

## PENTECOST: IN FAITH WE RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

**Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 14)**

**August 12, 2007**

**Genesis 15:1-6**

**Psalm 33:12-22**

**Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16**

**Luke 12:32-40**

### **God Bless Us, Everyone!**

“The LORD blesses each nation that worships only him. He blesses his chosen ones.”

Psalm 33:12, *CEV*

Although many nations do not share our ideologies, the world is watching every move that the United States of America makes. We are, to their way of thinking, a symbol of what democracy ought (or ought not) to look like. We wield such a sphere of influence that we are loved and hated in the very same breath.

Here at home, our First Amendment rights give rise to critiques and criticisms of the very “truths” we hold to be self-evident. Our citizens are plagued with fear as anti-terrorism strategies are stepped up in an effort to keep us safe. Meanwhile, our leaders contemplate our military might and muscle. Yet, amid our growing concerns, this week’s readings remind us that, as a nation, what truly matters is our relationship with God.

The psalmist says: “Mighty armies alone cannot win wars for a king;  
great strength by itself cannot keep a soldier safe.  
In war the strength of a horse cannot be trusted  
to take you to safety.  
But the LORD watches over all who honor him  
and trust his kindness.  
He protects them from death and starvation.  
(Psalm 33:16-19, *CEV*)

The LORD watches over all who honor him... God demands our obedience and our faithfulness. Abraham, the patriarch, bared his soul before God as he asked for a son in his old age. God promised him not just a son, but that he would make him the father of many nations. Incredible as it seemed “Abram believed the LORD, so the LORD was pleased with him and accepted him” (Genesis 15:6, *CEV*).

Abraham was inducted into the biblical Hall of Fame because he trusted God’s promise, was obedient and found favor with God (Hebrews 11:8-12). It is our faith in God and his promises that helps us overcome the difficulties in life. It is also our faith that allows us

to look at what the world deems impossible with eyes filled with undaunted possibility for “faith makes us sure of what we hope for and gives us proof of what we cannot see” (Hebrews 11:1, *CEV*).

Our relationship with God matters! Individually and collectively, God wants to bless us as we yield ourselves to his teachings. “I will live with these people and walk among them. I will be their God, and they will be my people” (2 Corinthians 6:16b, *CEV*), says God. And because we know that God is faithful to the promises he makes (Numbers 23:19), we can be assured of his divine protection.

We live in perilous times, and now, more than ever, we need to re-examine our relationship with God and seek his blessing. Like the psalmist we, too, can pray:

We depend on you, LORD, to help and protect us.  
You make our hearts glad because we trust you,  
the only God.  
Be kind and bless us!  
We depend on you.  
(Psalm 33:20-22, *CEV*)

Even now, Lord, bless us, everyone!

This week’s Reflection was prepared by Dorette Saunders, who serves on the staff of the American Bible Society as Senior Editor in the Education Unit of the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship.

+ + +

**This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: Namibia** – With thanks to God for the HIV/AIDS prevention project and for the Khoekhoegowab literacy program, and with prayers for the Khoekhoegowab New Testament project, the mobile Bible shop, and for Namibia’s president, a man of deep faith; **Botswana** – With prayers for the publication of the Ikalanga New Testament, currently being revised, and for the resumption of work on the Ikalanga Old Testament, and for fundraising efforts, including the annual Bible dinner; **Zimbabwe** – With prayers for partnerships forged to address issues such as HIV/AIDS and for the launch and distribution of the Chikunda New Testament, the revised Ndaou Bible, and the Shona Common Language Bible, and for God’s intervention in the face of unprecedented inflation.

**Activity Corner:** “A Time of Blessing”

Supplies needed: Bibles, hymnals.

Gather members of your household for a time of devotion. Read Psalm 33 from a contemporary translation. Read verses alternately among people; for example between males and females or between children and adults. Sing a hymn such as “Bless the Lord, O My Soul” or “Majesty, Worship His Majesty” or any other praise song that speaks about the lordship of God. Encourage each one to pray another, asking God to bless that person and that he/she, in turn, would be a blessing to someone else. Conclude your devotional time by reciting Revelation 4:11 in unison.

