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Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

July 17, 2016

God Bless America

Selected Scriptures

Prayer: *Father God, we just again thank you, we praise you, we bless you for you have been good. You have been incredibly good to us as a country, to us as a congregation, and we thank you for the gifts that you have laid at our feet. Just the fact that we can come together in corporate worship is an incredible gift and we thank you for it. And Father, at this part of our worship we are opening up your book and we thank you in advance for the presence of your Holy Spirit. We pray that you would guide us, that you would give us the privilege of understanding your words and that they can again be of permanent value and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, usually during the summer months I go back and I revisit some of the messages that I have given years ago because it enables me to revisit scriptures that I had examined back when all of the notes that I had were handwritten. And because they're handwritten, I have literally hundreds of sermons that are locked away in file cabinets and there's no way to read them unless you

sit down and go line by line and re-read them. And so now that I've been doing for the last four or five years, I've been using Word and I can examine things that I said before, what I like to do during the summer is take some of the old messages that are handwritten and just kind of redo them, bringing them kind of up to speed, redoing them, going over them, changing them, updating them, and putting them into a Word format, and so I'm going to be doing that for the rest of the summer. We're going to pick up on Daniel in the fall.

And being as it's July and we just recently celebrated the 4th of July, I wanted to revisit a message that I gave 14 years ago that was entitled "God Bless America." And I noted in that message how the English language is really a very strange thing, and that those three words, "God bless America" can be spoken in many very different ways to convey many different messages about God, about America, and about God's different blessings. See, you can pause between the first and the second word, and it becomes an imperative, it becomes a command, you can say "God, bless America." I mean, put a question mark in there and you can change the entire tone of that sentence. If you put the question mark after "God," well, you can wind up making a philosophical statement about God's very existence. You can say, "God? Bless America?" Or you could put the question mark after "America" and it becomes a statement

about God's rejection of America, you can say, "God bless America?" See, we can alter this three-word sentence just by our tone, by our inflexion, just by the look on our face when we speak it. So there's no doubt there are many different ways that Americans speak that sentence. We can be desperate, we can be demanding, we can be incredulous, matter of fact, or worshipful all in the way we deliver that three-word sentence, "God bless America."

And so this morning I want to look at this sentence through three different sets of eyes that define how we see it, and first we'll look at it we demanding eyes, then we'll look at it through incredulous eyes and finally through worshipful eyes. And we'll ask the question which eyes are mine. So the first set we're going to look at is demanding eyes. This is "God, bless America." It was R.C. Sproul who first coined the phrase, "Grace accepted yields grace expected." It was Sproul who observed that fallen human nature has a very limited capacity for appreciation and an unlimited capacity for expectation. In short, the more that we are given, the more we expect. I saw this borne out repeatedly in my own home, and one of the things that my kids will attest to growing up is that we were dirt poor. And we did as best as we could and God was incredibly faithful to meet all of our needs, and one way that he met our needs during Christmastime is -- and to this day, I don't know who it was but there was a mystery person who used to

leave a huge box on our porch, and the box was filled with all kinds of goodies that we would never, never have purchased, I mean, inside the box instead of the generic toasted oats there was genuine Honey Nut Cheerios which was like gold when we were at that state. And there was all kinds of food and little prizes for the kids and every year for about three or four years we just woke up one day and found this huge box on our porch. Well, for one reason or another one year it didn't arrive. My kids were upset. I mean, you would have thought we had ordered this from Amazon and somehow or other it got messed up and it didn't arrive on time. Grace accepted had become grace expected. I explained to my kids, just because it's been there for three or four years doesn't mean that it's going to be there forever. We had the exact same thing happen when our neighbor out of the goodness of his heart, one day he plowed us after a snowstorm. And then he did it again and again and he did it after every snowstorm and he did it for a couple of years. Then we had a really large snowstorm and for some reason or another he couldn't do it. So I told my kids that we all had to get out there with the shovels and do it by hand, and they were very unhappy. Where's Ted? Ted always does this. I mean, how come he's not here? It's not fair. Grace accepted yields grace expected. And I don't think my kids are the exception at all, I mean, the example I used to give is tell your young ones that this Christmas you're going to Disney World and they're going to be

