Торіс	A New Beginning: Blessings and Curses
Reference	Genesis 9-10
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Speaker	Pastor Leon Lim

Today's sermon is entitled A New Beginning: Blessings and Curses because right after the flood we are here at the start of a new earth. One untainted by the sins that plagued it so badly, we see an important story that if you understand it, that has a remarkable uncanny semblance to the actual beginning in Eden.

We see in the beginning when God the new heavens and new earth. There was waters that covered the entire earth. And here we see the same thing happened. Because of the flood, the waters covered the entire earth. Then we see God created dry land and called it good. Here we see again that Noah found dry land and that is when life started for them again. Then God blessed Adam and Eve and tells them to be fruitful and multiply. Here we see the same thing. When God makes a covenant with Noah and his family, so that they would be fruitful and multiply in Chapter 9. Then the fall happens. At both ends you see Adam and Eve falling into sin. Then here you see Noah and Ham who fell into sin and this of course resulted in the pronouncement of the curses but also the promise and hope and blessings. Then here we are at a point where there is a noteworthy parallel of the promise of the Messiah that will happen in Genesis 3:15 and the act of covering that Seth and Japheth did. This I hope, I will uncover slowly as we get along through this message today.

In order to understand these two chapters, you need to put yourself in the mindset of someone who has been there at that time. And reading this story, you need to understand that their worldview and ours are not the same. You must realize we are not the first intended recipients of the story. This story was written down for the Israelites just before they entered the promise land. This story was also written so that they can bring with them the knowledge of the Word of God into the land of promise. Not only that, it will be the basis to tell them their true purposes as the people of God. So important were these stories that every Jew until today is still required to memorize the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) before they are 12 years old.

It is kind of given that in every story we need a good guy and we need a bad guy. And this story is really about it as you will see in the end. I mean everybody wants the good guys to win. In the early days when we watch movies, it is inconceivable for the bad guy to win. The movie won't sell if the story was about a bad guy wins the day. There is always a protagonist in the story or what we call the hero who will always come to save the day. My favorite protagonist is MacGyver . He would always find a way to save the day. That formula still works till this very day. It's built into us.

Yes, although we see today more movies that show the negative side where bad guy seems to win, like Thanos in the Marvel Movie and that some evil corporation takes over the world and destroys the world and that may stem from a very deep struggle with the reality we see on earth today where evil seems to triumph but don't kid yourself we all want the good guys to win. I mean even Apple wants the good guy to win. Their recent policy was announced that no bad guy in movies can ever use an iphone as their phone. Why? Cause Apple are the GOOD GUYs. And Android.....meh...

We are wired inside so deeply about this good guy and bad guy thing that even my son who is 4 years old believes with all his heart he is the good guy. And the bad guy that is tormenting us now is the Coronavirus. Every night he prays that we will FIGHT this virus and kill this virus so that we all can be safe and that the virus will die and his friends can play with him.



So in the mind of the Jews at this point in reading these stories, there is an antagonist. There is a bad guy and can you guess who that bad guy is. Yes, you are right, the CANAANITES. And in the mind of every Jew they know that they are God's chosen people. They came out of Egypt overcoming one of their former antagonist, the Egyptians. They are now faced with new bad guys, the CANAANITES. Once, they were so afraid of them that they decided not to go into the Promised Land God asked them. So big was this rebellion that God literally brought them through the desert an extra 40 years just to get rid of those who were of that generation.

Going into the promised land later, that mindset won't change. They won't understand God's ways and would constantly label others as enemies. So much so thousands of years later, they would still regard themselves as the promised people and everyone around them as outcasts. Antagonists, these were the Samaritans, the Romans, the Greeks, the Gentiles, but they were the Good guys. The Blessed and the rest of the world curse.

To them GOD IS FOR US and GOD IS AGAINST THE ENEMY. But the remarkable part of this story was God was telling the narrative about who the real protagonist of the story is and who the real antagonist of the story is. Take a guess. I'm going to assume you shouted the answer and you got it right! Yes! God is the Protagonist and the Antagonist is Sin not even Satan. The issue at hand is really about God vs Sin, Holiness Vs Wickedness, Covenant Vs Curse. And what God is demonstrating in this story is that He is Faithful to His Promises. He promised that He will send a savior. One who will rid us of wickedness and the curse. One who is more powerful than our worst enemy. God was Faithful to keep His promises to save us then and is still faithful to keep it now even though we all deserve destruction.

