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Rick Myatt

THE PROBLEM WITH CANADIAN FOOTBALL Genesis 11:31-12:3

There have been some unusual things offered for sale on eBay. The original Hollywood sign was sold on eBay in 2005 for \$450,000. I'm not sure what you'd do with that sign, but someone apparently wanted it fairly badly. One I would really like to have bought was offered for sale in February 2004. It was an F/A-18 fighter jet, much like the one our son-in-law flew. The owner bought it from a scrap yard and offered it with a starting bid of \$1 million, or the buy now price of \$9 million. In the end it went unsold. Man would I like to have that. Talk about a cool lawn ornament. Of course I suspect our HOA would go ballistic about that.

A letter written by Albert Einstein in 1954 to philosopher Erik Gutkind in which the scientist defended his views on ethics, religion and human nature sold on eBay for \$3 million. Are you kidding me? I've written a whole book and you can buy it on Amazon for \$2.99. That's one millionth the cost of a mere letter. Um, yeah, Rick, but the book is written by you and the letter was written by Albert Einstein. Oh, so the value of the piece of writing stems in part from who authored it? Exactly. A North Carolina man put this on eBay. "I have discovered the reason for existence and will be happy to share this information with the highest bidder." The starting bid was one cent. It sold for \$3.26. Imagine learning the meaning of life for under \$4. I'm guessing that guy who bought the meaning of life for \$3.26 got about what he paid for. I want you to think with me today about the meaning of life and where that meaning comes from. To spark our thinking let's look at Genesis 11:31-12:3, a passage that begins a study of the life of Abraham, one of the greatest men of the Old Testament and, indeed of history.

GOD INITIATED

Envision a world in which there is no church, no nation that is the chosen people of God, no written Word of God, no revelation of God at all apart from what we see in nature. In this world it would be hard to know much about God. One might have a sense that there is a Creator behind all that we see, but there would be little knowledge of that Creator. One could deduce that the Creator is powerful beyond our comprehension, possibly that he is good, given all the good things in this world, and even that he is personal, given the personality of part of his creation.

But one could draw some other conclusions about the Creator. Given the often random and capricious nature of life one might assume that there were a number of beings involved in the creation.

Around 3000 years ago a man named Abram lived in the area historians refer to as Mesopotamia. The word Mesopotamia is actually Greek in origin and it meant “land between the rivers.” It refers to the area in the Tigris-Euphrates river system in what is today northern Syria, Iraq and Kuwait. Abram lived in a place called Ur. The ancient Mesopotamians were polytheists. They had concluded from the randomness they saw in life that there were a number of gods. They had more than 1000 gods in their pantheon. Our man Abram grew up in that culture and originally had that kind of a theology. But at one point everything changed for him.

We can see in 11:31-32 that Terah, who was Abram’s father, took Abram, his wife Sarai and a grandson named Lot with him as he decided to move south to an area called Canaan. I think he probably took more than those three. Likely he moved most of his extended family, but the three who are mentioned play roles in subsequent events that are described in Genesis. Terah didn’t get all the way to Canaan. He stopped at a place called Harran and, for unknown reasons decided to stay there. We don’t know why he stopped there, but we do have an idea about why he might have left Ur in the first place.

In 12:1 we are told “the Lord had said to Abram, ‘go from your country, your people and your father’s household, to the land I will show you.’” Somehow, in a way that is not specified, the one true God communicated to Abram. That must have been a dramatic and profound experience for Abram. Somehow he learned there is one true God, and that God had chosen him for a special role in human history. God told him to leave Ur and head south. My guess is that when Abram announced that he intended to leave Ur his father said, “All right, then we’ll all go with you.” They made it as far as Harran (which actually was not very far), and decided that was far enough. But Abram was instructed to push on, which he did.

In Genesis 15:7 God reminds Abram that he brought him out of Ur to give him the land of Canaan. In Acts 7 when Stephen was reciting the history of Israel he said in verses 2-4, “Brothers and fathers, listen to me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran. ‘Leave your country and your people,’ God said, ‘and go to the land I will show you.’ So he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. After the death of his father, God sent him to this land where you are now living.”

