

FROM THE PASTOR'S PEN



January 2009



THE BLESSING

PASTOR TROY

As I reflect upon the past year for our church, it is a reflection that can best be encapsulated by the word “blessed.” I don’t think this word is terribly unique – as if there were some years where God’s blessings were somehow absent. I don’t believe that at all. It’s just that there are times when one stops and looks at all that God has done in our lives and there’s really nothing more to be said than “God has blessed us.”

There is a danger, though, in reflecting upon blessing. Blessing was never intended by God to be reduced or limited to the first person pronoun “I.” The Bible is full of reminders that those to whom much is given, much is expected. The Lord rebukes his people for taking the blessings he has given them and squandering them for selfish purposes. He legitimately asks the question as to how they could, with clear conscience, be so consumed with their lives that they forget and ignore the plight of the alien, the fatherless and the widow.

The Bible clearly states that the people of God are blessed to be a blessing. That is to say, when we stop to count our blessings, it is not limited to how much we have received. The deep blessing of God is the blessing of the ways and the means by which we can bless others with the blessings we have received. Here we thank God for using us, for giving us opportunities to serve, for giving us the means by which to help, for not allowing our hearts to grow selfishly cold.

It was a privilege for me to take part in the delivering the gifts of the Deacon’s Christmas project to a needy family in Escalon. I marvel at the enthusiasm for service projects at our church. Just as I was amazed by the outpouring of support, on very short notice, for medicines to be purchased for our Gua-

temala Trip, I was amazed by the fact that every gift on the tree was taken, plus more. The project’s success was entirely the work of members of our congregation.

Yet, as I watched the excited children come pouring out of their trailer, consumed with excitement as Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus gave them gifts lovingly presented from the people of our church, I couldn’t help but reflect on God’s desire for the use of his blessings. The truth grabbed hold of me in a powerful way that day – the truth that there is joy in serving. There was no time to think about the “self.” There was simply time to enjoy a child opening a gift they thought they’d never receive. There was time to watch a parent receive a gift card to help repair their home. There was time to watch excited laughter and choked back tears.

I wish you all could have been there to witness it. It really was a beautiful time – despite the rain! – where I was thankful for the generosity of our church and the opportunity to help and blessed by the smiles on the family’s faces. Yet, interestingly enough, it did not produce a feeling of satisfaction in me. And I think that’s a good thing. It produced a feeling of “what else can we do?” and “who else can we help?” God does not want our blessing of others to be limited to a few strategic events – he wants it to be a definition of our daily lives on a variety of levels.

This is why I say that we are blessed – because God has moved in our hearts to *do this!* God has given us the opportunity and the resources to *do this!* God desires that we *do this!* For *this* is simply “blessed to be a blessing.” Our Lord did not make himself nothing and die for our sins for us to do anything less. God is good – and uses his people to show others that this is true.