In chapter 6 and 7, we see that it was not God who changed His mind and wanted to destroy us with the flood. The purpose of the story showed that God was a person who hurts just like we do seeing His children do what is not good. He is not a distant God and aloof and does not care what happens to us. He cares so deeply for the purposes and future that we have. He is like Father who watches a kid squander his entire purpose in life even though the Father provided everything for the child to be prosperous and have a future. But like a Father who regrets seeing His prodigal son go wayward. The rest of scripture shows that God keeps running back with mercy towards the child with open arms.

In chapter 6 God again showed unmerited favor to Noah, not because Noah did what was right. Yes, he was better than those of his generation yes, but God's mercy that found Him. It was an UNMERITED FAVOR. Here at the point they have come out of the ark, they are met with a new beginning, one sign by the most beautiful symbols in the world, a rainbow. Then God made a covenant. God says again that His intention is not to destroy us. Gen 9:11 says,

11 I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth."

He never wants to. But He will destroy wickedness, He will destroy sin, He will break the curse and set His people free. The people who would keep His covenant, because that is His Promise. So when we see the rainbow, while it is a sign that remind God that he never destroy us by water again. It is also a reminder that God keeps His promises no matter what. No matter what man tries to do, or Satan tries to scheme, God will keep His promise to save us, redeem us and bring us out of darkness into His marvelous light. Not just us but all creation. Gen 9:17 says this

17 So God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth."

In times like this, I'm hearing so many stories of depression, suicide, because of bankruptcy, loss of income, jobs and more. It is only going to get worse. The economy is already in a recession like we have never seen before. We have yet to feel the full brunt of it, but when the time comes, it is easy to question if God's faithfulness is true. Is

His covenant true? How could this happen to me? The worse feeling comes when you know that you have been faithful to God and yet these things still happen to you or me. But that does not change the fact, God is faithful and the story of Genesis reminds us nothing will stop Him from fulfilling His promise to rescue us.

One of my favorite songs of all time is, It is well with my soul. This song written after traumatic events in Horatio Spafford's life. First the death of his 4-year-old son in the Great Chicago fire, which also ruined his finances and business because of the damage caused by the fire to his properties. Then his business was hit further in the economic downturn that happen a few years in a row, so he sent His family ahead to Europe for a planned travel because he has to settle business issues caused by the fire. As the ship went on its journey, it sank and he received a telegram from his wife '...saved alone'. Four of his daughters perished on that ship that day. Travelling to see his wife, on a journey there he passed by the place where the ship sank and he penned this song as the shipped passed near the area where his daughters died. The words of the first verse goes like this,

When peace like a rive, attendeth my way

When sorrows like sea billows roll. Whatever my lot, you have taught me to know. It is well, it is well with my soul

How can someone who has been stricken with that much tragedy can say I know that I know that I know that it is well with my soul. Because Just like Spafford we know that God's faithfulness comes at the price of His own life. He has taught me to know that if we are found faithful, full of His faith, full of trust in Him in the end, all can be well with our souls.

The following part of the story was not to highlight the sins of Noah and Ham and their unfaithfulness, but to highlight how God is faithful to be our covering. Now let me explain. See Sin has cause a SEPARATION. Not just a vertical separation that separated us from God, but this has also caused a separation horizontally in our relationship with each other. This separation was never God's purpose. Salvation was to mend this separation both vertically and horizontally.