Observe that it was God who acted. God picked Abram out, God called him and told him to pick up stakes and move. Abram didn't seek God out. He didn't volunteer to know and serve God. There is no indication that there was something special about Abram that caused God to choose him. He was likely just another polytheistic idol worshiper going about his business when God tapped him on the shoulder. Abram had no idea whatsoever of the role God had for him to play in human history. Do you realize that 3 of the world's major religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam all trace their roots back to Abram? Some of his choices in life set in motion events that still have huge implications for the world today. I suspect Abram never really understood what was ultimately going to happen because of him.

In his book, *Created To Be God's Friend*, Henry Blackaby wrote, "The ways of God are mysterious and wonderful. Eternity is the starting point for God's activity...Abram was chosen by God from eternity" (pp. 3, 5).

ABRAM RESPONDED IN FAITH

Abram did what God told him to do. He left his home town and headed south. This is surprising a couple of fronts. The most obvious is that God told him to go to "the land that I will show you." That's a pretty nebulous instruction. Head out that way and I will inform you when you get there. What is this, some sort of treasure hunt? Wouldn't you want to have a better idea of where you're supposed to go than that? We follow Google Maps to places by just following the directions. Turn right in 500 feet. But Google Maps starts by showing you the route to the destination so you have a sense that you know where they're taking you. All Abram got was "head out and when you get there I'll let you know you've arrived."

God called Abram to leave his country, his people and his father's household. This is not so startling in our time and our culture. The area where we live is filled with transplants. There are a whole lot more people who grew up somewhere else and later migrated here than people who were born and raised here. We don't think it is a big thing for someone to move to a different part of the world.

However, even in our world leaving home can be hard. The place I grew up was Bakersfield. Honestly, leaving it has not been all that hard. But for my daughter leaving the San Diego area where she has essentially lived all her life, has been hard. She misses home. She has been writing a blog about her transition to a new location with a new culture. At one point she wrote, "I expected to hear the occasional gunfire living in the sticks as we do. But, I did not expect our neighbors to shoot their guns for no apparent reason at random intervals. Sometimes it

happens in the morning. Sometimes it happens in the middle of the day. Sometimes it happens in the middle of the night. Sometimes it sounds like a distant rumbling. Sometimes it sounds like they have bazookas and are firing directly at our house. Whatever it is, it's usually not clear why they are shooting or what they are shooting at. Luckily, Michael warned me of this random gunfire phenomenon before we arrived, so I have yet to call the cops in a panic.” That’s one tiny thing Carissa has had to adjust to in her new place. There are many more, and some of them have been hard. One of them has been extreme weather. She has learned this summer that the heat and humidity of Mississippi is no joke. Abram had to leave his home and adjust to a brand new place, kind of like Carissa has had to do.

God also called Abram to leave his father’s household and his people. Again we live in a mobile society where people leave home at the drop of a hat. But that’s not such a big deal because we have so many ways to keep in touch. You can text any time, you can talk long distance at no extra charge, you can even Skype or Facetime so you can see each other when you talk. Plus, if you miss the family you can hop on a plane and be back with them in a matter of hours. So moving away from them is not a big deal, right?

I beg to differ. Even in our culture where we have lots of ways to keep in touch, I can testify that it is hard being away from loved ones. But consider what life was like for Abram. First, his was not a culture steeped in rugged individualism like ours. Their culture was all about the community. The community was more important than the individual. You made decisions on the basis of what was best for the clan, the family. You got your identity not from what you did or who you presented yourself to be, but from your clan and your family.

Look at Luke 3:23-24. “Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melki, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph.” So it goes. The entire genealogy tells us who was the son of whom. Isaiah, the prophet, is introduced as “Isaiah, son of Amoz.” Jeremiah is introduced as the son of Hilkiyah. Ezekiel is identified as the son of Buzi. Hosea is the son of Beeri. I am a little concerned that those last two prophets were the sons of Buzi and Beeri respectively. It sounds like there might have been an alcohol issue there, but scholars assure us this is not the case. My point is all these people were identified by who they were the son of. Their identity was rooted in their family.

Abram was told by God to give all that up. He was to leave his home, leave his culture, leave his family, essentially abandon his identity and go to some unknown

place where he would be a total unknown. He would be forever a stranger, an outsider there. There would be no calling home. No letters to keep in touch. No holiday visits with the family. He would leave and never come back. He would never see his family again!