jumping for joy, they're going to think this is absolutely amazing, and do it four or five years in a row and then in the sixth year say, "By the way, we changed our mind, we're going to spend Christmas at home." See what happens. I mean, my guess, firsthand you're going to see what grace accepted yields grace expected means. And this is not just -- it's not just a family thing, this is a national thing. It's amazing to me that when the government gives money to people, when it gives it to them directly, they have a name for what the program is, you know what that name is? It's called an entitlement program. And when they do that, what they're unknowingly doing, they're addressing a fallen human value, the more we given, the more we feel entitled to. You know the Jews who escaped from Egypt, they were in the desert, they were starving. And so they cried out to God and he sent them literally food from the sky. It rained down from the sky. And he called it manna. First they received it with great joy, and every single day like clock work they'd go out in the morning and there it was, they just gathered it up. In fact, God gave them twice as much on the day before the Sabbath so they wouldn't have to gather on the Sabbath. But guess what happened to the Jews? This amazing grace of food literally raining down from the heavens went from being an accepted grace to an expected grace. And not only was it expected, the complaints began to fly. This food is boring. I mean, it's the same old, same old. *Numbers 21:5* says this: *And the people spoke*

against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food." Wow. But do you think we would have done any better? I mean just think, look around, look at the blessings that we have received. Has it increased our appreciation or has it increased our expectation? I mean, do you ever wonder why things like famines and typhoons and earthquakes and epidemics, they all seem to happen somewhere else but never here. Of the top ten earthquakes in the last century, four of them were in China; the rest were in Italy, Japan, Peru, India, Armenia, and Iran. And we don't even think about this, but the number one earthquake occurred in Tangshen, China, it occurred on July 28th, 1976 at 3:42 in the morning, and it only lasted 16 seconds, but at the end of those 16 seconds, 242,419 people were dead. And 164,581 were severely injured. 7,218 households were completely wiped out. We just think this can't -- this can't happen in our country. Why? Because it never has. And because it hasn't, it won't, it can't, I mean we're America, God blesses America. I mean he always has and he always will. That is grace accepted, grace expected at a national level. You see, we are so isolated and so insulated from the horrors that the rest of the world lives with every single day that it's natural for us to just assume these blessings are an entitlement, but they're not. I mean, it's easy to identify with the Jews in the desert. They were so used to being blessed that

they, too, assumed it's an entitlement. And the scary thing about identifying with the Jews in the desert is that 99.99 percent of them had no relationship with the God that they dealt with every single day. I mean, they gathered their food from a God they had no connection to at all other than the fact that he fed them. I mean, they bear a lot in common with today's evangelical Protestant church-goer. I mean, they had a God-centered history, they had a God-centered culture, they even participated in God-centered rituals and they clearly saw God's power, God's provision, and God's protection but they were as lost as any other pagan nation. And they came to believe that God owed them blessings because he always had. In *Hebrews 3*, God warns us about that very same danger, he says this, he says: *But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called, "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? And with whom was he provoked for 40 years? Was it not with those who sinned whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.* What God is saying here is that out of the nation of

Israel which numbered millions in the desert, there was only two people, only Joshua and Caleb, who entered into God's rest. I mean, God marched the rest of them around and around in circles for 40 years until the entire generation of those unbelievers had all died. They had deluded themselves into thinking that a connection to God was a relationship. I mean the Jews in the desert thought they belonged to God and more importantly they thought that God belonged to them. After all, he was in a cloud by day, he was in a pillar of fire by night, he fed them personally every single day, he protected them from their enemies, so they just assumed they were part of the kingdom, but they were terribly mistaken. See, everything around them spoke of the kingdom but nothing inside them connected to it. And we can say the same thing today about much that takes place within the evangelical church, I mean, all the external things, our bibles, our doctrine, our worship, they all point to the kingdom. But who knows about the internal things, the heart things, who knows individually within us where those things point to and those are the things that really matter. Jesus said in *Matthew 15*: *"These people honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."*