Sin now has caused the separation of Noah and His Family. You see, right after God 'Blesses' Noah with abundance. He uses that abundance to 'Enjoy' himself, but he goes overboard and He sins. What this sin really is, we are not sure but it caused the same thing. When Adam and Eve realized they sinned, they realized they were naked and here Noah ends up naked. The story is not to tell what the sin was, but to tell and draw the parallel for the person who is reading this story to realize that here is the point that sin has happened again and has caused man to be naked. What we see in God, was that God when Adam and Eve sinned, he covered them with skin. Now where does this skin come from? The shedding of blood. This was a stark reminder of Jesus whose would be the sacrifice and covering for our sins. He would cover our sins and his blood will be sacrifice for our recovery. Blood is so important as a sign that God said in Gen 9:4-6

4 "But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it. 5 And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each human being, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of another human being. 6 "Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed;

Here in this next story, it develops the next idea of God's redemption as our covering. In the story we learn that Ham who finds his father naked, saw it then went to tell his brothers about it. Now what actually transpired, no one actually knows. Remember the stories are supposed to be told to children too. So the gory details are probably omitted for a reason. If you read commentaries and scholarship there has been much speculation about the "SIN" that was committed but I think this misses the whole point. The reason of the story was not to tell you the gory details of what happened, what Noah did or what Ham did. The earlier passages spent no time on the gory details of the SINS that man committed that grieved God's heart. The reason for the story was to reveal WHO GOD IS and



what we can learn from the responses of those who went before us. Ham's response was to leave the nakedness. He went one step further by revealing the nakedness to his brothers. This is somewhat like the outcome of the Proverb, whoever covers an offence seeks love but he repeats a mater separates close friends, proverbs 17:9. In this case, it has caused a rift in Noah's family. Ham mirrored what Satan did, he revealed and ridiculed his father's sin. In the eyes of the ancient world dishonoring your parents was a serious matter that commands divine retaliation. It was a contempt against God's order.

His brothers however imitated God by covering the father's nakedness. They honored the Father and did not look at his sins. THEY IMITATED GOD who covered Adam and Eve's nakedness. Now was this equivalent to God's action of covering our sins? No. But it pointed back to the story of the creation to every Jew who reads it. That what God wanted was for us to BECOME HIS IMAGE. To follow His WAYS.

Adam and Eve did not want to follow God's ways. Cain did not. Now Ham by his actions again did not respond the way that God purposed. So Ham's actions put him out of the will of God's covenant and such was part of the 'cursed'.

Sin now causes a split between those who are blessed (in covenant) and those who are cursed, the CANAANITES. Why was Canaan the son of Ham punished for what his father did? This is not how the ancient readers will see it. The lineage in chapter 10 was there to bring a clear picture about the separation between those who are blessed and those who have fall under the curse of sin. Remember in the heads of the Jew. Israel are the Blessed and Canaan are the Cursed. Here, Canaan is used because the name that reminds them of their antagonist, lineage is connected and makes sense to the readers. That's why it was emphasized earlier if you read that Ham was the father of Canaan. To put it into context for the Jewish readers. That from this event of dishonoring the Father, and not following God's ways they have become so corrupt to this very day and that is why God is commanding them to take hold of the land and wipe away SIN. They were supposed to be agents of bringing God's purposes and ways back into the land God decides.

Notice how it wasn't God who blessed or curse on this occasion? I notice how God remain silent all the way to Chapter 12 where He speaks to Abram? The lineage in chapter 10 though ends in Chapter 12 with Abram or we know better as Abraham. Right before that is the story of again man's choices that lead them further away from God's intended blessings, the tower of babel.

Then God intervenes again and bring unmerited favor again to Abraham. the one of which the blessings and inheritance of Israel as they are now comes. This was a story to tell every Jewish child that God chose them to be the blessed. In their minds THEY WERE THE HERO OF THE STORY. When they read a text like Gen 9:26-27,

"Praise be to the LORD, the God of Shem! May Canaan be the slave of Shem. 27 May God extend Japheth's[b] territory; may Japheth live in the tents of Shem, and may Canaan be the slave of Japheth."

In their minds they were thinking that all of Canaan will be under them who have the Abrahamic covenant. Japheth for his actions are also blessed to fall under the blessing and Canaan will be cursed. This story was even more apparent because they are watching an entire generation of older folks who were 'cursed' to die in the wilderness because of not trusting in God's ways. And rejecting God's purpose of them going into the promised land the first-time round. Ingrained into their psyche is that they need to keeps the laws and commandments in order in order not to fallout of God's order.

Such for them they had means to get rid of the sin through the tabernacle and keeping. And such this was so important to them so they can avoid the curse. Rather than seeing how God time and time again gave them grace. Covered them and blessed them by making a covenant with them. With the Revelation of Christ now we know.