Abram displayed great faith. He responded to God's call, despite how difficult it was, and made the sacrifice that was necessary. His faith is demonstrated in his obedience. Had he been informed by this God whom he knew nothing about and whom he had never heard of before that he was to take such a radical step and he responded, "hey, I believe in you and all that, but, um, leaving my family, my clan and my home to go to some strange unknown place? That's a bridge too far," would that have been faith? No, it wouldn't. Faith acts. It steps out on the claimed belief and when told to go, it goes.

FAITH RESULTED IN BLESSING

Faith will prove to be a major theme in Abram's life. In Genesis 12:2-3 we see what God promised Abram if he responded in faith. God promised to make a great nation from his descendants and to make his name great. He promised to bless him, and to bless anyone who blessed him and to oppose anyone who opposed him.

The promise that God would make a great nation of Abram was a big deal. At the time Abram left Haran he was 75 years old. In our culture today young people are delaying having kids until they are older than people did 50 years ago, but, um, this is extreme. Today 75 would seem to be an age where the descendant train has already left the station. However, Abram was born when his dad was 70 years old, so it seems back then they lived longer and had children longer. Nevertheless, this was quite a promise. It was rather amazing to be promised that one's descendants would become a great nation when none of them existed and Abram was that far along in years.

The promise of his name being great and of blessing essentially told Abram that though he was going to be an unknown and an outsider it wouldn't matter. He was going to be someone to be reckoned with. He was going to be very prosperous and very well known. One scholar said that the blessings Abram would be given included all that a king in the ancient east would have dreamed of gaining.

BLESSING LED TO BLESSING

The last promise given to Abram is really astounding. "All peoples on earth will be blessed through you." God told Abram that all of the human race would be positively impacted by him. I don't believe Abram ever knew what that would

mean. I can imagine him pondering that question often during his life. How is the whole world going to be blessed through me? I probably would have come up with some scenarios and all of them would have been wrong. I suspect Abram even seized on certain events from time to time and wondered if this was what God meant, this was the way he would bless the whole world.

Abram never really knew what this promise was about. Because we have the perspective of history we know today what it meant. Abram's descendants were what we today call the Jewish people. From those people came Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah. The most familiar verse in the Bible is John 3:16, which says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life." God's calling and blessing of Abram was part of a vast divine plan whose goal was to have Jesus Christ, the Son of God, enter human history to rescue us all.

God loved the world and through his Son, Jesus of Nazareth, a descendant of Abram, he made a way for us to have eternal life. We have it by believing in him, not by working hard to earn that which would otherwise be forever beyond our reach. This incredible blessing, the ultimate and by far most urgent and important hope of all human beings, is available to anyone and everyone. God offers it to the whole world because he loves the whole world, and he made it happen through a descendant of Abram.

Abram never had a hint that the promise meant that. Not once in his entire life did he ever understand that. All he knew was that God promised if he believed that the Lord would somehow bless every person on earth through him. God kept his promise, but the fulfillment came many centuries after Abram was gone.

IMPLICATIONS

GOD IS DOING AN ETERNAL WORK IN US

God was at work before Abram even knew he existed. Remember what Henry Blackaby wrote. "Eternity is the starting point for God's activity...Abram was chosen by God from eternity." God set a plan in motion before Abram was ever born. It was a plan that would not actually come to fruition until almost 2000 years after Abram!

Sure but Abram was a special case. We know that God has always set apart special people to play extraordinary roles in the progress of his plan and his kingdom in human history. He chose Abram to be the father of faith and of the people of God. He chose Moses to lead Israel out of slavery and to deliver his covenant and his

law. He chose David to be Israel's greatest king. He chose the prophets to deliver his truth to his people. He chose the apostles to be the founders of his church. But those people were clearly extraordinary, set apart for very special tasks.

We cannot generalize from their experience to ours, can we? God hasn't promised to make us a great nation and to bless the whole world through us. True, but surprisingly Scripture insists that God is at work in us just as surely as he was in Abram. Philippians 2:13 says, "For it is God who is at work in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose." God has his purposes that he is working. He has been at this since before the world began. And that verse claims he is at work in you and me to bring about those purposes just as surely as he was at work in Abram. Ephesians 1:4 says God, "chose us in him (Christ) before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight."

