Blessed Surprises

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“Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us.”

~Ephesians 3:20 NASB

Have you ever surprised yourself?

I’m frequently surprised by my daughters, whether it’s their wit, their silliness, or their beauty. They are a great gift and a surprise to my life, encouraging me to recognize the ways that God blesses me, “far more abundantly,” than I could even imagine.

But there have also been moments - much less frequent - wherein I am surprised at what happens in my life - through my life. On more than one occasion, while teaching, I’ve been asked a very interesting question and begun answering as best I could, only to find the words coming together in subtle and beautiful ways that I’d never actually considered before. Those surprises are also gifts.

When we recognize God’s work within us, it can be a blessed surprise. It could also be a temptation to pride - but that’s not what I’m talking about. I’m talking about how we cooperate with God’s work in our lives to accomplish something beautiful and surprising and, “beyond all that we ask.” And I am coming to appreciate the importance of recognizing and acknowledging those moments more and more.

This year is the 175th Anniversary of the American Baptist Churches in Wisconsin. As we look forward to our Annual Gathering and Celebration in October, I want to encourage you to reflect on the ways that God has surprised you - even and especially in yourself and your church. What are the ways that God has done something beautiful and surprising through you?

It is important that we acknowledge and recognize those gifts. And at moments of celebration, I believe it is even more important that we share those stories with one another. Even though our circumstances and stories will be very different, we will be able to appreciate those surprises, celebrating the shared, “power that works within us.”