That the covering was not our actions but the action of God to die on behalf of our sins. It is not by the means of doing all the rituals or sacrifice. It was by the blood of the perfect lamb Jesus Christ. So choosing to be in covenant is not something we initiate ourselves. It is God initiated and it is God's invitation. He chose to bless us. He chose to cover us and the story of Jesus really is God's way of telling us, I have got you covered.

To illustrate my point, have you watched the movie, 7 pounds by Will Smith. It came out in 2008, quite some time back and this movie was one of the most beautiful depiction of I feel like Christ covering for us. This movie talks about man who knew his life was coming to an end and in seven days he would choose to change the life of seven people. He went onto the find seven deserving people who were critically ill and needed vital organs to survive. At the end of the movie, it begins to reveal that the recipient of the organs started to realize that they were recipient of the organs from the same man and because of what they shared that connection. The movie ends with this emotional moment. Because this man changed their lives.

Our nakedness was supposed to lay us bear with shame and lead us to our death, yet Christ stood naked on the cross to be over covering that gives us life. That is the true meaning of God being our covering. God seeks us out, saves us but unlike the movie, not because we are deserving but even though we are undeserving God covered our nakedness and gave us life.

So how we choose to be in covenant and choose to be blessed? It is important to understand that the point of the story was God was teaching the people that there are two choices/responses we can have.

Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments. - Deut 7:9

The first is to know that who God is. Basically, trust who He says He is. The Israelites failed to believe that He is good. That the promised land that He had installed was good. They saw the Canaanites and they felt afraid. They struggle to see to this very day and believe that he is good. The plan of Jesus Christ they don't believe in it, that Jesus Christ is God and that He became our covering.

The word Faith in the bible does not mean belief. It actually in the root word means more like TRUST. Do you trust in God's story that He will come and save you. He will be your covering for your sins? Do you TRUST that He called you to be blessed? That no amount of sin can keep you from His love. OR Do you trust in what you do to achieve Salvation more than all that He has done for you? Kind of like the Jews, do you trust in your ability to keep the Law is what makes you better than everyone else? That if you follow stringently what you think God has commanded you will be saved?

That is how the Jews saw themselves. You see the story of Israel at this point, they did not seem like the ones that are blessed. They longed to be blessed. In fact they worked very hard at it. They believe that if they were to stringently and ritualistically fulfill God's requirements they will be blessed by God. This is in contrast to the Canaanites who looked like the ones who were blessed. A land flowing with milk and honey. Gigantic size grapes. They had all the blessings in terms of what they world sees blessings as. In fact, they were seems so blessed compared to the Israelites who were nomads fighting to survive.

They were looking to receive the same blessings. And for thought it they followed the law they could fulfill are the requirements not just for salvation but for God to make them a GREAT Nation. One that will be the envy of everyone else. Till today Israel is longing to the glory of the days of David and Solomon. Till this very day, Jews and many Christians place a superior view of the Jews as blessed by God.

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But God's version of being blessed was for them to put their trust in Him. To believe that He knows what is good for them. That He will lead them each step of the way. That He will fulfill his covenant through them and bring salvation to the world. God was faithful to that, He brought salvation through Jesus Christ.

Being Blessed is not fulfilled by what we do. But it is given by the grace and mercy of God. Choosing to trust in Christ in His undying blessing that is given not because of our merit but because He promised to be our covering. Choosing to be blessed is to trust in Jesus Christ.

Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those *who love him and keep his commandments.* – Deut 7:9

The second is, choosing to be blessed is choosing to keep in covenant by imitating Christ. Not fulfilling every law and command. Not by having MORE FAITH. Not by giving more money to God. Not by being more righteous than someone else. The more important point for those who love Him and keep His commandments is **"are we becoming more like Him?"** Are we bearers of Good news through the lives we live, covering the nakedness of Sin in this world bringing God's kingdom into this world?