Now that is astounding. I just read David McCullough's book about the Wright Brothers. It reminded me of how different the world was back in 1903. Our son in law Michael has flown fast enough to break the sound barrier. He has approached flying at Mach 2 and has reached altitudes 8 miles high. He has flown all the way across the Pacific Ocean multiple times. And none of that is remarkable to us. Things were very different in the first decade of the 1900's. People were astounded and enraptured to watch Orville Wright fly his invention around a field. He flew a hundred feet in the air around a field for a few minutes and people reacted as though they were seeing a miracle. Back then in the first decade of the 20th century God had already chosen you. He was already at work to bring about his purposes using you. In 1903 Rebecca Margaret Myatt was born. Her parents were John Martin Myatt and Autensie Whited. Margaret, known as Maggie, would marry Cecil Eldridge Myatt, son of Will Myatt and Nellie Goodrich. They had the same last name but weren't related. God was working his purposes in their lives, and a part of that purpose was, believe it or not, to eventually bring into this world Rick Myatt so he could use me. God was at work in 1550 in the life of Richard Mayot. I don't know what other purposes he had in mind for him, but among others he was using him to bring about the life of Richard Myatt who stands before you today. When God called Abram so many centuries ago God was also working to bring about his purpose in you!

In Psalm 139:15-16 David wrote, "My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be." All the days ordained for me were written down before I showed up on the planet. Proverbs 16:9 says, "In their hearts

humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps.” We can and do make all the plans we want, but God determines how things go.

That presents some brain bending problems that we will never resolve because of our finite abilities. We make choices that are real and meaningful. I don’t think everything in our lives is determined by an unalterable destiny. I do not believe that God had it all decided what shirt I was going to wear today. Nevertheless, the message is clear. Our days were ordained and written long ago, even before we were born. How that works is far above my pay grade.

This does not mean that you and I are robots like R2D2 and C3PO from the *Star Wars* movies. But it does mean that somehow, in a mysterious way that’s far beyond me to comprehend God has woven our choices together to bring about his purposes. And the cool part about this is that he is at work making something meaningful and purposeful out of our lives. At times they might seem random, chaotic and nonsensical, but God is at work and he always has been.

This is good news, for it speaks to a crucial question every human must answer. That question is “who has the right to define life and meaning?” At the heart of the recent Supreme Court decision about same sex marriage was a statement about the definition of liberty that goes back to a much earlier court decision that actually laid the foundation for this recent one. In the 1992 *Planned Parenthood vs. Casey* decision Justice Kennedy wrote, “At the heart of liberty is the right to define one’s own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, of the mystery of human life.” If I have the right to define the universe and the mystery of the human life, surely I have the right to define marriage, right?

I appreciate Kennedy’s desire to ensure that we all have the right to determine what our lives are about, but what he actually said presents some problems. A big one is that I can define “the concept of existence and of the universe” all I want, but the universe has a tendency to stubbornly refuse to be defined by me.

There are other problems with Justice Kennedy’s assertion. One is we end up with no possible rationale for law because life has just become a free for all, every man for himself. Morality becomes a joke. In the end, follow his logic and we end up with chaos, emptiness and foolishness. In fact our lives will have no meaning, because whatever meaning we assign them is something we made up. It is pretend. And in the end that logic will inevitably lead to a place where all that is left in a culture is the raw exercise of power.

I bring this up because it relates to something we see happening in the life of Abram. Pastor and author Mike Wittmer said correctly, “only God bestows human dignity and determines the meaning of our existence.” He’s right. God determined the meaning of Abram’s existence. Who would Abram have been had God not determined the meaning of his life? No one! Same is true for us. God has been determining the meaning of our existence from before the foundation of the world. Without him there is no dignity and there is no meaning, nor is there morality or law. But with him our lives have unlimited dignity and meaning.

