



New Life Christian Community

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." 2 Cor 5:17

Sunday, December 23, 2018

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PASTORAL PONDERING

To Bless

Tomorrow is the eve of one of the grandest miracles of all time. Eternity will not be enough time for us to consider even the slightest glimpse of the grandeur of the idea that God almighty became a baby. Oh, how wonderful a thought. Lean in brothers and sisters.

As we seek to celebrate this vast miracle, each of us, in our own way, are seeking to bless our loved ones (I may or may not be still seeking gift ideas for Julie). It is a native desire of this time of year. We find ourselves proclaiming to loved ones, with Bing Crosby, "...May your days be merry and bright." Our language even shifts to a version that would make King James proud, singing, "God bless ye merry Gentlemen!"

We see this time of year as a great opportunity to "bless" those we love.

How is that endeavor going for you? Are you blessing those around you? Are you blessing those you love?

For many in this generation, the idea of blessing someone is strange - not that we feel it would be strange to bless someone, but rather, that we have no idea what it *means* to bless someone. We wonder, how in the world do I "bless" someone? Is giving a gift the way we "bless?" Is hugging a way to "bless?"

I'm really glad you asked those questions. Sometimes "Christian-ease" or ultra-spiritual language can be devoid of meaning because of how often it is used (or even of how rarely it is used - Just ask a millennial what a "Noël" is!)

So, back to our question (stop searching on your 'smart' device, "what does noel mean?" and be attentive to the other question at hand). What does it mean to bless and how can we bless one another? Let's allow Scripture to light our path. Consider with me one of the moments when the Bible speaks directly of the idea of blessing.

In [1 Kings 8:54](#) we are told that Solomon, after building the house of the Lord, stood and "*blessed all the assembly of Israel.*" After 7 years of construction and at the conclusion of a prayer over the Temple, Solomon stood before the people of Israel and blessed them. It was the proper activity at such a moment. This was a big moment for the people. It makes sense that he wanted, at that time, to bless the people. After God's Temple is created and recognized as complete, a blessing is a natural conclusion.

With this in mind, it makes "blessing" all the more natural to us - this time of year. We see in Christ the perfect Temple in that Bethlehem-born Baby. At his inauguration, in his humble human form, one would expect blessings to flow. And just as we would expect Solomon to bless the congregation at that landmark moment, so too we have come to expect blessings to go in every which way during this time of year.

But that still doesn't answer the question of *how* we bless one another.

What is absolutely profound about this [1 Kings](#) text is what we see in [verse 56](#). [Verse 55](#) tells us *that* he blessed the people and [verse 56](#) tells us *how*. Let me simply quote the text

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Coffee Ministry

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GriefShare Youth Ministry

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Transportation Services

Art Behr: 715.220.6882
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Video Ministry

Jim Mabee: 651.470.4172
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Worship Ministry

Pastor Bennett Anderson:
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Pastoral Pondering

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so you can see its profundity without my scuruffled language.

55 "And he stood and blessed all the assembly of Israel with a loud voice saying, (get ready - here it comes) 56 "Blessed be the Lord who has given rest to His people Israel." Did you catch that? We bless each other by blessing the Lord. Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, wanted to bless all Israel. So, he turned to the Lord and proclaimed a blessing unto the Lord! In other words, the way Scripture tells us to bless one another is by proclaiming praise unto God.

The Body of Christ is blessed when Christ is worshiped. Your family is blessed when you are praising Jesus. When you are proclaiming how good Jesus is - that is when we truly and Biblically bless our loved ones.

No gift we can give is worth more than a simple proclamation of praise unto Jesus Christ.

In [Luke 2:13-14](#) we see the penultimate (that's a good word) blessing. Think of the unimaginable blessing given to those shepherds that night when they were in the presence of the heavenly hosts. The angelic host proclaimed loudly, "*glory to God in the highest...*" The shepherds were blessed because "a multitude of heavenly host [were] praising God" in their midst.

May there be a host of believers who, today, are proclaiming "glory to God in the highest" in the company of an onlooking world. It is in that proclamation that we are able to eternally bless the world around us. So Christian, worry less about the things we give to one another and hide not your praise to Jesus.

