

Numbers 6:24-26

February 12, 2017

“Benediction – chock-full of rich content”

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

6th Sunday af. Epiphany

Rev. Brent Hartwig

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God, our Heavenly Father, and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ.

[Introduction]

As the end of worship nears, do you ever lose your focus?

Do you find one distraction or another interrupts your meditation?

Do your thoughts ever turn to plans for the rest of the afternoon?

Maybe the family meal preparation occupies your attention.

Perhaps, the scheduled tip-off time of the afternoon game enters your mind.

Obviously, you don’t want to miss out when that good dessert is offered.

And you don’t want to miss your favorite team

driving down court to score at the end of a good game.

But – before all of that – don’t miss the good word at the end of worship.

From the Invocation to the Benediction

our Divine Service is, and I am going to use a technical term here,

chock-full of rich content. “It’s good to the last drop!”

[Benediction]

Benediction comes from Latin and means “good word.”

The very good news about the “good word”

is that God’s people live continually under His Benediction.

Our minds may be crowded with thoughts about many things,

and our lives may be overwhelmed with much to do.

Nevertheless, the good word about God and from God

remains ours at all times.

The rich significance of the Benediction, within worship,

is the sure and certain promise of the Triune God’s continuing blessing,

His abiding grace, and His enduring peace in our lives

long after the liturgy is completed.

The most common Benediction used within the Divine Service is the Aaronic Blessing drawn from Numbers 6:24-26:

²⁴ *The Lord bless you and keep you;*
²⁵ *the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;*
²⁶ *the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.*

These words are neither a mere wish nor a simple pastoral prayer.

Rather, they convey the confident assurance of God's blessing upon His people.

Here, words of fact and faith intersect in our lives.

“When they pronounce my name over the Israelites,”

God said to Moses regarding Aaron and his sons, “I will bless them.”

The same blessing given by God to His people of old is extended to us today.

We are blessed!

For God's Word is performative.

It does what it says. What it says it actually does.

With our hands out to receive.... in expectation for what our good God is giving...

With the pastor's pronouncement of the Lord's name,

and with the parting good word spoken over us,

we leave with gladness at God's guaranteed goodness.

[*Three-fold*]

²⁴ *The Lord bless you and keep you;*
²⁵ *the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;*
²⁶ *the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.*

The threefold structure of the Benediction reminds us of our three-in-one God.

It is the Trinity who works His blessing in our lives.

The Father, our Creator, is also our provider.

The God who “has given me my body and soul”

also “blesses and keeps” us

by providing all that we “need to support this body and life.”

The Son, as He “makes His face shine upon us,”

shows the Father's gracious disposition toward us.

In Jesus' face we see the loving countenance of God.

Of course, upon the cross His face contorted as He writhed in pain
– our Lord redeemed us “not with gold or silver,
but with His holy, precious blood and innocent suffering and death.”

Now, after the resurrection and in His ascended glory,
the face of Christ shines with the promise that we will
“live under Him in His Kingdom and serve Him in
everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness.”

The Holy Spirit

– the one to whom Jesus referred as “the Comforter”
– is alone able to “give us peace.”

Apart from the Spirit’s work through means of grace we remain distant, detached
from God and unaware of His love.

We are unable to grasp the gifts of God by our “own reason or strength.”
But, the Holy Spirit calls us by the Gospel and brings us a peace
that is beyond all understanding.

Blessed and kept with all that we need,
saved from sin and death by grace,
comforted and assured with peace that the world cannot give
– the Christian worshipper is privileged each Divine Service
to hear this good word from the Holy Trinity.

The Benediction is *chock-full of rich content. “It’s good to the last drop!”*

[The Sign]

²⁴ *The Lord bless you and keep you;*
²⁵ *the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;*
²⁶ *the Lord lift up his countenance upon you ...*

It is at that point I make the sign of the cross. And Oh! What a sign it is!
The sign of the cross is God’s peace sign to us.

On the cross,
Jesus died to remove the guilt of our sins and reconcile us to the Father.

The Benediction offers us a meaningful reminder that in Christ we have peace!

Appropriately, the final word of the Benediction that accompanies the sign of the cross is “peace.” Peace – particularly the Lord’s peace – is certainly a good word!

At the end of the Divine Service, you are super-saturated with God’s peace.
That is because the Divine Service

is *chock-full of rich content*. “*It’s good to the last drop!*”

We begin with the Invocation reminding us of our Baptism,
reminding us whose we are.

We confess our sin and receive forgiveness for all
that would separate us from God to rob us of His peace.

In the Kyrie, we say, “In peace let us pray to the Lord.”

The pastor reminds you of God’s “Grace, mercy, and peace” in the sermon.

We share the peace of Christ with each other through a handshake of peace.

We bid the Pax Domini – the “Peace of the Lord” – to one another.

We call upon the Lamb of God to grant us peace in the Agnus Dei.

We ask the Lord to let us depart in peace in the Nunc Dimittis.

Finally, with the Benediction,

we look in confidence to the Lord to give us His peace always.

[*Conclusion*]

The same good gift of peace that God gives to comfort us as we live under His Benediction is ours to give to others.

Hearers and believers of the good word

become sharers of the good word once the Benediction is spoken.

So go...

Go and spread the Word. You are leaving here, and you are entering the Mission field.

Go and enjoy a good Sunday noon meal – especially the dessert!

I hope your favorite game is on this afternoon, and may your team win.

But, Sunday – and everyday – live in celebration of God’s Benediction.

Live in the good word of grace, mercy, and peace

meant to touch every moment of your life.

The Benediction is *chock-full of rich content*. “*It’s good to the last drop!*” Amen.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, ...

to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations,

for ever and ever! AMEN!