel. Then Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on Ephraim's head.

Ephraim is one of Joseph's sons. Joseph had two sons Ephraim and Manasseh and so both are brought to Jacob. He laid it on Ephraim's head. He put his hand on his head who was the younger and his left hand on Manasseh's head guiding his hands knowingly for Manasseh was the firstborn. There's actually a really interesting thing going on here because the right hand and the left hand have significance and Joseph is actually a little bit I don't know if it's upset or annoyed or he's just trying to make an adjustment because the firstborn should be blessed with the right hand and not the second born.

[19 : 02] We won't get into that and why that is. There's a lot of stories in the Old Testament especially about the firstborn and the secondborn being like switched.

You see that in several different places. And I think that really is a type a shadow of something that was to happen future where a secondborn would come in the future and he would kind of swap places with the firstborn.

What are you talking about? The Bible talks about the firstborn son being Adam of the flesh and another man coming later on who would be like the secondborn Jesus Christ.

And he would become preeminent Jesus Christ. Anyway, that was for free. Maybe we'll talk about that more in the future. But it says this and he blessed Joseph and said God the God before before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has fed me all my life long to this day. The angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads. Let my name be named upon them and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

[20 : 24] And so here Jacob, through the laying on of hands, is blessing both Joseph, his son, and also his grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh.

And so this is something that the Jews took, there's this example and a few others in the Old Testament and ran with it and they would, it was common during the time of Jesus for rabbis or other leaders to bless people in the same manner.

The other example is conferring authority. We see this in numbers, we actually see this several times, not just numbers but also in Deuteronomy but we'll just look at numbers here when Moses remember had the authority from God but he was about to die and he was passing on his authority to someone else and that someone else was a man named Joshua.

And it says in numbers 27, you don't need to turn there necessarily but numbers 27 verse 18 and it says and the Lord said to Moses take Joshua the son of Nun with you a man in whom is the spirit and lay your hand on him and set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation and inaugurate him in their sight.

This was a ceremony of sorts in which Moses was basically transferring his authority from God to Joshua and using the symbol there isn't anything really magical or mystical about the laying on of hands it's just symbolic in this case and I think also in the case of blessings.

[22 : 04] We also see this in the New Testament in the book of Acts chapter 6 verse 3 we see the 12 apostles are kind of up to their eyeballs in the needs of the people around them remember they sold all their stuff in order to go preach the kingdom to all of Israel and they were really struggling people were selling all their things and getting supplies but they were spending all their time passing out supplies and making sure that these people got enough and there was kind of infighting going on so they said we need to appoint other people to take on this job so we can devote ourselves to prayer and preaching the kingdom to Israel and so this is the context in Acts chapter 6 and it says this in verse 3 Acts 6 3 therefore brethren seek out from among you seven men of good reputation full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom whom we may appoint over this business but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word and the saying pleased the whole multitude and they chose

Stephen a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit and Philip Prochorus Nicanor Timon Permanus and Nicholas a proselyte from Antioch whom they set before the apostles and when they had prayed and they laid hands on them so again kind of conferring authority hey you have our us as the apostles Jesus gave us authority as the apostles to preach to Israel and we're conferring authority to these men in this matter of business these were the first what we might call deacons helpers if you will and then the third one to impart miracles and we see this of course in the life of Jesus him laying hands on people many times he didn't always lay hands but that was a common thing that he did to lay hands on those whom he was healing but this is actually something that Jesus conferred to his own apostles to give them the ability to have a miracle ministry just as he had and so in the very end of Mark chapter 16 we call this the great commission

Jesus said this to his disciples Mark chapter 16 verse 17 and these signs will follow those who believe in my name they will cast out demons they will speak with new tongues they will take up serpents and if they drink anything deadly it will by no means hurt them they will lay their hands on the sick and they will recover and so laying on of hands here is something that was used to really impart miracle working power if you will and so those I think are the three purposes for the laying on of hands blessing imparting a blessing what did I say the other one conferring authority and then imparting some kind of gift or miracle power so but back to this what's Jesus doing here he's not healing these kids even though there might have been children that he healed but that's not the context in this passage he's not conferring any kind of authority on them but he's just blessing them in Jewish culture both in that day and even today this concept of blessing and conferring blessings is very commonplace you will find books among