Let me illustrate. This baseball season has provided me with a large disappointment. Our Padres, who gave us such hope in the offseason, have turned out to be a huge bust. Most of the time they’ve been bad and they’re boring. Unfortunately it’s more than a month until football starts so I’ve had no sports to watch on television. Recently out of desperation I watched a few minutes of a Canadian football game. Wow, dude, you’re pathetic. True, but in my defense I reiterate I only watched a few minutes. It made me think of what we’re talking about right now. Canadian football is much like American football with a few major rule differences. The field is bigger, teams have 12 players instead of 11 and you only have 3 downs to go 10 yards instead of 4. But another rule difference is there are no rules about motion in the offensive backfield. In our game there are strict rules about movement in the offensive backfield before the ball is snapped. In Canadian football guys can run willy-nilly all over the place before the snap. To an American it looks wrong. I find myself yelling, “illegal motion!” repeatedly. But it’s not illegal because it’s their game and they have the right to define the rules however they want. How dare they change the rules of our game? According to Justice Kennedy to have liberty they must have that right.

That’s when it hit me. What if you brought 22 men onto a football field and told them, “Each of you has the right to define the game and its meaning however you want.” Would that be liberty? In a way I suppose. But what would it produce? There would be utter chaos. One might define the meaning of the game to be injuring as many people as possible. Another might define it as being about kicking the ball into the stands surrounding the field. Another might decide it’s just about tackling whoever he feels like tackling. Another might decide it’s about trying to deflate the ball. Still another might decide you win if you can get the ball and run out of the stadium with it. Each person would have his own rules. As you can see two things would happen. One would be utter chaos and harm as people run all over the place doing whatever they want by their own rules and hurting each other in the process. The other result would be the game would be completely robbed of any meaning whatsoever. The game only has meaning if it operates by

an ordained set of definitions and rules. You can only have the glory of scoring a touchdown and winning the game if someone has defined how one scores and what it means to win the game. When everyone has the right to define those things on his own, the result is horrifying and is utterly empty of any possibility of meaning. And so it is with life.

True liberty, real freedom that allows life to have meaning and fullness, only exists when the meaning and the rules have been defined for us. We become totally free within the rules. But without that we have chaos, injury and emptiness.

When God showed up in Abram's life it took on a whole new significance. He went from being an utter nobody to being one of the most significant people in human history. The same is true in each of our lives. When God shows up he defines the meaning and the rules, and when that happens we gain huge significance. Our lives mean something. He has something for us to do and ways he wants us to do it and not to do it. Within those boundaries we have great freedom, but it is the boundaries that allow our lives to be filled with meaning. We don't want to think that we're basically a possum that got run over on the highway of life. But that's exactly what we end up when we define life, the universe and its meaning on our own. But when God shows up and defines life and meaning for us, suddenly we are much more than road kill. We have eternal significance and limitless meaning.

God showing up in Abram's life impacts us and the meaning of our lives in another way. It enables us to come to grips with the inevitable painful and unfathomable things that will happen in all of our lives. One of the most despairing places we can ever be is to experience hurts, hardships, losses and disappointments and know that there is no point to any of it. We *need* to know that there is meaning in our lives and some point to all these random things that happen. The Roman poet Publius Vergilius Maro, usually known as Virgil, said, "Happy is the person who can know the reason for things." Rick Myatt, the American Nobody, said, "Despairing is the person who never has a clue about the reason for things that happen in his life."

We can be at peace because we know God has been and continues to be at work in us, just as he was in Abram. Henry Blackaby in his book, *Created To Be God's Friend*, wrote, "Even the most bewildering and potentially discouraging circumstances are then seen as vital aspects of God's purposes and activities to develop our character and our intimate relationship with him."

You all know that I went through a kind of hard thing when I was fired from a ministry I served for more than 30 years. It wasn't a tragedy. People get fired from jobs all the time, but it wasn't much fun either. On the whole if offered a choice between that and going to Disneyland I would take Disneyland. Actually if offered a choice between that and having a root canal I'd take the root canal. But if God is at work in those events, achieving his purposes, then not only can I accept it with grace and peace, I can embrace it. I likely will not understand why it all happened. I don't need to. I just have to know that God was planning on using that from before the creation of the world, and if that's the case then let's just go with it. What peace, freedom and joy we can have because we know God is at work.

GOD USES US TO BLESS

If it were up to me I would like God to call me like he did Abram, with a few edits. I'd be good with him making a great nation from me. I'm good with him blessing me. I'm good with him making my name great. I'd be happy if he'd just stop right there. That's the stuff I really care about. I want to be great. I want to be blessed. I want my family to be healthy and successful. That's good enough for me.

