

Sermon Note: Benediction

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Introduction

We are nearing the conclusion of our Worship with Rejoicing series. As we come to the end of a worship service, we often hear the words of benediction—a sending forth, a blessing. But what does it mean to be blessed as we go back into the world? The passage from 1 Kings today recounts the transition of leadership from King David to Solomon, a pivotal moment where wisdom, guidance, and blessing were deeply sought. Solomon’s request for wisdom is not just a personal plea but an invitation for God’s continual presence and guidance in the lives of the people.

Illustration Videos

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OFuX5TbmXzY>

In the 2003 film, *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*, Aragorn is crowned king and offers words of blessing to his people.

Video Discussion Questions

1. How does Aragorn’s coronation scene reflect the weight of leadership and the need for wisdom?
2. What parallels do you see between Aragorn’s blessing of his people and the concept of benediction in our faith?
3. How does the idea of transition, whether in leadership or personal life, challenge our reliance on God’s guidance?
4. Solomon asked for wisdom instead of wealth or long life. What does this teach us about the priorities we should hold in our own prayers?
5. What role does community play in discerning wisdom and living out God’s guidance?
6. In what ways can we view our daily interactions as opportunities to extend a benediction—a blessing—to others?
7. How does the concept of benediction reshape your understanding of your purpose beyond the walls of the church?

2 Kings 2:10-12, 3:3-14 (NRSVue)

¹⁰Then David slept with his ancestors and was buried in the city of David. ¹¹The time that David reigned over Israel was forty years; he reigned seven years in Hebron and thirty-three years in Jerusalem. ¹²So Solomon sat on the throne of his father David, and his kingdom was firmly established.

³Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of his father David, except that he sacrificed and offered incense at the high places. ⁴The king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the principal high place; Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. ⁵At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, “Ask what I should give you.” ⁶And Solomon said, “You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you, and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love and have given him a son to sit on his throne today. ⁷And now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of

my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. ⁸And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. ⁹Give your servant, therefore, an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil, for who can govern this great people of yours?”

¹⁰It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. ¹¹God said to him, “Because you have asked this and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or for the life of your enemies but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, ¹²I now do according to your word. Indeed, I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you, and no one like you shall arise after you. ¹³I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor all your life; no other king shall compare with you. ¹⁴If you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your life.”

Scripture Discussion Questions

1. Where did God appear to Solomon?
2. What did God say to Solomon, and what did Solomon say?
3. How does Solomon’s response reflect his character and priorities?
4. If you were in Solomon’s position, what would you have asked for, and why? How can we apply Solomon’s example to our decision-making processes today?
5. What is the significance of Solomon’s blessing from God in 1 Kings 3:13-14? How does it serve as a form of benediction for his reign?
6. Rev. Dr. Derek Weber writes: “In some way, the benediction is our weekly answer to God’s command, ‘Ask what I should give you.’ In the benediction, we dare to join as a community to ask for God’s blessing. Not just understanding or help. Blessing. And more specifically, a blessing that extends the work we rehearse in worship into our daily lives... because when we ask God for blessing, we are participating in an ongoing conversation and work of grace with God and one another. Will our benediction extend or resist the work of grace in our communal life together?” What does “a blessing that extends the work we rehearse in worship into our daily lives” look like? How will “your benediction extend or resist the work of grace in our communal life together?”

Weekly Action

As you go through this week, consider the areas in your life where you seek guidance and wisdom. Take a moment each day to pray for God’s wisdom in those areas. Reflect on how you can be a blessing to others, offering encouragement, support, and love as you interact with them. As a very practical addition to this, consider crafting a personal benediction. Start with gratitude, seek God’s guidance, request strength and protection, ask for compassion and love, and end with a blessing. If you choose to do this, share with a trusted family member, friend, or spiritual companion.

Prayer

Gracious and loving God, we thank you for Solomon’s example and his humble request for wisdom. Guide us as we seek your wisdom in our own lives, helping us to make decisions that honor you. May we continually grow in understanding and be inspired to apply your teachings daily. As we go forth, may your blessings be upon us, guiding us in all we do. Amen.