Jews today just as you had back then that have written blessings that many times the Jews would memorize and say throughout the day many times many Jews would repeat these prayers or blessings every single day in different circumstances I was on a plane once flying to New York and for work and sat next to a guy and he was definitely some kind of orthodox Jew he had all the little I don't know what those things are called the twirly things whatever and the things hanging off of his hips and all that and so I don't know as much maybe as I should about all that but I saw him open up this little book and say a prayer or a blessing I'm not sure exactly what it was and I asked him about it and he says oh you know I have this whole book and I use it throughout the day and you

know this is some kind of like traveling blessing a blessing for or prayer for travel and so I thought that was super interesting but it also reminds me of the the the movie Fiddler on the Roof which I think we recommended in our bulletin a few weeks ago Fiddler on the Roof which is such a great film so well done and really gives you some insight I think into Jewish culture even today but there's this opening scene in the Fiddler on the Roof and one of the all these people are gathered around the the rabbi the town rabbi and one of them asked him he said is there a proper blessing for the Tsar you know they're in Russia or in the Soviet Union I guess and the Tsar is you know somebody that they are not exactly thrilled with and the rabbi replies and he says a blessing for the Tsar of course may God bless and keep the Tsar far away from us that's his response and so it definitely gets a laugh because they definitely they you know the Bible actually speaks in the New Testament of of actually praying for our leaders and I think that's something that is not just a New

[27 : 39] Testament principle but for the Old Testament anyway the when the Jews were in captivity remember that God told them to pray for the the abundance the really blessing for the land that they were in so that they could actually thrive in that land in which they they were in and we ought to do the same thing today for the land that we live in even when we're so frustrated with our leaders and all the shenanigans and clown circus things that are going on but we continue to pray and and bless those in leadership so but these blessings can become superstitious rituals right blessing in which you know the all you do is basically you live out of a book right and you're just repeating blessings and it's it's so common not just in Judaism but even in Christianity right where everything that you do is part of your your your religious life your your devotion to God is just you know reading passages from from a book and doing kind of ritualistic things and I don't think that repeating a passage from the

Bible or even a written blessing is necessarily a bad thing on its own but I think we should be careful that those kinds of things can lead to lifeless religion in fact a rabbi back in that day during around the time of Jesus this is recorded in a book called the Mishnah which was some oral tradition around the Bible the Jewish scriptures that was eventually after the time of Jesus I think is when it was written down this is what rabbi Eliezer said he said one who makes one's prayers fixed you know just kind of wrote written down something that you repeat that person's prayers are not sincere petitions I think that's probably an overstatement I don't think that's always true in fact we'll look at some blessings here at the very end that I think is can be appropriate but if that's all we're doing is everything all of our prayers are just written prayers all of our blessings are just written down I think that can be a concern but blessing people is very biblical and we're going to look at some more examples here we go back to the very beginning the first chapter of the whole Bible Genesis chapter one we saw also in Genesis Genesis Jacob blessing Joseph and his sons but all the way back even in the garden it says this in Genesis chapter one verse 22 and God blessed them saying be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas and let birds multiply on the earth God when he created man it says that he blessed them he blessed them we also find later on in Genesis with Abraham he this and I love this blessing this is this is tremendous so that's an example of God blessing mankind here's an example of of a some some men some people actually men and women blessing another person Genesis chapter 4 verse 20 or chapter 24 verse 60 this is actually the the context here is