Over the past two months I can't help by looking at how our nakedness, wickedness and shame have been displayed all over the world. From the xenophobia and racism, the hatred, the blame, the politicking being priority over precious lives. The extreme darkness of death looming over us and the selfish hoarding, all the results of sin. I think the church now is given the mandate to be the agents of change. The ones called not to constantly gripe at and reveal the world's nakedness and sin. Not called to bash other people and pronounce judgment for their sins, although the truth about judgment is important. What we really need is a church that will be there to love the world. To cover the nakedness and shame cause by sin by proclaiming the good news. We need to be actively involved in bringing Christ to the world through the power of the Holy Spirit. To be the extension of the Father's mercy in running out to the prodigals. This is because this is what the Father would do. Leave the 99 for the 1 who needs to be loved.

I think some of you recently got to catch the Trinity BN musical Jesus. I thought it brilliantly painted a beautiful picture about how God intentionally went to save the man tortured by a legion of demons. I never saw that perspective until I saw this musical. The script writer wrote so beautifully about how the Jews in this instances were trying to question how these people, the blind, the poor, the lepers and all were all cursed and question what they did or what sin caused them to be cursed.

The musical was so powerful, and I cried so much because when Jesus said it was not sin that caused them to be cursed. The Jews were trying to reveal their nakedness like Ham. But the story of the gospel tell that these are opportunities for the glory of God to be revealed. That is the story of the gospel. The gospel is an opportunity for the glory of God to be revealed in the lives of those who are lost. This means that we, the church, if we are to follow Christ's example, we are not to see those suffering around us as having a lack of faith or are chained by sin or sinners or gentiles but we should see them as God given opportunities to show how much God loves them. I think we have truly chosen to not just be Blessed but be a blessing. Every blessing poured out upon us as the church of God is not so that we have a beautiful church that we can brag about and tell the world we are blessed. It is so that every blessing we have can be channeled to reflect and declare the love of God to the world.

Jesus said, truly I tell you whatever you did for one of the least of my brothers and sisters, you did for me. Matthew 25:40, here this carefully,

He did not call them outsiders or gentiles or people that did not deserve it or unbelievers or non-Christians. Jesus called them brothers and sisters.



William Barclay relates two legions that illustrate this worse so well. His legends are not necessarily true but in fact they are certainly true in spirit.

We need more Christ like people to live just like as Christ did. But this is not meant to be done by a specific few in church. We all need to follow Christ's footstep and be Christ to a world that is lost, who needs God just like we do. So we are given a sign and God gave us a sign to remember His covenant. What is the sign? Here God gave a sign to the world. A rainbow. I don't think it is too farfetched to say that we are the sign that God has left behind for the world to remember His covenant. Never again to destroy us but to give us hope and a future. We become that sign when we are to be the image of God. That the covenant God made with us is a promise that He will save all creation. And that we are called to be like Him bringing his plan for salvation to the world. The sign reminds us God is on a mission to save the world does not destroy it. We are God's rainbow.

Through the Israelites, God's Chosen Blessed people, salvation was supposed to come to all the earth. Instead they thought that they were an exclusive people that were special and the rest of the world did not deserve God's blessing. They were chosen to be the BODY of CHRIST.

This year is our mission's year. And what has been clear to me is that we have a clear mission and mandate like never before in this season. The Church in the same way have been chosen to be the extension of Christ's work to the world. Being Holy, being chosen, being separate was not a call to be exclusive but to be God's invitation into His covenant. We supposed to be the conduit where people will see what the GOSPEL is. People ask, why does God not show himself visibly now? My answer is HE is showing Himself. Visibly through His church. We are called to be imitators of Christ to the world.

Now in closing, I'm going to share with you a part of me that I've been very afraid to show. You see, I have always believed that I need to decrease and God needs to increase. That I should take no credit for anything. I really want God to receive all the glory. But in doing so. I need to share my story. I have been very afraid of sharing my musical gifts especially in the part of the songs that I write. I get very nervous when I song lead each time, I believe God gifts His church with songs that remind us of His purpose. I never really wrote songs because I felt so unworthy. I still feel that way. So I'm going to share you the second song I wrote for God.

This song came as a miracle to my life. It was a God moment where I prayed that God will give a song for the church I was serving in. We needed a theme song but we couldn't get one, and I said God please write through me. And the words and music for this song just poured out in that moment. Little would I realize how this song would be the thematic prayer and response for my life. That we would be the song that reminds me to Choose to be in covenant with God. My rainbow.