This year let your presents be a proclamation of praise unto to Jesus in the presence of an onlooking world.

All Glory unto Jesus Christ, Pastor Tony Minell

December Memory Verse

Isaiah 9:6

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." ESV

Christmas Eve Service

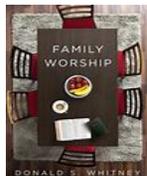
Please join us **Monday, December 24th** for New Life's Christmas Eve service **at 6:30pm** at the building. We will gather to sing, pray, and share in a short devotional. Though there will be many gifts given this month, one of the great gifts we receive being in Christ, is true fellowship with Him and one another as it says in 1 John 1:3, "*that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.*" So please consider who you could invite: family, friends, neighbors, or co-workers that they too may receive Him as Lord and Savior and have true fellowship with Jesus Christ.

Announcements and Upcoming Events

VIDEO MINISTRY

New Life video ministry is looking for camera operators. This is an opportunity to serve those who are unable to join us in person to worship Jesus Christ and to study God's Word on Sunday morning. You can sit with one of the camera operators to see what is involved, talk to anyone on the team about the ministry, or contact Jim Mabee @ 651.470.4172. We'd love to have you on the team.

FAMILY WORSHIP



Months ago, a book called "Family Worship" by Don Whitney was handed out to each family. We want to follow up and hear how it has served your family or influenced your understanding of family worship in the home. We want all families to be strong and healthy and growing in relationship with Jesus, and we see from the Word that growth in spiritual maturity and cultivation a healthy relationship with Jesus begins in the home. We would love to hear from you! Please share comments through New Life Connect, or email, or share with a pastor or elder in person.

NEW IMMERSE CLASS

Starting the first week of January: "Owning Your Faith" taught by Pastor Bennett. This class may be of special interest to young adults/teens, but all are welcome. We'll discuss what it looks like to truly make your faith your own, explore the big questions of faith and doubt, and learn to think more critically in the process.

ANNUAL PARTNERS MEETING

Mark your calendars for our Annual Partners Meeting **Saturday January 19th @ 10:00am**. As a partner of the body of New Life this is one way to participate in the workings of the body and also to be aware of the goals and direction the Lord is leading us in. If you have been attending New Life for some time and you would like to become a partner or have questions about what it means, please reach out to one of the elders or pastors and set up a time to meet.

Regardless if you are a partner or not, for whoever calls New Life home, we all need to be continually praying for the Lords leading, especially as we enter a new year. May Jesus always be at the center!

Please bring a dish for the potluck brunch to follow. What great way to express your partnership!

JANUARY CHRISTIAN RETREAT

Don't forget to check out the new retreat taking place right here in the valley. Do you hear my voice? Do you know my name? The 2019 Conference "He Seeks, the God of the Bible" is taking place at Oak Forest Retreat Center in Fredric, WI on **January 25th - 27th**. Space is limited. The conference is open to Men and Women. For details please see the flier on the welcome table in the entrance or text Rene Germain at (715) 417-4363.

Fellowship Tip: Have you read a good book from the resource center lately? Tell someone about it.

Upcoming Potluck/Meal Teams:

Dec 30 Meal Team #4
Jan 6 Potluck Team #1

Please join us for fellowship and a meal following our service today!

Pastoral Eldership Team:

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Dale Mattson	715.566.2302
Greg Mattson	715.417.2444
Rene Milner	715.557.0185
Jim Nelson	651.283.2132

This Week's Schedule of Events @ NLCC:

Dec 24 **Christmas Eve Service** 6:30 pm
Jan 19 **Annual Partners Meeting** 10 am
Jan 25-27 **Christian Retreat** (Men & Women)
Oak Forest Retreat, Frederic, WI

There will **Not** be any meetings this week for Immerse, GriefShare or for any men and women Bible studies.

Check out New Life Online
newlifechristiancommunity.org

• Events • Sermons Online • New Life Connect • Set Lists • & More

May this week be a blessing to all of you and your families.



Today's Passage:

Pastor Tony's message is from the Old Testament book,
Judges 20:18-48

Sermon Notes: