

## THE BLESSING

Genesis 48: 8-14 and Matthew 3: 17 June 16, 2013 –Father’s Day/ New Members/ Graduation  
The Church of the Covenant

I remember coming home and announcing to my parents that I felt called to go into ministry. It was almost exactly 30 plus years ago. My Dad woke up the next morning and his hair had turned completely white! He went grey overnight. But I also remember him, after a time of thinking about it, coming into the kitchen one night and saying that he thought “this ministry thing”, as he referred to it, was OK. I was able to begin seminary and ministry with my Father’s blessing. It was “The Blessing”. It was the passing of blessing from Father to son, from Mother to daughter, from parent to child. I think every person needs to receive that blessing in their life. On this Father’s Day I am urging us all to pass on the blessing.

Our Old Testament lesson from Genesis 48 is the passing along of a blessing from grandfather to two grandsons. Joseph brings his two sons to his father, Israel, for the blessing. First, Joseph says of them, *“They are my sons, whom God has given me here.” (Genesis 48: 8)* First, Joseph identifies with them; they are “MY sons”. And then he admits what every parent knows, “They are my sons WHOM GOD HAS GIVEN ME”. Children are a gift and a miracle from God; they are ours and they are not ours; they are ours and they are also God’s children. Israel notes that he had thought he would never see his own son, Joseph, again, let alone Joseph’s sons. It is a gift of grace to see a child grow up and become a fine young man or woman for God. So Israel is about to lay his hands upon two grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh. The Blessing is words of affirmation spoken while laying hands on someone. Then ensues the fact that Israel chooses to bless the younger with his right hand; Ephraim gets the best blessing and Manasseh gets the secondary blessing –Ephraim goes on to great success, of all the tribes of Israel it is the richest and most successful. It is a story of blessings given and blessings withheld. How did Manasseh feel when his younger brother received the blessing he should have received? How does a son or daughter feel when they do not receive a blessing from their parent? And is it just coincidence that Ephraim goes on to become wonderfully successful, knowing that his grandfather Israel reserved the most special blessing for him? The Blessing passed from parent to child, or not, may have a great deal to do with that child’s future life...

Of course, another Old Testament blessing story is that between Jacob and Esau in Genesis 27. Jacob tricks his Father, Isaac, to give him the blessing reserved for the first born son, Esau. And Isaac blesses Jacob and speaks these words over him –*“May God give you the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth...let peoples serve you and nations bow down to you, be Lord over your brothers...Cursed be everyone who curses you and blessed be everyone who blesses you!” (Genesis 27: 28-29)* The offspring of Esau became the Arabs and the offspring of Jacob became the Jewish people and many people often note that the enmity between these two groups of people go back thousands of years to this time of blessings given and blessings withheld. I always remember this story because in seminary I was in a class where we were given a Bible text and sent out of the room and had 5 minutes to prepare a brief talk on the passage. Every now and then they would pick a funny or particularly difficult text just to see how you’d handle it. When my time came I opened up the folded piece of paper to discover my text was Genesis 27:11 –*“Behold, Esau my brother was an hairy man.”* Just try to talk about that for 5 minutes! So I was wracking my brain trying to remember the 25 cent word for hairy and then it dawned on me; the word is “hirsute”; Esau was hirsute and Jacob was not. Got an “A” for the exercise, and many laughs along the way.

And “The Blessing” is not just saying words of blessing over a child and it is not just laying hands of blessing on a child, it is also passing along one’s spiritual giftedness to one’s child. There is the passing

of the prophetic mantle from Elijah the prophet to his son in the Lord, Elisha, the next prophet in Israel. Elijah takes his mantle, the cloth signifying his prophetic powers, from his own shoulders, and places it on Elisha. There is a blessing and a transfer, if you will, of the spiritual prowess of the spiritual Father to the spiritual son. Elisha wisely asks only that: *“Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit.”* (2 Kings 2: 9) and that is what is passed from Elijah to Elisha. So to recap—the blessing is the passing of the mantle of the spirit from Father to Son, through the laying on of hands and the speaking out loud of blessing upon the life of the child. Obviously, this passing of the mantle of blessing happens not just between Fathers and sons, but also Mothers and their daughters, and parents and their children. It passes from mentors to mentorees; from one generation to another; from former pastor to new pastor; from old boss to new boss. The blessing empowers the son to do greater works even than the father; it is bold words of acceptance and support from one generation to the next; it is the prayer that the very core values that live in the heart and soul of the parent are passed on to their child. It is the passing of the baton, if you will, from this generation to the next, and in such a way that emboldens the next generation to do even greater things for God.

We see this again in the New Testament at Jesus’ baptism. Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River and in the act of baptism it is as if God, His Father, lays hands on Him to convey spiritual authority and power upon His only begotten Son. The dove descends. The Spirit descends from heaven and alights upon Him. The Spirit goes from heavenly Father to Jesus, the Son of God. Then a voice from heaven speaks. And the voice speaks words of blessing. The words are these: *“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”* (Matthew 3: 17) These are the words of blessing spoken over Jesus the Son by God the Father. And these are the perfect words of blessing needing to be spoken by Fathers and Mothers over their children: **“This is my beloved SON...this is my beloved daughter...this is my beloved child...in whom I am well pleased.”** Oh, how our sons and our daughters yearn to hear these words spoken over them! Oh, how the next generation desires to hear this generation speak these words to their heart! Oh, how we need to speak words of blessing to those around us that they might hear from us—IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED!!!! GIVE the blessing; do not WITHHOLD the BLESSING.

When I was young my Mother must have read some article about how young people were trying to “find themselves”; to go out and have multiple experiences in order to discover who they were. She came to me and very strongly said to me: “Stuart, you do not need to go out and find yourself. If anyone ever asks you who you are, just tell them that you are a child of God!” Our identity in Christ is as a child of God. Who we are is a child of a loving, merciful heavenly Father. We’re not defined by our past or our present; we’re defined by our heavenly Father. We don’t need to go out somewhere to discover who we are; we are made in God’s image and precious and beloved in His sight; we are a child of God. We don’t have to worry about our acceptance or our place in the world; in Christ, through Jesus, we ARE a Child of the living God. We don’t have to worry about being rejected or measuring up to some impossibly high standard; no, the blessing has already been given to us through Jesus; we are sons and daughters by adoption. When God says to Jesus: *“This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”*, Jesus is saying that about us. Hear your full and final acceptance, hear the words spoken over you by our heavenly Father; hear the blessing spoken through the life, death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ—THESE ARE MY BELOVED CHILDREN IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED!!!!!! On this Father’s Day I just say thank you to my Dad, who gave me his blessing; may I receive a double portion of his spirit and may I be a credit to him and all his wonderful heart-held values passing now into me.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant  
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*