

Message Summary

Though our culture denigrates it, the Bible depicts old age as an opportunity to grow in wisdom and righteousness (Prv. 16:31). Faith, similarly, is inherently forward-looking and hopeful about the future. Isaac and Jacob were both older men, Jacob 147 years old. Though their physical eyes dimmed, their spiritual eyes became clearer and clearer. Though our outer nature wastes away, our inner self is being renewed day by day (2 Cor. 4:16). Over time, people of faith see even more clearly the true purpose of life: worship. The overflow of worship and faith is blessing to others. Whatever gifts, especially whatever excess, God entrusts to us is for His glory to bless others around us.

The author of Hebrews turns in his catalogue of faith to Jacob, the favorite son of Joseph who received his blessing. Jacob knew that God's promised blessings were not designed to stop with him. He was entrusted with blessing others around him, because the blessing did not ultimately come from him, but God. God had promised a land and offspring to Jacob's grandfather Abraham (Gn. 12:1-3; cf. Gn. 28). Jacob knew this promise would be fulfilled in his posterity, and so looked and prayed toward land and offspring for future generations. Christian generosity is just this: giving to others what God has given to us. The most valuable creatures on earth are people. Thus, the most direct and focal recipients of the blessings we pass on must be those around us made in the image of God.

God would hear and honor Jacob's blessings and make Israel a great nation. Generation after generation of Israelites would come from his line. Eventually, God would honor Jacob's blessing by sending Israel her true King, Jesus Christ, who would reign over the household of Jacob. We who would bless others must first receive God's blessing through Christ. Jacob blessed by placing his hands on Joseph's sons; Christ blessed by stretching out his hands on the cross. We who have received peace through Christ have opportunity to bless others through Christ's sacrifice, and look forward to our future home in heaven.

WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

- 1) Why are people the most valuable thing on earth (see esp. Gn. 1:26-27; Jm. 3:9)? How did Jacob exhibit this truth? In what ways does the world distort this truth?
- 2) How does an eternal perspective enable us to live with a faith like Abel's, whose fruit still speaks after death (Hb. 11:4)? What are the dangers of earthly-mindedness?
- 3) How can we cultivate a greater multigenerational prayer focus and vision? What sorts of blessings is the Lord calling us to pass to the next generation?

NOW WHAT DO WE DO?

Group Discussion & Application

Use the following questions to examine what the sermon and its text mean, to apply the Word to your life, and to guide how you pray. Please note that you don't have to use all of the questions. These are just options (along with the digging deeper section) to help you frame the family/small group discussion.

- 1) Are you discouraged by the prospect of growing older, or do you view it as an opportunity to pass God's blessing to others even as your spiritual eyes grow clearer and clearer?
- 2) Do you see worship as the purpose of your life and the lives of others around you?
- 3) Are you using God's gifts, especially excess gifts, to bless others? Or do you tend to hoard them in a world that will pass away?
- 4) Do you see all you have as a gift from God's hand (1 Cor. 4:7ff.; Jm. 1:17)?

- 5) Do you see God as the ultimate source of blessing, or are you tempted to look toward worldly sources for blessing?
- 6) Do you have a multigenerational vision for family of God and the nations of God?
- 7) How can you extend God's blessing to others this week?

Prayer

- Pray for Our Church:
 - Thank God for sending Christ to bless us by extending his hands on the cross. Thank Him for the opportunity to love others through extending Christ's blessing to them.
 - Pray that we would look to Christ alone as the source of our suffering, and not turn to false worldly sources for blessing
- Pray for Our Community:
 - Pray for the International Student Dinner this Friday night at the Holts' home. Pray that the Lord would use this opportunity to preach the gospel to many who have never heard it, and establish gospel relationships that will last for a lifetime. Pray that the Lord would raise up many indigenous missionaries to their own people through our church's witness.
- Pray for Our World:
 - Pray for the Delaney family in their process of adopting Elliot. Pray that the Lord would see to all needed medical care, provide for finances, and finalize all documents for their adoption to be complete.
 - Pray that the Lord would lead many to be part of orphan care, through the Delaney's adoption and otherwise.