Abraham is looking for a husband for his wife his wife Abraham is looking for a wife for his son Isaac and he wants to go he wants to find a wife among his people so he sends his servant out he says go back to the land where we came from and find among my brethren a girl a really nice girl for my son would you do that and so he must have really trusted this guy right so he sends his servant and his servant finds this young lady named Rebecca and she's like this is the one and he he finally asks her he says well would you come back and marry my master's son and I think the family says well give her and she says yes I'll do it and the family says and he said well let's pack up and go and the family says wait let's give her like 10 days or something like that and he's like actually you know they're really excited let's go right now and so she's like okay we'll leave right now and so there's this passage here in which her siblings I think it says this in verse 60 and they blessed Rebecca this is on her her way out the door and they said to her our sister may you become thousands of ten thousands and may your offspring possess the gates of those who hate him wow may you become ten thousands of ten thousands and that was their blessing may your tribe multiply and you become a great nation so we've seen a blessing from God to man and from

man to man but what about a blessing from man to God can man bless God doesn't seem I mean how can we bless God right we can see how God can bless us and how we could bless one another but how can we bless God what is it that we have to offer him anyway but the psalmist reminds us to bless God in Psalm 103 verse 1 it says this bless the Lord oh my soul and all that is within me bless his holy name bless the Lord oh my soul and forget not all his benefits we little old us can bless God and the psalmist is reminding the singer themselves we all and we do need to remind ourselves don't we hey my soul hey down there my soul bless the Lord at all times bless him and so blessing is this concept in which we really kind of wish for or proclaim our desire for favor on someone God's favor or maybe man's favor and so what is this are we declaring our desire for favor on the

Lord what does that mean and yes it is we are expressing our favor towards him we might think our our gratitude for everything that he has done and we might think oh God doesn't really care about whether men favor him is that true no God loves it when we express our favor because does everyone favor God no many people reject him or just ignore him you know there's a God that created him out there somewhere and many people walk around and they enjoy life and the creation that God put them in but they never give second thought to the one who created them that they should bless him that they should declare their favor towards him now Jesus didn't just bless children but he blessed others as well and we'll look at one passage here which I thought was a really neat one this is at the end of his ministry Jesus is about to ascend into heaven Luke chapter 24 verse 50 says this and he led them out as far as Bethany and he lifted up his hands and he blessed them now it came to pass while he blessed them that he was parted from them and carried up into heaven you imagine this picture Jesus he doesn't lay his hands on them probably because there's too many right there's disciples out there instead of laying his hands on them he just lifts up his hands like this and he declares a blessing toward his favorite people while he's here on earth and while he's in the middle of his blessing up into the air to return as the angel said in the same like manner someday what is the blessing a blessing really I think we can think of it as a type of prayer and Jesus it seems uses the term blessing and prayer somewhat interchangeably and so there's this passage in Luke in which Jesus is teaching that we should bless and not curse and he says this he says this in Luke chapter 6 verse 28 bless those who curse you and pray for those who spitefully use you this is a common thing among the scriptures in the

[36 : 36] Old Testament and the New Testament in which you basically say the same thing twice but you use different words you see that all over especially in the Psalms and more poetic type of literature it's a redundancy there's a name for it and Graham I can't remember what the name for it is but it's just a way to express the importance of an idea you say it twice but with with different terminology and I think that's what's going on here he says bless those who curse you and pray for those who spitefully use you somebody who curses you or somebody who spitefully uses you that's the same thing he's saying bless them and pray for them it's the same idea and really I think what a blessing is it's a type of prayer not the kind in which we are asking God we're petitioning God for something but it's a form in which we are expressing our hope our wish our desire or our longing for something from God that is good usually blessings you see in the Bible are not said from afar out of outside of people's hearing like you might pray for somebody in your prayer closet let's say but a blessing is usually something done in their presence in their hearing that they can hear which is really neat what is the opposite of a blessing opposite of blessing is what Jesus just described here a curse and in a curse instead of expressing a wish or a desire for some good thing for someone it's expressing a desire for some evil thing to come upon someone we actually see blessings and cursings in the book of Deuteronomy in which Moses declares in the law that if you fail to if you if you obey this law if you uphold the law you will be blessed but if you fail to uphold the law if you reject it if you thumb your nose at it you will be under a curse just like Jesus taught in this verse that we just looked at regarding not cursing but blessing even our enemies Paul teaches the same thing this is not just a kingdom principle of blessing your enemies this is something that applies even to us in this age of grace and in Romans chapter 12 verse 14 this is what Paul says to the Roman