I mean God blessed America, so God blesses me? Well, how do you know that? How do you know that that's the case? Well, ask

yourself, where does my heart point to? What occupies my mind? Is it the kingdom of God? Because this is what God says in Romans 8. This is *Romans 8:5-9*: *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.* You might have noticed in that passage there's a very large "if" clause. It says "*if the Spirit of God is in you.*" Now, what it's saying is if he doesn't, if he doesn't dwell in you, God says you are not a Christian. You know, many a time I've reflected on that verse and I thought of my own personal wickedness, my own personal pride, my indifference to things that mattered to God and I've asked myself if I'm not kidding myself about being part of his kingdom. I absolutely believe in eternal security, that God never ever lets his children go, but I also know how easy it is to delude ourselves that we are his own when we are not. That's just what the Jews did in the desert. And Paul warns us in *2 Corinthians 13:5* to make sure we ask ourselves if we are not in fact deluded. He says: *Examine*

yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you -- unless indeed you fail to meet the test!

All right. So how do I test myself? Well, it says "*if the Spirit of Christ dwells in you.*" If that's the case, then he's actively about the business of changing the very way that you think. I mean, you begin to no longer think like the world thinks, talk like the world talks, or act like the world acts. If Christ is in you, your mind is set on what his Spirit desires. If my mind is set on what my flesh wants, then instead of appreciation for God's blessing, I've got expectations that those blessings are really entitlements and hostility when they don't materialize. And like the Jews in the desert, we wind up telling God that this manna isn't even meat and it's really detestable. And despite a complete indifference or even some active hostility towards God, we still say "God bless America" simply because he always has.

Now another way to say "God bless America" is with incredulity. Just stick a question mark in the middle of that phrase and you have a brand new way to say it. You say, "God? Bless America?" What God? I mean, for many people now, even the idea of an all powerful God blessing America, it seems silly. I mean you can now dismiss God completely from America's blessing and say it's all the

product of evolution and time and chance, and you can take that course and many, many people do. But here's the problem. You see, if we are just the product of random chance and eons of time, then we answer to no moral power higher than ourselves. And if that's the case, we answer to nobody other than ourselves, how can you say that anything is good or evil? I mean, the butchery of ISIS, if you put it into an evolutionary framework, can't you just say that everything that ISIS or Al-Qaeda does is only the evidence of an evolutionary struggle? A sub dominant group of Muslim fanatic creatures struggling for dominance over American creatures. I mean, if we win, hey, we get to kill them; and if they win, they get to kill us. Doesn't it come down to the basic tenet of evolutionary theory, kill or be killed? See, "God bless America" Is an absolute fiction if there's no God. And if there's no God, then there's just humans right there at the top of the heap and we make up whatever we want as a moral framework.

Germany in the 1940s was at the top of the heap. They made the rules. They declared the Jews were not worthy of being afforded humanity and they killed six million of them. Well, if evolution is really true and we are nothing but animals, maybe an advanced form of animal but an animal nonetheless, then really what's the big deal? I mean in 1994, the Hutus were the top of the heap in Rwanda. You may have recalled this, as happened in the news, there

