

FAITH @ HOME

Way of Love

Week 6: Bless

ADULT AND SMALL CHILD

READ: Numbers 6:24-26

REFLECT: You are a blessing to God. That means that God favors and protects you. Even when you make bad choices or mistakes, you are still a blessing to God and God loves you. It is a gift from God. When you get a gift, sometimes it is nice to play with it by yourself. For example, if you get bubbles for your birthday. Bubbles are so fun! Blowing bubbles by yourself outside on a sunny day is wonderful. But bubbles are meant to be shared. You can have one person to blow bubbles and another to catch them. Sharing a gift is a way of remembering Jesus. Since you already have God's blessing and always will, you can share that blessing with your family and friends. You can give them a blessing. You can love them and protect them.

RESPOND: Try blessing others using one of these activities:

- Draw a picture for a friend who lives far away and mail it to them. Remind them that God blesses them too.
- Caregivers, bless the children who are in your care. Hold their hand and pray loud for them. You can use the blessing in Numbers 6:24-26 or another blessing of your choice. Here is a blessing from our Jewish friends that you can use:

May God bless you and guard you.

May God show you favor and be gracious to you.

May God show you kindness and grant you peace.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: HANNAH GRAHAM



For nearly 15 years, Hannah has served Episcopal parish communities in a variety of Christian Formation roles. As a gifted Godly Play storyteller and youth mentor, Hannah utilizes her knowledge of child and adolescent faith development not only in the classroom, but also in executing big picture planning to enhance the shaping of Christian community. Hannah has led the Education for Ministry Program as a trained mentor for 4 years, and regularly contributes to Diocesan events, camps, retreats, and committee work. She is recognized for her innovated use of social media to integrate liturgical seasons, parish programs, music, faith at home activities and outreach. In addition to the spiritual formation of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Glenwood, Maryland, Hannah devotes herself to growing in faith as a beloved child of God, wife and mother of three boys, ages 10 months-5 years old.

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ADULT AND ELEMENTARY

READ: Matthew 25:34-40

REFLECT: A lot of times, people are richly blessed in ways that we fail to remember. Do we have a home or place to call home? Do we have electricity? Do we have access to food and clean drinking water? These are all incredible blessings that many have and yet take for granted. It's not that people don't appreciate these things—it's just that people forget to be thankful for these blessings we have.

Jesus calls us to be aware of all we have and to bless others as we have been blessed. If we have clothing to share with the naked, we should help clothe others. If we have more than enough food to share, we ought to feed the hungry. If someone who's new to us shows up, we should welcome them warmly. When we seek to share our blessings with those who go without, we bless God as well.

As Christians, we are called to put our faith into action and actively bless others, but we don't do so for our own glory or to feel good about ourselves. We are called to love others through our actions because we are then actually showing others that we love as God loved us. In those moments, we help care for our fellow members of creation and love like God in the process.

RESPOND: Every day this week, find a different way to share blessings with those around you. Put your faith into action to bless others as God has blessed you. You can use one of these suggestions, or come up with your own: collect non-perishable food to donate to a local food pantry, make a tie blanket to give to a local shelter, visit residents in a nursing home, donate clothes that no longer fit that are still in good to great shape, read your favorite book to a younger family member or friend, etc.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: ERIN WOLF



Erin Wolf is a Youth Minister hailing from Little Chute, WI where she lives with her four kids. She serves both All Saints Episcopal in Appleton and the Episcopal Diocese of Fond du Lac. Her ministry focuses include children & youth, camp & retreats, music, service work, interactive prayer for all ages, and more. You can connect with her via email at ewolf@diofdl.org.

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ADULT AND YOUTH

READ: Luke 6:27-36

REFLECT: I must admit that bless is a term I can be uncomfortable with; I think it is a term that has been co-opted by folks saying “hashtag blessed” about ways that their lives look perfect and well put together on Facebook or Instagram or Tik Tok or whatever new app there is. I am also guilty of this and often post on social media about my best moments: moments I am happy, moments I am with family, or moments that look polished and neat. I don’t post the moments when I feel alone, when I am struggling, or when I have fallen short and messed up. But #blessed is not what we are talking about.

We are talking about being a blessing to everyone you meet. In our Baptismal Covenant we are asked if we will seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbors as ourselves. And we respond that we will, but we require God’s help to follow in this way.

In our reading today, it talks about the hardest people to care for: those who are my enemies. People who hope for bad things to happen to me and are unkind. This is really tough for me having met some pretty mean folks in life. But I found a post by Justin McRoberts recently that helped me to attempt to follow Jesus’ command in Luke: “May love and forgiveness for others be less and less optional.” For all people. So how will we seek and serve those persons?

RESPOND: Recently my youth group started a chalkboard filled with people we are praying for. We tried to focus on the people that it is hardest for us to love and these are some of the people we came up with: Blessed are those... who are “too cool,” who we disagree with, who annoy us, who hurt us, who are mean to our friends, who leave us out, who bully, who get under our skin.

Write on a chalkboard (or a piece of paper if one is not available to you) the people who it is hardest for you to love. How will you be a blessing to those people this week?

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: MEREDITH ROGERS



Meredith serves as the Director of Youth Ministries at St. Mark’s Episcopal Church in San Antonio, Texas. She is a strong advocate of mental health in ministry and the benefits youth can gain from a summer camping or retreat program. While she feels incredibly underqualified to be a writer on behalf of Forma & Faith @ Home, Meredith trusts that her voice might be one that you need to hear and knows your voice is one that the world needs to hear.

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ADULT AND ADULT

READ: Luke 10:25-37

REFLECT: Scripture makes it very clear that we are all called to bless others. Jesus tells us to love one another as God loves us. We fall short of that all the time! I feel ashamed of the lack of help I've given to people in need. But perhaps we all have a way to live into our gifts to be a blessing each day.

On Saturday, I went to the post office to mail some packages. While I used the self-service kiosk to weigh and purchase postage for each package, a woman came to weigh a large envelope. She couldn't figure out how to use it and asked me for help. I couldn't figure it out either but showed her how to use the self-service kiosk to weigh her envelope and find out how much postage she would need.

We got to talking about what I was mailing, and I shared with her that it was my Lenten practice of giving away a bag a day. She was astounded that I was not selling the bags but freely sending them to folks, some of whom I didn't know. We talked about Lent and sacrifice and the joy in giving. It was clear that she was hungry for this conversation. She had many questions about my practice which I gladly answered, including "what's the name of your blog again!?"

Before she came in, I realized that I didn't have a pen. I'm wearing a cast right now and really didn't want to go back to the car but had no choice. Talking with the woman made me feel comfortable enough to ask her if I could borrow a pen. She gave me one and said, "I've taken so much of your time; you've been such a blessing to me."

This small exchange might not seem like the kind of blessing Jesus asks us to be to each other. And then again, maybe it is. I've found a way to use my gifts to help others every day. What's your way?

RESPOND: Discern your gift to bless others daily. One day this week, find a way to be a blessing that is slightly outside of your comfort zone.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: MIRIAM MCKENNEY



Miriam is a child of God who finds extreme joy parenting her three girls: Nia, Kaia, and Jaiya. She met her husband, David, at the Union of Black Episcopalians conference in 1981. Miriam works as Forward Movement's Development Director, and writes for their family blog, Grow Christians. She was a children's librarian and school media specialist for 20 years before joining Forward Movement's staff. She has recently discovered a love of outdoor fitness in extreme temperatures, as there is no bad weather, just incorrect clothing choices.

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