Christians he says this bless those who persecute you bless and do not curse and that is one of the very unique things about Christianity isn't it you think about another one of the big religions Christianity and Islam are the two really big ones right and in Islam this idea of blessing those who curse you is that's outside of the context of kind of the Muslim or Islamic faith it's a very unique thing to Christianity something that actually I think changed the world in a tremendous way bless those

who persecute you and bless and do not curse an important thing to note for us as grace believers is that the Bible says that we are blessed that we stand blessed already in Ephesians chapter 1 verse 3 Ephesians chapter 1 verse 3 it says this blessed be the God there's a lot of blessings in this one verse blessed be the God and father of our Lord

Jesus Christ Paul is blessing God who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ the Bible says that for those of us who believe and trust in Jesus and what he accomplished for us on that cross on Calvary that we stand in Christ and that's an identity phrase in our position in Christ we stand blessed with a few blessings in heavenly places now he says every spiritual blessing in heavenly places we stand in every spiritual blessing every kind of spiritual now notice he doesn't say material blessing and sometimes I know as Christians we can we wish that we also receive the material blessings of life but that's not what has been promised to us in Christ but what has been promised to us is that we stand blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places because of our identity in him because of our position in him and through the grace that has been gifted to us in in Jesus Christ but does that mean that since we have every spiritual blessing in heavenly places that well now in this age of the body of

Christ because we've already been blessed with every spiritual blessing then there's no need for us to to declare blessing on each other let's say or believers right well you're already blessed with every spiritual blessing so there's no room for me to add additional blessing but one of the things you notice as you read Paul who's the apostle to the Gentiles the apostle of grace you might say who's the one who teaches these great truths about right there in Ephesians from Paul we are blessed with every spiritual blessing but at the end of just about every single one of his letters he ends with what can only be described as a blessing and so here's just one example from 2nd Corinthians the very last three verses 2nd Corinthians chapter 3 verse 16 now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace always in every way the Lord be with you all and just skipping one he says well he says the solution the salutation to Paul with my own hand which is a sign in every epistle so I write and then he ends this is the last phrase he says the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all amen the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with this is a blessing now these are believers they already have the grace of God so why would he why would he say that well you know an important part of the Christian life is not just that you receive grace but that you walk in it each and every day that you recognize with your understanding the spiritual blessings that we have received and I think that's what Paul is getting at here at the end of each of his letters the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you walk in the grace that has been gifted to you through Jesus Christ don't ignore it but let your life be lived in this blessing that you have received what about us should we bless I mean we see Jesus blessing and Jacob blessing but they're like big shots they're hot shots they're holy men they're patriarchs Jesus said we should bless our enemies so did Paul we should bless our enemies so if we should bless our enemies well what about our friends or our family Jesus blessed children should we bless children especially I think of those of us who are parents and grandparents and I think we ought to regularly bless our own children and grandchildren and even as many of you have I know great grandchildren but before looking at that a little bit more I want to ask this question will God respond to our blessing is this blessing just something to make us feel good about ourselves and kind of performing a religious duty or is a declaring a blessing actually have some kind of impact do we really expect that if we bless or pray for our children that God will respond in some way and I think it's so common in Christianity for us to have a very fatalistic view of things and think well who am I anyway I mean God's going to do what he's going to do regardless of what I pray or the blessings that I speak over my children but I think we need to understand this that when we ask God to bless our children or pray for them through prayers of petition that God will respond in ways that we may never understand we may not understand how it works he'll move and he'll act and he'll influence our kids in ways that he may not have otherwise had we not prayed for them had we not blessed them the prayers that we pray for our children our family members our friends those around us have an impact over the years as I've kind of tried to figure out how to be a father a good father to my kids one of the habits or routines that I picked up or decided to implement in our home is many times at night not always when putting the kids to bed I will go into their bedrooms and whether it's taking them by the hand or laying a hand on their shoulder or sometimes on their head like we see in the Bible or even taking them up in my arms and asking God to bless them not with riches or wealth not with power or fame but to bless them for example with the heart of a servant

