

Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – April 30, 2020

The Lord be with you.

Do you ever wonder why I begin every one of these conversations with the Lord be with you?

Well, I do it because that is the Bible's way of blessing someone, I don't say those words as I wish as a prayer, but I say the words as a blessing, a declaration of God's purpose, God's desire to bless you. The Lord be with you was how believers did it in ancient Israel as they would bless one another. It would go like this one person would say The Lord be with you, and the other would respond the Lord bless you. Check it out in the Book of Ruth 2:4 where Boaz greets Ruth with the words the Lord be with you and Ruth answers back, the Lord bless you. And those words, those blessings set in motion the little Ruth becoming the great grandmother of King David, and Ruth, included in the family tree of Messiah.

Big things can happen as we bless. Now, in case you ever wonder if it is really God's will, God's purpose to bless you. I turn to Numbers Chapter Six is here we are in the wilderness with Israel as Israelites have just left Sinai, and they are journey on and in spite of themselves, and in spite of hardness of heart God purposes to bless them.

Here it is, I'm looking at numbers chapter 6 verse 22, the Lord spoke to Moses saying, speak to Aaron and his sons saying thus you shall bless the Israelites, 'you shall say to them, The Lord bless you and keep you the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you, the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace. Now in ancient Israel, the sons of Aaron were the priest who were the go-between standing between God and His people, they represented the people to God, and represented God to the people, they spoke for God, and here, God is commanding the priest who speak for him, by pronouncing words of blessing over his people.

And so after the morning sacrifice a priest would go and stand before the people, he would raise his hands and he would speak words of blessing. And the words of this blessing. They originate with God. They're not positive thinking, they're not speaking self-affirmations, but these words are declaring what God wants to do for his people, how he wants to bless them, and in this blessing, it is significant that each time the word you is used, it's the Hebrew word for you in this singular The Lord bless you in particular and you and you and you and you. He's not blessing the entire crowd, but he's making sure that each and every person is blessed that's the idea.

And then after pronouncing the words, of blessing in Verse 27, "The Lord declares... So, They shall put my name on the Israelites.

That's a fascinating because in the Bible a name means something, it doesn't mean here in the modern West, as in the Bible the name expresses the essence of a person, the name expresses who the person essentially is, and in the Bible and name stands for a lot

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more than a label or tag it stands for the totality of the person.

Take just for one instance, Moses at the burning bush. He asked God His name, He is asking God what is his essence, His very nature is being... So you could take what the name of God means and you look at verse 27, when he says, So they shall put my name on the Israelites. As the words of blessing are pronounced over the people, the Lord is putting his name on them. That means that they get to go about wearing God's name they wear the very character the very essence and all of the promises of God. It's all wrapped up in the words of this blessing. So, they shall put my name on the Israelites and I will bless them. I will do for them what I declared that I want to do.

And what this means, were you and me in the new covenant that we receive God's blessing into our hearts, into our very being. The blessing is ours. Now, Paul in Ephesians 1:3 says God has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. So God is not saying in this blessing, as I sometimes hear preachers say, God is not saying... Well, I'll bless you if you get your act together.

It says The Lord bless you and keep you. And you and I today, we are living in that blessing and we let that permeate into our very being, it means that we get to go about our day knowing that we are blessed.

That's what Abraham did, that's what David did. They went at life, knowing that they were blessed by God. And this is how faith works, God speaks His blessing and we live into it. Now when we come to the New Testament, there's something else exciting that happens as it is no longer, the sons of Aaron who are the priests but it's you and me. It's Christians who are believer priests. Listen to 1 Peter 2:9, writing to Christians. "But you are a chosen a chosen race a royal priesthood. We're the ones who get to bless. I turn over the page to 1 Peter 3:9, and I see that as members of Christ's royal priesthood, it says we are to bless and it says that we are to bless others to bless even those who speak the against us, and this gives us a whole new way of looking at other people... We have received and our receiving God's blessing and we get to pass on that blessing to others -

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We wouldn't necessarily say those exact words, but we can be God's blessing to others because God is pouring His blessing into us.

I grope for words here, but in Ruth chapter 2, when Boaz said to Ruth, the Lord be with you, and Ruth answered The Lord bless you... Those words of blessing set in motion events that changed salvation history. And again today and I close today with words of blessing with a pronouncement of God's eternal purpose, to bless you... the Lord be with you.

I am Tim Smith, a fellow traveler on the pilgrim road.

Thanks for listening, until next time...

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