



The Rev. Alan Sutherland, Rector

June 15, 2008

Proper 6A  
Father's Day  
By Reverend Donna Barr

At the conclusion of Christian worship services, we follow the ancient practice of ending with a benediction. With hand raised, the minister or priest often uses the words from Numbers Chapter 6, our reading from the Daily Office this morning.

"The Lord bless you and keep you;

The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;

The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace."

In a book filled with "numbers", we find this beautiful gem of scripture, which has been called "the Lord's Prayer of the Old Testament." It is a benediction, a blessing which was to be spoken by the priests during the worship in the Temple. For us today, the word "bless" is sometimes a rather empty term used of prayers before meals or a wish after a sneeze. But there are many kinds of blessings. One story I heard about blessings goes like this.

A Catholic priest, a Rabbi and an Episcopalian were discussing when the blessing of life began. And the Catholic priest said, "It begins at conception;" the Rabbi said, "The blessing of life begins at birth," and the Episcopalian said, "The blessing of life begins when your children leave home."

Thankfully, in Scripture a "blessing" is a promise of God's abundant protection, that all of life would prosper under the watchful care of God. The word "benediction" comes from Latin, meaning "to say something good." It is not a concluding prayer, but a statement of divine approval, pronounced on behalf of God by His servant to the people of God. It is not just a mere expression of pious hope; it is not a magical incantation to seek God's support. It is a pronouncement, a statement of fact based on what God has already promised. The blessing found in Numbers has been part of church liturgy since before Acts. With its beginnings during the time of the Exodus, it continued on through the period of the Temple, during the synagogue worship.

Today is Father's Day. How appropriate that we should read in scripture the very words that for hundreds of years Jewish fathers have blessed their children with, when they returned home from the synagogue on Friday

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

*Established in 1847*

210 North Main Street Versailles, KY 40383 859.873.3481 [info@stjohnsky.com](mailto:info@stjohnsky.com) [www.stjohnsky.com](http://www.stjohnsky.com)



The Rev. Alan Sutherland, Rector

June 15, 2008

night. I believe that one of the most healing events in a person's life is to receive the "blessing of the father", to know that you are loved, accepted and found worthy. God's own word to his son was "beloved."

Many of us spend a life time seeking that blessing or feeling the emptiness and sadness that comes when one has not received it. If we have not received the blessing from our biological father it is sometimes harder to accept the blessing from God. Then some of us have had the gift of, not only a Heavenly Father, but a Heavenly Dad who has blessed us with his presence, calling us his beloved and marked us as Christ's own forever.

One such father bravely blessed his son with his presence and love. He had a young son who was very ill. After the boy had undergone an exhaustive series of tests, the father was told the shocking news that his nine year old son had a terminal illness. The youngster had accepted Christ as his Savior, but he wondered how he could tell his young son that he soon would die.

After a long time of praying, he went with a heavy heart to the boy's bedside. First, he read a passage of Scripture and had a time of prayer with his son. Then he gently told him that the doctors could promise him only a few more days to live. "Are you afraid to meet Jesus, my boy?" asked his father. Blinking away a few tears, the little fellow said bravely, "No, not if He's like you, Dad!"

Fathers are very important in God's plan for the family. They have a wonderful opportunity to encourage, to teach, to counsel, and to model the Christian life for their children. The most important job for fathers, found in Deuteronomy, is to teach your children to always love and obey God. By establishing the disciplines of worship, prayer, and Bible study in your own life, you'll be prepared to integrate these into teachable moments with your children.

Chaplain Richard Halverson of the United States Senate told the story of a time when the subject of prayer in schools came up just before a Senator was to give a speech to several hundred men at a church's annual men's dinner. In response to the Senator's question about how many of the church men believed in prayer in the public schools, nearly every man present raised his hand in the affirmative. Then the Senator asked, "How many of you pray daily with your own children in your home?" This time, only a few hands were raised. **The power of a father's blessing cannot be overestimated.** That is your privilege as a father in Christ.

The benediction, we read today doesn't depend on us. This blessing does not say that God "May" bless us only if we're on our best behavior. This blessing doesn't just happen if God feels like it: "God may bless and keep you today, or He might get around to it tomorrow." Rather this promise is stated as fact, for as we bear God's name we know that we receive what He has promised.

To our wonderful fathers here at St. John's.....In our secular world, your children are supposed to honor you today....presents and cards.....hugs and kisses. May I suggest to you that the greatest gift you may receive

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

*Established in 1847*

210 North Main Street Versailles, KY 40383 859.873.3481 [info@stjohnsky.com](mailto:info@stjohnsky.com) [www.stjohnsky.com](http://www.stjohnsky.com)



The Rev. Alan Sutherland, Rector

June 15, 2008

today might come from you, by giving a blessing to each of your beloved children. No matter their age or your relationship to them.....bless them. Call them, write them, or speak to them personally. God will give you the words....all you heavenly Dads.

And God Bless you all! Amen

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

*Established in 1847*

*210 North Main Street Versailles, KY 40383 859.873.3481 [info@stjohnsky.com](mailto:info@stjohnsky.com) [www.stjohnsky.com](http://www.stjohnsky.com)*