I'm going to share you a little music video of it then I'm going to invite you as a close to sing this song together. I'm doing this making myself vulnerable. Please don't send me any messages thanking me for this, look to Christ. I'm not forcing you to sing this song with me. But I hope this song will be a blessing for you to respond to God this season together with me to choose to be Blessed and to be a blessing, to be more like him.

Church, we are given a chance to give a new beginning to those who have no hope. We have been given a chance of the life time to cover the nakedness of sin that engulfs the world and become the Body of Christ that gives shelter to the homeless, healing to the sick, food and help to the poor, comfort to the neighbor, protection to the weak.

The enemy is not it is not politicians, it is not the person in your office you hate or the boss who is making your life difficult at this time. Not it is also not the virus. It is not like suddenly we are all friends because of a common enemy. No, I don't think we are friends just because we have a common enemy, because the enemy we are talking



about is Sin. And God says that His side (the Blessed) chooses to imitate Christ, to be a COVERING to the nakedness of sin. The imitate Christ and be more like Him.

We are given the opportunity to react in a way that will show what Jesus will do to make this world a better place. To be the people who usher in the fulness of His kingdom. Because we know what God has in store. Goodness, Mercy, Humbleness, Kindness, should follow after us. Then we can truly say we are BLESSED. For we are not constrained or chained to react in anger or fear or worries or selfishness but we are able to look at the situation and be an agent of change, hope, courage, wisdom, understanding.

We are not called to show mercy just to those who are deserving, we are to show mercy indiscriminately like the Father would to a prodigal son who would come back. Who is lost but is now found. Yes I agree this is not an easy thing to do. And we have been bitten so many times that we are shy. But the Father in heaven showed that even though we reject His son over and over again. All the typologies and symbology of His salvation, the ark, the covering, the covenant, the promise. He still takes us just like the song I sang two weeks ago just as we are. Who are we to offer conditions to those He is drawing back to Him in this season of unrest?

What does that mean? Don't pass fake news around? Check, verify, and don't spread things that incite anything that bears the nakedness of sin in the name of being (cautious). Be informed but be shrewd and wise not everyone needs the information you send. Spread the word, truth, and what will bring about a covering to this messiness that clouds our vision. Let us bring an end to the lies that plague us. Ask the question, is the Spirit leading me to pass this message?

We need to set ourselves apart as Holy. In these unprecedented times. We are able to as a family keep ourselves holy unto God like never before. Families are given the opportunity and time to pray and seek God, study His word, worship Him daily like never before. Many of you who I've talked to during this MCO have told be that one of your longing this season is to have a deeper relationship with God. To walk closer with Him. In a blink of an eye 4 weeks has passed. It is time to build up deeper spiritual habits or reading Gods word and meditating on it day and night. Praying and listening to His voice. Spiritual Journaling. Parents it is a great time to spiritually grow your kids in the Lord. I know some of you realize like in this picture. The problem isn't actually the teacher. Now more than every we need parents to reflect Christ at home to show the children how we as the church react in times such as this. Now more than every your children can see how you actually work for God's kingdom. How much you care for others and love your neighbors as yourself. Now more than every we need you to spiritually guide your children now that Sunday school is a distant learning process. You can not leave it to anyone else. You are called to teach them Now more than every we are needed to be Christ to the world. Yes it is not wrong and it is loving our neighbor by staying at home and not spreading the disease. But it calls for more creativity than every for us to reach out to someone in need. Pray for the Spirit to show you those opportunities to show love and pray for the boldness to do it.

Love covers a multitude of Sins. Are we the Church, the Body of Christ covering the nakedness, wickedness and shame of the world as Jesus would. Would you join me in responding and saying I choose to be the Blessed and the Blessing by committing myself to be the image of God? The I would be your rainbow and sign to the world who is lost. The homosexuals has made the rainbow their symbol. But truly this symbol belongs to God and no to the. The world is changing into a new normal. We must never forget the good purposes God had installed for us. This new season reminds us we have a choice to make. I pray today you'll make the choice to be the Body of Christ to be More Like Him.