But God didn't stop there. He told Abram he would be a blessing to other people. In fact, God would use him to bless the entire world. When you look at the big picture you see that in fact this was really at the core of what God was doing. He wanted to use Abram to bless other people. That was the end purpose. The whole purpose in working in Abram's life was to accomplish God's work of rescuing the human race through Jesus Christ! That is the biggest blessing in the history of the human race. Could it be that God is working the same way in us?

Indeed it is. I don't always know the specifics of why events happen in my life. A couple of years ago Laurie had to have not one but two surgeries. Why? I don't know. This year she has had to endure a 9 month long dental ordeal. Why? I don't know. But I know that God has some purpose in it, even if I don't know what it is, and in the end, the answer is always going to have something to do with building our faith and shaping our character so that God can more effectively use us to bless other people. In Philippians 2:4 Paul said "each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." In 2 Corinthians 9:11 Paul talked about why God blesses us with material blessings. "You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion." In other words, God gives you things so you can give to others. He blesses you so you can bless.

This involves a radical reorientation of our thinking. Like I said, I want life to be about me. And Abram's example tells me it is about God using me to bless other

people. How different we will be when we reorient so that we evaluate everything that happens, everything that is in our lives not from the perspective of how it will benefit us, but from the perspective of how it will bless other people.

Observe the life of Abram. God blessed him and told him he would use him to bless others. It is the same with us. We will have a hard time, maybe an impossible time, trying to bless others without God's blessing. I might decide that I want to bless you by giving you \$1 million. There would be a problem. I don't have \$1 million. I cannot give you what I do not have. I cannot bless you if I am not blessed. But we have been blessed by God, just as Abram was. Unfortunately we have a tendency to think we're not blessed. The reason for this is we usually have a wrong idea about what it means to be blessed by God.

What does God's blessing look like for a Christian? It is not lots of money, health, success, and all the good things of this life. It is forgiveness, hope, eternal life, God's unconditional love poured out every moment of your life, peace, God's presence with you, strength to endure. When we seek things above, put our hearts on God's kingdom and on spiritual things, we experience the unbounded blessings God is pouring out on us every moment of every day. And these are the blessings that we need most, because all of us are going to have bad days, maybe even long hard stretches in life. We think we want blessings like success, money, approval, acclaim, because we believe those things will give us joy and peace. They are good and they give momentary joy, but joy, peace, meaning, hope and love actually come from God. When we learn to rejoice in God's blessings we will have unlimited resources to bless others.

The great thing is that this is the life of meaning that we long for. At every moment of life we can see it as our purpose to bless those around us. We can seek continually to bring grace, kindness, goodness, peace and affirmation to people, regardless of what kind of people they are and how they treat us. Laurie and I just bought a new sofa. All our furniture in our living room is hand me down ranging from 12 to more than 50 years old. We were excited about getting a new sofa. It was delivered about 10 days ago. It wasn't as wonderful as we hoped, because it had stains on it! We sent it back, and immediately had to start doing battle with the store we bought it from. I assumed they would be aghast and apologetic that they had delivered a defective piece of furniture and would be anxious to make it right. That's what I assumed. I assumed wrongly. We, mainly Laurie, have had to bang heads to get them to fix the problem properly. It seems to be getting resolved, we hope. But as I prepared for this sermon I realized as the battle was raging I got focused on my rights, on them treating us fairly. I didn't think at all about how we

could be a blessing to the people we were dealing with. We weren't ugly with them. It's just that I never thought about it. God has called us to be a blessing in every circumstance.

We have a couple of neighbors who are at war with each other. We had a conversation with one of them this week when we were on a walk. He lives right across the street from his enemy. We've talked to his enemy and have seen the hatred spilling out from him. It is returned in kind. The guy we talked to this week has been told by members of the HOA board just to avoid contact with enemy. How sad. The war began because both of them want what they want, and the other person was in the way. Avoiding each other won't end the war. Having an HOA intervene to mediate disputes won't end the war. What would end the war? If even one of the combatants woke up one day and said, "My purpose in life is to bless people, even that guy across the street. So from now on I am going to seek to do whatever I can to be a blessing to him." It might not end immediately, but it wouldn't take long.

What a powerful, unstoppable way to live. This is what God wants for us. He has blessed us and continues to bless us, and now he sends us into the world to bless others. Nothing can stop us.