[46 : 15] God will you bless my kids make them a servant to others with my girls asking God to bless them with a gentle and quiet spirit that he would bless my boys with courage to stand against all kinds of evil in the day in which we live praying that they would grow in the knowledge and the wisdom of Christ their Savior and that they would also grow especially in their love for him that they would grow in their love for him and that's what I want to end on today is an encouragement to all of us that we have an opportunity to bless one another especially us as parents or grandparents who have really in a position of quite authority or influence special influence in our households or extended family husbands can bless their wives declare a blessing over your wife lay hands on her pray for them wives can do the same thing for their husbands parents can bless our children and I think we ought to do it on a regular basis not just when they're sick or in need of something right and that tends to be when we pray for our children it's well when they have a need but is there any day in which our children do not have needs that really need to be met spiritual needs that are not always at the forefront like when they're vomiting in the toilet

God help! but they need to grow in the knowledge and wisdom of God so on a regular basis especially I think of fathers and grandfathers really patriarchs is it just Jacob that was a patriarch? or can any one of us as Christian believers be a patriarch of our family? a family leader to speak blessing to take opportunities on a regular basis to ask for God's favor on our households not just in secret prayer not just in a prayer closet but in the presence of them all to lay hands whether it's on somebody's head as we see with Jacob or a shoulder or whatever it is to bless that child that son and young and old right?

we see this with Jesus with little toddlers little infants really you can start praying and blessing a little child even in a womb and I've done this many times put my hand on on my wife's womb and pray for that little baby that's to come pray for his or her blessing that they would grow to know the Lord even at an early age at birth I've held babies in my arms right after they're born while mom's trying to sleep and recover and just pray and ask God bless this child that you've given me infants and toddlers putting kids to bed at night and even adult children kids don't get too old to be blessed by their parents do they?

it can be a I have a son or a daughter who's 60 years old do you think they'd appreciate a blessing from their mom or dad? lay your hands on them take them into your arms bless them and watch as God transforms their lives because you took the time to bless them each and every day and God will work and act we'll finish up there I want to finish up with this I don't usually do this but there's a there's a blessing in the Old Testament and I want to finish up with this because I thought well the I thought about there's a blessing in the Old Testament in the book of Numbers called the Aaronic blessing Aaronic?

[50 : 29] what does that mean? it's the blessing given to Aaron who was a high priest and so we'll leave you we'll leave you with this before we pray this is this is what God commanded it says the Lord spoke to Moses saying speak to Aaron and his sons these are the priests the high priests saying this is the way you shall bless the children of Israel say to them this and this is what I say to you today the Lord bless you and keep you the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace and then finally I think the blessing that we see from the Apostle Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles he usually leaves his readers with this and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you always amen let's pray Father I thank you for your love for us your love for not only the big people but even the little people and you have blessed us from the very beginning of creation when you created

Adam and Eve you blessed them and you bless again and again and again even though people turn away you offer blessing and ultimately in Jesus Christ you offer us every spiritual blessing in heavenly places you don't withhold a thing from us I pray that we would Father also extend blessing to all those around us whether it's our enemies who despise us but especially those close to us that need to hear a blessing from our mouths that you would work in us that we would not be stingy with our blessings but we would be generous with them and not not timid but bold to speak blessings when appropriate in Jesus name amen amen will God for you amen