# The Seed You Receive

## On Sowing in Morning and Evening, and the Words That Carry the Blessing of Abraham

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Rob Massie Sermon Collection, Volume 3: The Upside-Down Kingdom, Chapter 16

Sermon preached November 30, 2025

The thought that jumped out at me from the songs we were singing was this: the seed I receive is the seed I will sow. That ties directly into the encouragement out of Ecclesiastes 11: that we would sow our seed in the morning, and we would sow our seed in the evening, and not consider the wind. That is, not stop to calculate whether it's the right time, but sow. Share what we have received. Give.

This is a vital principle, because anything that receives and does not share ends up forfeiting itself. A seed that is never planted will not grow. An acorn, in principle, will never become an oak unless it is placed in the ground, watered, and given sun and nutrients. Only then can the potentiality of the oak tree be realized.

### Our Calling Is Bigger Than a Sinner's Prayer

When we begin to understand what God has called us to, this becomes the most important thing. I've been touching on it off and on all summer. Hear me carefully: do not get it into your mind that our goal as a people is to go out and get other people to say the sinner's prayer, come into church, and become good Sunday participants. Now, reading your Bible every day is great. Praying is absolutely essential. Going to heaven when you die: wonderful. But that is not what we are called to do. That is not the calling of the people of God.

The people of God are called to take hold of the commission given to Abraham in the beginning, when God said:

"I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing . . . and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:2–3).

That is the full manifestation of who we are called to be. We are those who receive a blessing from God, a word from God, and then become a blessing. The very thing we partake of is called the Word of God.

**Word as Life, Word as Light**

Jesus said, in John 6, that unless we eat his flesh and drink his blood, we have no life in us. And John has already equated life and light: in him was life, and the life was the light of men. So this Word that we are consuming, the Word that was light, the Word that we partake of when we partake of Jesus and his life, that becomes something we begin to live into.

Word is critical. Consider Joel:

"Let the weak say, I am strong" (Joel 3:10).

Do you see the power in the word there? Or in Matthew 18:

"Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 18:18).

And just before that: Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them, gathered to speak, to agree, to declare. There are words being spoken.

We have to remember that the power of Word has the power to shape your world individually. It has the power to shape a church collectively. It has the power to shape nations. It has the power to provide doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, the four works of Scripture in 2 Timothy 3:16.

If the world that was originally formed was formed by the Word (God said, “Let there be,” and there was) what is the potential of the words that come out of our mouths? If those words are blessing, then we carry the power to bless, the power to give growth, the power to deliver light to those who sit in darkness.

That is exactly what was happening with Jesus in Matthew 4. The text says,

“The people which sat in darkness saw great light” (Matthew 4:16).

And what was he doing? He was speaking. Teaching the gospel of the kingdom, saying, “Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” And the people came, and they were healed of all their diseases, and the demons that had possessed them were cast out. Lives that had been bound for decades (centuries, even, of idolatry) were being set right again. They who sat in darkness saw a great light. My God, what a powerful word sits in our mouths.

**Blessing or Cursing: The Weight of the Tongue**

And so James, in chapter three, says, “Do not seek to be a teacher, because you will receive the greater condemnation.” It is the words coming out of our mouths, the blessing or the cursing, that bear that judgment. How is it, brothers and sisters, that we bless God with our mouth and curse our fellow man with the same mouth? Can a cistern bring forth both brackish water and pure water? Can a tree bear two different kinds of fruit?

Let us be the fruit-bearers of Abraham who bring forth blessing. That is what James 3 is calling us to.

Then James asks: Where do wars and fightings and tumults within the community come from? They come from a heart bound up in the idolatry of human systems: human wisdom, a wisdom that, James says, is earthly, sensual, and demonic. When you are driven by those things,

you will produce only the fruit of the earth. A double-minded person will use the methods of the earth and expect the blessings of God. That doesn't work.

This is why the judgment on teachers is so severe. If they come into a community of faith, or if they're mentoring others, and their words are not balanced with love and grace and humility, they wreak havoc.

How do we get out of it? James 4 answers plainly:

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you . . . Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up" (James 4:7, 10).

That is how we get out of it.

**Grace to Ourselves, Grace to Others**

A prayer was offered today asking that God would help us show grace to ourselves. I want to dwell on that for a moment, because the words we sometimes speak to ourselves are words that tear down and destroy. We cannot escape the voice in our own head about who we are.

But if we will get a glimpse of the potentiality that God sees in us, the potentiality he already declared through the promise to Abraham, that you will be a blessing and in your seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed, then all we have to do is live into that new story. Tell yourself the story of God.

The redemptive story of God is a story in which God sets everything right, and is just in all things. People say, "Well, I just got saved. Now what?" You had a moment with God, you believed the gospel message: now what? Is it some magic that has just occurred inside you, that on its own turns the acorn into an oak? Do I now sit down as a passive agent in this whole process God is doing? Or do I stop taking on the word of the world?