was a plane containing the Hutu leadership and it went down and the Hutus were all convinced it was a plot and they went on the radio and they called on their fellow Hutus to deal with their rivals, the Tutsis. And again, these were rivals that they regarded as subhuman. And so they took to the airways day in and day out, and they demanded that the Hutus finally rid the country of the Tutsis who they constantly labeled as cockroaches. Day in and day out they declared that these cockroaches were subhuman and eventually their countrymen got the message. And in four months, between April and July 1994, between five hundred thousand and one million Tutsis were butchered, I mean, largely by machetes. They were butchered by their Hutu countrymen. Take a step back. Obviously the Hutus were stronger and the Tutsis were weaker, I mean, isn't that how evolution works? You know, in the United States in 1973, we extended the very same subhuman status to babies in the womb through Roe versus Wade. And again, it made perfect sense if we are nothing but evolving animals. But when an Islamic radical mows down 80 plus people in Nice, France, we still insist on drawing moral conclusions that these are profoundly wicked deeds. But that presupposes a moral system and it presupposes a system bigger than human beings, and evolution insists there's nothing bigger than human beings. So atheism then has to borrow its moral code from some transcendent being larger than us because if it's only us, then the most powerful among us, well, they're the ones who get to

make the rules. You know, to say that the murder of women and children is evil is to make a judgment call that frankly evolution regards as silly. I mean, I've seen countless wildlife shows where adult lions and adult bears, they routinely kill the infants of their own kind just to eliminate competition. Nobody suggests that these creatures are morally wrong because, after all, they're just animals. There's no moral issues when wolves kill deer or when lions kill gazelles or for that matter when my cat kills a chipmunk. I mean if we are just the highest most evolved form of animal, then we're still just animals. And I certainly don't punish my cat when it kills a bird or a mouse, so why should we be punishing ISIS when they kill us? I mean we're just bigger birds; we're just bigger mice. We're more adapted, we're more evolved, we're more intelligent, but we're still just animals without a future like they are. If they are and we are nothing but animals fighting it out, then all we can do when we're confronted by a moral outrage such as Nice, France, is regret that at that moment they had more power and cunning than we had and hope in the future we can kill them before they can kill us. An America that can't even imagine God blessing it is a sorry America indeed.

And finally putting the question mark after America asks "God bless America?" I mean this may be the question that Christians are asking more than anyone. How can God bless a country that now

systematically excludes him from its history, its culture and its educational systems, a country that insists on protecting the rights of a doctor to butcher a baby in the act of being born, a country that kills over one million children in the womb every single year. See, my fear is that I think I can make a far stronger case for God's curse on America than I could ever make for God's blessing. Now I recently had a discussion with a group of about ten adults. And typically, as you all know these days, it centered around politics, where the country is going and what politician was more qualified to lead us. And I made the statement, I said there is no amount of political acumen that can overcome a curse from God. I said our biggest problem here is not political; it's spiritual. We are under the curse of God. I went on to explain I said, if you go back to the book of Genesis, you look at the very first murder that was ever done, that's the death of Abel by Cain, you'll find that God placed a curse on the ground for that murder. This is what he said in *Genesis 4:10*, it says: *And the LORD said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand."* I told this group of people that the blood of 53 million innocent babies is crying out from the ground for vengeance and that I believe that instead of blessing America, you could certainly make a much bigger argument that God

has cursed us as a nation in response to what we did when we made abortion legal, and that much of what we see taking place in this country is now the outworking of that curse. I pointed out if you look at Romans 1, if you look at Romans 1, particularly verse 18 until the end, it is literally a description of how our culture is falling apart. And as I've said many, many times, the curse of God is not so much seen in earthquakes, in famine or pestilence, it's much more seen in God simply abandoning us to our own insanity. I call it judicial blindness, and it's the worse kind of curse. If you look at Romans 1, you see three different times God says God gave them up, God gave them up, God gave them up. He's giving us up to what? To our own insanity. So one of the group asked me to explain practically. Well, explain to me, you say we're under a curse, how does a curse affect a nation? I said, "Let me give you an example." I said Europe is about 15 to 25 years ahead of us in terms of the way it treated abortion. And they've so thoroughly given in to the practice that they discovered very quickly that their birth rate fell below replacement levels. Soon they realized that they would not have enough young people to do the menial tasks that young people used to do. So what did they do? They went to other countries and they brought in young men from Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, Egypt, all these other middle eastern countries basically to do their hard labor. What they didn't realize is that they were importing people into their country who

