

GO AHEAD- ASK FOR THE BLESSING EPHESIANS 3:20-21

HEART OF THE MATTER - A WORD FROM KEN

Some words just sound like church. Words like *benediction*. *Doxology*. *Blessing*. Or how about *Amen*? You can just see the stain glass; the cold concrete archways reaching in grand symmetry for the ceiling; the Roman columns; the glossy stone floors; the hardwood benches. You can hear the echo of your footsteps. You involuntarily hush up the children. “*Shhhh!*” You prohibit them from running.

It’s *church*, you explain.

When these pious sounding words make their way into some kind of civic event, there’s an aura of religiosity. You spot them in the bulletin or hear them in baritone over the PA system. “The benediction will be offered by the Reverend...” and so on. “Shall we all rise for the Doxology?” How did religion get so formal? So distant?

The Irish love to give blessings. My personal favorite goes something like this:

May the road rise up to meet you.

May the wind always be at your back.

*May the sun shine warm upon your face,
and rains fall soft upon your fields.*

*And until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of His hand.*¹

We come to the end of the first half of Paul’s letter to the Ephesian church. Our writer offers a blessing. Most commentators call the final two verses a “benediction” or “doxology.” The literal Latin meaning of the first simply means “to speak well.” The second “a word of praise.” In more modern terms, Paul is making a toast.

Here is **the heart of the matter**. At the end of the prayer, Paul holds up the God who is the author of every spiritual blessing; he is the One who is able. Paul is in touch with the height and the depth and the width and the length of Christ’s love. This God is the One who is capable of more than we could ask or even imagine.

This past Christmas season, we spent time with people we love. These are people we don’t see often enough. So when we said good-bye, there were hugs and words of encouragement and blessing. There may even have been tears. It was a send-off. A fare-well. We wished them every blessing. Safety. God’s protection and care.

And we pray. Why? We are entrusting the people we love to God’s care and keeping.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

AUTHENTIC INTERACTION · COMPELLING CONNECTION · IRRESISTIBLE EXPERIENCE
LOVING ACCEPTANCE · EVANGELISTIC INFLUENCE

Jesus told us to ask. That’s what Paul did. What happened? This little group of believers in Ephesus changed the world. Generation after generation, including ours, have discovered this letter and these words. None of the results are confined to a building we may call “church.”

It is a fitting word well spoken (benediction) and brings glory to God (doxology). So may it ever be (amen). Ask – and you will receive, Jesus declared.

¹Traditional

BACKGROUND - - It’s our church’s vision. It’s what we value the most. We are hungry to know God. To experience more of his love. To understand the power of his grace. To become more and more like Jesus. To become the praise of his glory. It’s beyond our ability to imagine. And that’s the point.

Read Ephesians 3:20-21

Think it over...

1. Let’s take it a phrase at a time – “Now unto him who is able.” To whom does Paul speak and what do we learn about him in this phrase?
2. “...to do immeasurably more...” How does this phrase compare to the description of the love of Christ in vs. 18 and 19?
3. God operates on two levels: 1) our requests and 2) what we can imagine. Talk about each.
4. According to what does God work? (focus on the phrase “at work within us”)
5. Where does he pray the glory will be manifest?
6. For how long?

Bring it home...

1. What does this passage tell you about the extent of God’s interest in your life?
2. Is it possible to be satisfied that we have exhausted our knowledge of God? Our experience of God?
3. What keeps us from asking God for blessing?
4. Why is it important for a parent to “bless” a child? (compare Matthew 7:7-11)
5. Can you share the experience of the powerful work of God within you?
6. What does it look like when the church displays the glory of God?

SHARE. SUPPORT. AFFIRM. PRAY.