The world has wisdom, but it will only produce the things the world can produce. Do we seek God for the wisdom that is from above? Do we seek that kind of word? I want to make sure that what I watch, what I scroll, what I'm feeding myself, feeds into the powerful potential God has created for me. And when I don't do that, as a pastor of this assembly, may God give me the humility to hear the Word from others. That corrective force is what puts me back on track to become exactly what God wants me to become.

## There Is One Truth

Some people are simply convinced, "I gotta be me." How is that working for you? How has that ever worked for any of us? "I gotta be me." "It's my truth." All of these clichés of contemporary culture. My truth, your truth: you live your truth, I'll live my truth. No. There is one truth. There is one light. There is one source of all life and light. When we let that in and take it in, we become something we could never be outside of living into that story.

Tell yourself a different story. I have lived many stories in my day: you can tell by the clothes I wear and the cut of my hair, you can tell the stories I have lived into. We become an amalgamation of all our heroes and all our stories. So the question is: How does your story end? The only story that ends in eternal life is the story God is telling. It is an eternal story. There is a story you can live into in the earth, and it will be what it will be, as good as the earth can produce. And then there is a story we can live into that is the story of the heavens, the one God has started. When we live into that one, we can obtain all the potential.

## The Algorithmic Confirmation of Self

We do not live in a very humble society. Our AI algorithms will confirm our biases, and we will begin to live into the algorithm if we're not careful. Every time I slow down past a certain meme, the algorithm registers it and serves me more of it, and I begin to confirm my own

story. The more I see it, the more I live it. I now have all the computational power of data centers across the world confirming me in my story. The god of this world, now expressed in processors and supercomputers and meshed networks, is working together to confirm you in your story.

You will become destined; you will be unable to get out of the loop. The words that continue to feed you will shape the words you begin to feed others, words that confirm your own story. We will lose the ability and the humility God has asked us to live in. We will lose meekness. We will lose gentleness. We will lose compassion for others, because we now have a story so confirmed that anything outside it must be destroyed. Then we will choose judgment over mercy. We will choose the death of our enemy over the love of our enemies.

This is the world we live in right now. And if you don't know that we are living there, wake up. This is my word from James 4: wake up. Do not allow the powerful moves and pressures and winds of worldly doctrine and culture to drive your mind into a confirmed bias you arrived at the party already holding. We can destroy our brother or our sister over something God does not care one whit about.

## The Way, and How We Walk in It

The eternal things, the wisdom that comes from above, come from God, and he calls us to a life of meekness and gentleness. But meekness does not mean we never say, "This is the way; walk in it." This is the plan, from Abraham to Christ, from Christ through his church, and from his church to the ends of the earth. The Great Commission is to go into all the world, preach the gospel to every creature, and teach them to obey all that he has commanded.

God is calling us to obedience. Obedience does not mean we passively let the world go to hell in a handbasket. We do speak truth. But we speak it with sincerity and with the meekness,

love, and gentleness that the Lamb of God brings to the whole thing. How do we speak truth with a heart of gentleness? My God, help us.

That, according to James 3, is the perfect man:

"If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body" (James 3:2).

Let's navigate that. Let's depend on the Spirit of the Lord: what John calls the Spirit of truth, and what Luke shows us anointing the mouth to speak words that glorify God. When we begin to bless God, and to bless our neighbor made in the image of God, that is a powerful force.

**What It Looks Like, Monday Through Saturday**

What does it look like? It looks like showing up every day to work. It looks like waking your children up, making them breakfast, getting them off to school. It looks like husbands coming home to their wives at night. It shows up on the jobsite, when you're working on a project, and there's angst and anxiety, and people are fighting, and there are differences of opinion. How do you bring the blessing God has given you? The seed you have received, that you will sow, how do you produce what God has blessed you with?

It is through the Word. And that word is spoken in love, in mercy, in humility, and with an ear that listens for words spoken to you that will be corrective.

I could go on and on. This is the great theme: speaking and listening. I started the summer on this: committed, Spirit-filled speaking and listening. We need to be listeners, with humble hearts and meekness, receiving with meekness the engrafted Word of God (James 1:21). If we are always blocking and parrying and defending our position, then God can never get in. Receive. And then, whatever you have received (if you don't know yet, and it doesn't sound dangerous) put it on the shelf.

**Babylon, or Blessing**

We live in a society in danger of creating not just two sides, but as many sides as there are people. The threat to human thriving is that we would become separated from one another, and that is Babylon. That is Genesis 10 and 11: the scattering of the nations, the estrangement of humanity from one another.

But God has called us to be like Abraham in Genesis 12:

"In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:3; 22:18).

I'm going to bless you: be a blessing. I cannot underscore it enough. We need to get out of ourselves. We need to figure out how to be a blessing to one another. We need to know how to receive, and to listen, and then to speak with grace and humility and gentleness. That is how this thing gets corrected.

Let me close by summarizing it this way. For the last several weeks I have not been able to fully work through James, and I'm not going to finish it here either. But I beg you to saturate yourself in James 3 and 4, because they are all about the words we can speak: how they are for life, or for death. And I am saying, as children of God, as heirs according to the promise of Abraham: speak blessing.