believed in an ideology that wants to conquer the entire world, who had no intention whatsoever of being assimilated to that country but instead formed their own little sub groups who were committed to bringing their way of living into the host country in the name of their God Allah. Now many of these countries have hundreds of pockets where these different cultures clash. I gave one example, I said there are literally thousands of young Muslim men in Europe now who view women simply walking about unattended as worthy of sexual assault because in their country women are not even allowed out of the house. Women who are seen in public without an escort are treated as shameless and worthy of rape in many instances. Let me give you a quote. "Women are not entitled to respect when they walk around without a Hijab. They are to blame for it when they are attacked," said Imam Shahid Mehdi who now lives in Copenhagen. This is what they've imported. And it's only coming to light now that there have been literally thousands of sexual assaults on women by Muslim youths in Sweden, in Germany, and France. Writing in *National Review*, Emily Dyer said this, it said:

The chickens are coming home to roost on Europe's unwillingness to offend. The beginning of 2016 in Europe saw the collision of two problems that have long been left to run their course undisturbed. Making allowances for human rights abusers in order to avoid causing offense is, after all, nothing new here in Europe. Neither

is our well-meaning refusal to question the potential impact of welcoming record levels of migrants to our societies. On New Year's Eve, more than 500 women out celebrating in Germany felt the impact of this collision: They were raped, sexually assaulted, and robbed by gangs of largely migrant men and then blamed for it by the authorities. Mayor Henriette Reker, of Cologne, released a "code of conduct" for women's behavior in public, which includes keeping strangers "an arm's length away" and staying away from groups of people. Her words could have easily been mistaken for....., a pressure group with a long history of campaigning on behalf of convicted terrorists that published "precautionary advice" to prevent Muslims from "becoming targets of harassment," stating that women "have to take personal precautions when they go outside."

This is astounding to me. What she's saying is to prevent Muslims from being harassed, women have to learn how to stay away; they have to learn how to stay inside. See, there's a culture clash in which the European culture is steadily losing, and an oppressive women-hating culture is steadily gaining, where the host country is absolutely hated and where by virtue of the reproductive power of these new citizens the country itself is literally being invaded relentlessly from within. I told my friend that's -- you want evidence of a curse and how it's working itself out? That's

evidence right there. That's how it's working itself out. No earthquakes, no pestilence, no famine, just the abandonment of a previous Christian nation to its own stupidity. *Psalm 2* says this: *The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed saying, "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us." He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury.*

That's Europe. We are on the exact same trajectory as Europe is with regard to defying God. I mean just this year we legalized homosexual marriage and the Supreme Court just struck down a law in Texas that would demand that abortion clinics have the same safety standards as hospitals. See, we've reached the point where the lust for freedom that abortion is is now seen as far outweighing any safety concerns for those undergoing the procedures. What a country. I mean, I could go on and on but we've all heard it over and over again, "God bless America?" Well, the undeniable and outstanding fact is that he does, and we are the strongest, wealthiest, most influential country in the history of mankind and that's not a boast; that's a fact. And the question we have to ask is not if God blesses America but why. And the answer to that question is clear, compelling, and stated over and over and over in scripture, because God never blesses without a reason, and his

reasoning is almost always the same. We receive blessings in order to give blessings. You know, it was Jesus who said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." And God blesses us so that we can bless others. This is stated as far back as Genesis 12 in God's call to Abraham. This is what God said: *Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house and to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."* So why did God bless Abraham? He said, *"I'll bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing."* We're blessed to be a blessing. We shoot forward to the New Testament to 1 Peter 2:9, God says this incredible blessing: *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession.* This is the blessing that we are blessed with. But here's what God expects us to do with it: *That you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.* You see, we've been blessed to be a blessing. And God even tells us how to give it. He says in Luke 6:38, he says: *"Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put back into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you."* So "God bless America?" Well, he

absolutely has. Is it because we deserved it? Absolutely not. *Lamentations 3: It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions failed not.* Is it because God loves us more than he loves all the other countries? Again, absolutely not. God is no respecter of persons. And being an American is absolutely meaningless to the Lord of the universe.

