

Blessings Remembered

God's Word, along with various images and occasional history, are presented on this devotional website page. "Blessings Remembered" will hopefully prompt memories of many personal blessings from God in your lives. May you always trust in God's promised blessings, past, present, future and for all eternity.

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." Hebrews 13:8

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"I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord!'" Psalm 122:1



(Photo: Bill VanNostrand)

This former Presbyterian Church still stands nestled on a hillside along the Des Moines River in the historic tourist town of Bentonsport, Iowa.

Boasting a population of more than 1000 a century and a half ago, Bentonsport was once a thriving community of hard working and industrious people. On Sunday mornings long ago, the church bell rang out on the hillside above the town calling people to worship. Gladly answering that call, residents left their homes dressed in their Sunday best, in order to worship our gracious God. They knew the importance of setting aside their hard work in order to take advantage of the blessings of a “day of rest” which the Lord had given, a day to “rest” in and upon His promises.

Thanks to preservation efforts, this church has remained standing for over one hundred fifty years. Also, after remaining silent for many years, its bell rings and the walls once again echo with the sounds of people gathered in non-denominational worship services from June through September.

Yet, as magnificent as a church building such as this is, and as historically irreplaceable, the importance of gathering in worship, is never found in a building.

Acts 7:48 declares; ***“...The Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands...”***

The importance of worship and its blessings are made known and received by God through the regular gathering of believers, who come to hear God’s Word and receive His Sacraments. In these we are comforted, strengthened and made glad in the presence of God and fellow believers in the Lord.

The Psalms declare the blessings of such regular gathering of believers:

“We have thought on your steadfast love, O God, in the midst of your temple.”

Psalm 48:9

Perhaps, this verse could be paraphrased to say; “Whenever we gather in worship we remember the blessings of your steadfast love, O God.”

The Psalms further declare; ***“Blessed is the one you choose and bring near, to dwell in your courts! We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the holiness of your temple!”*** Psalm 65:4

I find it quite comforting that we are “*blessed*” and “*satisfied*” with goodness from God whenever we come to the Lord’s house.

Isaiah, mighty prophet of God, reminds us why worship is so vital:

“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.”

Isaiah 2:3a

We gather in worship to be taught God’s ways and be blessed by God as we walk, or live, in His paths. Through worship, God’s precious promises are heard, promises so freely and graciously given by faith in the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Also, as the old hymn declares, there is “*Blessed Assurance*”, also help, comfort, peace and gladness of heart to be received by God in the company of “like-spirited” believers, people living faithful lives in the Lord Jesus Christ.

No other message will ever do that. The proclamation of the Good News in Jesus Christ is the only message that truly works, truly helps, and truly matters.

The Apostle Paul said it this way:

“[Jesus] came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”

Ephesians 2:17-22

By faith, every believer is part of the “structure” that truly and eternally matters. Ultimately, the four walls are not important. What’s vitally important is that we come together as God’s building, a holy temple in the Lord, the body of believers in Jesus Christ. For, it’s within the structure of God’s household, that we are truly strengthened when we are weak, comforted when we hurt, given hope when depressed or grieving, refreshed when too tired and worn-out to face the day.

God gives a wonderful privilege in that, each new week, He gives a new start, blessing us with His “day of rest.” Contrary to what constitutes “rest” in the world’s eyes, God’s rest bestows the blessings of forgiveness for our sin, peace, strength and life-everlasting with Him. Regular worship brings us constant opportunity to gladly remember God’s blessings of love and life with Him. Over-and-over-again, we each need that comfort of hearing and receiving such precious promises. God alone, in Jesus Christ, makes us glad!

By His Spirit, as we leave worship, we are blessedly made ready for the remainder of the week that lies ahead, days which may often be trying, painful, heartbreaking, and at times even cruel. In Jesus, as each new week begins, God gives the blessing of leaving the struggles and chaos in order to be refreshed by Him and reinforced by fellowship with faithful and loving believers. The Apostle Paul knew this to be true. He urges us, God’s people, God’s holy dwelling, to share the Good News of God’s promises in Jesus with one another and all people, all whom God also dearly loves outside the four walls of our house of worship;

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” 2 Corinthians 1:3 - 4

Worship, in the name of Jesus, truly blesses us as we meet the challenges of our day-to-day lives. By faith, we remember God’s blessings as, for Jesus’ sake God remembers and freely bestows His blessings upon us. In Jesus, we wholeheartedly declare with the Psalms;

“The Lord has done great things for us; we are glad.” Psalm 126:3

Rev. Bill VanNostrand

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All Scripture quoted from The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016) Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

"Blessed Assurance" is a well-known Christian hymn. The lyrics were written in 1873 by blind hymn writer Fanny Crosby to the music written in 1873 by Phoebe Knapp.