So again we're left with the question of why does God bless America? So that we might bless the world. We bless the world with food, we bless the world with clothing, we bless the world with shelter, but most importantly we bless the world with the gospel. You know, that man is estranged from God, that God became flesh, that he entered into our world, and he lived the perfect life, and then he offered up that perfect life on a cross in exchange for our lives of sin so that by faith in Christ's finished work on the cross we can claim his righteousness as our own instead of our own sin and so be made worthy of heaven itself. That's the gospel that God is blessing us to give. Personally it means that every blessing we receive is filtered through a grid that asks who or what or where am I to bless with this blessing. I mean, we're the wealthiest country on earth. Do you think our personal wealth is intended for our personal comfort or do you think it's intended to be passed on for the kingdom? You know, there's a caveat that goes with being on the receiving end of God's blessing. It's in

Luke 12, it says: *"Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more."* Our sister church in India does amazing things with the money that we send them, and I thank God for the opportunity it gives us simply by sending our resources to them and letting them do the heavy lifting, because they do. And in that case we are blessed to be a blessing. But it raises the question, if our incomes go up, do we see it as an opportunity to give away some of our increase? We can think it's all about us or we can think it's all about the kingdom. The same is true with all of our resources, how we look at them and how we look at God blessing America matters because we are America and God is blessing us for a reason. Now, we can see those blessings through demanding eyes, you know, "God, bless America!" and it will never be enough because grace accepted yields grace expected. And we can see them through incredulous eyes, "God? Bless America?" that sees any and all blessings strictly as a product of random chance, or we can say, "God bless America?" Realizing that God's blessings are all out of proportion to our wickedness but that we are still blessed to be a blessing. And that gives us the right way to say "God bless America," and that is the worshipful way. God so loved the world that he pours out his love through us to the world. God is the source. We are simply the delivery system and the most precious thing that we can ever deliver to anyone is the gospel.

You know, if there's anything the last few years have taught us is that we are not invulnerable. And in all of my days, I don't think I've ever seen the level of fear and angst that I see every day today in just -- in people in general. But that also means that more people than ever before need to hear the account of the hope that's within you. God has poured out the greatest blessing he has on many of us in this room. We know the king of the universe and we know why we're here, and to whom much is given of whom much is required. So the question is are we willing to bless others with the blessing with which we have been given? Just to translate that is do you share the gospel? Do you share the gospel with your non-Christian friends? Do you have any non-Christian friends? And if you don't, get some. I'm not kidding. We need to be intentional when seeking out opportunities to share this blessing that we've received. And if it means joining a bowling team or a homeowner's club or a sowing club or a sports team or some other opportunity to rub shoulders with the world, we need to take those opportunities. Now if I'm making this sound like a mission, it's because it is, it is our mission. 242,419 Chinese citizens went to bed that July night not knowing at all that they had an appointment with their Creator, and we're all still tempted to think that could never happen here. We think God blesses America because he always has, but that's grace accepted yielding grace expected, and God owes us nothing. Still, God does bless America and we can see it

through demanding eyes, through incredulous eyes, or through worshipful eyes and we each need to ask ourselves which eyes do I see it through? My prayer this morning is that we see the blessing the same way God does, and that we say with the psalmist in *Psalm 67*: *May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations. Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth. Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, shall bless us. God shall bless us; let all the ends of the earth fear him! Let's pray.*

Father, we are amazingly astoundingly blessed in spite of the wickedness that is ever more bubbling to the surface each and every day. And Lord, we understand we are blessed to be a blessing. We are surrounded now by people who are wondering why everything seems to be falling apart and yet we have the answers. We can take them to Romans 1, verse 18, to the end and just point out exactly what's going on, point out exactly what you're doing, that this is not taking you at all by surprise. We can give them the hope that is within us. We can share the goodness of you and the gospel. Give us the opportunity, give us the people, give us the desire, we pray

in Jesus' name. Amen.