

The Blessing

Luke 3:19-38

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Summary: Written history has recorded many blessings. Blessings from father to son, blessings attributed to people from various gods. But in the Bible, God gives one particular blessing that is not only recorded in history but sets the stage for history. What words did God give to Jesus as He commissioned His Son for His earthly ministry? How did these words carry Jesus through the next years? Join Stephen today and explore the meaning of God's most powerful blessing.

I subscribe to the magazine, "Israel my Glory," produced by the Friends of Israel ministry. The magazine features the exposition of scriptural passages, news items related to the Middle East and interesting articles on history and culture.

A couple years ago, I clipped one particular article and it came to mind this past week. It's entitled, "Who Doesn't Want a Blessing?" The author opened his article by referring to Mr. Spock, from the television series, Star Trek. Spock, played by Leonard Nimoy, is a Vulcan from another planet. Among other things, Spock would become known for his Vulcan Salute—as he greeted people—blessing them with the words, "live long and prosper."

When he gave that greeting, essentially a blessing, he would hold up his right hand and part his fingers to form the letter V.

But that gesture did not originate with him. You see, Leonard Nimoy was Jewish, and as a child, he attended the synagogue where he saw the rabbis use this same gesture with both their hands.

The rabbi would divide his fingers, which was intended to resemble the Hebrew letter "shin," symbolizing the Hebrew word for "Shaddai," meaning "Almighty God." The rabbis would hold out their hands in this manner and pronounce the blessing on the congregation.

Often, fathers would use the same symbol as they raised their hands over their children as the Sabbath began on Friday evening and pronounce a blessing on them.

When Leonard Nimoy was asked by the producers to come up with a unique Vulcan greeting, he literally reached back into his Jewish heritage and copied this gesture, and the rest is television history.

Evidently, William Shatner couldn't quite get it right, so they had to tie his fingers with fishing wire whenever he returned the blessing!

To this day, we may not hold our hands up with fingers divided, but we use the word *blessing* for a number of things, like when we say a blessing over our meal.

The word *blessing* can also mean “gift” or “present.” When people say, “You have been a blessing to me,” they are saying you have given them something of value—perhaps the gift of encouragement or the gift of time or service.

Originally, a blessing was something spoken, originating in Numbers chapter 6 where Moses said, “The Lord bless you and keep you—make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you ... and give you peace.”



Is there a blessing that you have received, maybe during your childhood, that you still remember? What were those words, and what did they mean to you? What do they still mean to you today?

This article went on to encourage the reader to become to others a blessing more often and to not hold back in speaking words of blessing.

Adapted from, Steve Herzig, “Who Doesn’t Want a Blessing?” (Israel My Glory, January/February 2019), p. 10

Without any doubt, one of the most significant blessings—the gift of words—revealed in scripture is about to occur in the life of Jesus.

In fact, it presents a model for every parent to speak to their children, their spouses, their parents; it’s a model for believers in general to do the same with each other.

This blessing takes place in **Luke’s Gospel, chapter 3.**

Now if you have been with us over the past few weeks, John the Baptizer has been preaching to the crowds that have come out to the Jordan to hear him.

And those who are willing to identify with his message have waded out into the Jordan River to be immersed by the prophet John as a sign of obedience and cleansing.

Now Luke interrupts this scene by telling us about something that will happen in the near future. Let’s pick our study back up at **chapter 3 and verse 19**, where we left off.

But Herod the tetrarch, who had been reproved by him (John) for Herodias, his brother’s wife, and for all the evil things that Herod

had done, added this to them all, that he locked up John in prison.

Luke 3:19-20

I don't want to spend much time here because we will deal more with John's imprisonment and death when we get to Luke chapter 7.

But for now, John is thrown into prison by Herod Antipas, one of the sons of Herod the Great. And just like his father, he was immoral and wicked; he had begun an affair with his brother's wife, who also happened to be his niece—so Herod is guilty of incest and adultery.

Instead of doing what so many religious leaders in our day do when they get invited into the halls of power and effectively baptize political leaders into the faith, John delivers to Herod the truth of his sin and it lands him in jail.

Now with that brief comment, Luke abruptly returns to the current scene at hand out at the Jordan River.

Notice verse 21:

Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened.

Luke 3:21

Something visible happens and, in a moment, something audible will happen.

But first let's ask and answer a key question: why was Jesus baptized by the prophet John, since He certainly didn't have any sin to repent of?

There were several reasons.

Jesus was baptized to respect the command of God the Father.

Jesus Himself will tell us through Matthew's Gospel that He was baptized, **"to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15).**

In other words, God commanded John to baptize people, and those who wanted to be right with God identified with John's requirement, and so Jesus did too.

John MacArthur, [Luke: Volume 1](#) (Moody Publishers, 2009), p. 237

The country was moving out here by the hundreds; this was an unprecedented movement towards God and Jesus essentially joined the movement.

William Barclay, [The Gospel of Luke](#) (Westminster Press, 1975), p. 37

He was identifying with the truth of the Old Testament prophet's message.

Jesus was baptized to be recognized for who He was.

John will introduce Jesus here as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

John the Baptist will also say here that he is bearing witness that Jesus is the Son of God (John 1:34).

You have to understand—people have no idea about Jesus. Jesus isn't walking

around with a nametag that says, “I am the Messiah.”

In fact, he’s not even showing up here at the River Jordan with a halo around his head and angels singing in the background.

He looks like any other peasant, carpenter, stone mason.

Through the centuries, the church romanticized this baptism scene, and that is why classic paintings typically show Jesus having this intimate moment alone with John.

But here in verse 21, Luke makes it clear that Jesus is being baptized along with all the other people.

In other words, Jesus is standing in line—a long line of people—waiting to be baptized.

Charles R. Swindoll, [New Testament Insights: Luke](#) (Zondervan, 2012), p. 91

Dr. Bookman, one of our New Testament professors at Shepherd’s Seminary, told me recently that he likes to think of this event, not as Jesus’s first public act of ministry, but the last act of His private, ordinary, common life among the people.

Keep in mind that Luke makes it clear—it isn’t until after Jesus is baptized that anything unusual occurs.

The next reason for Jesus’ baptism is when it becomes unusual.

Jesus was baptized to receive the blessing from His Father.

Back up to verse 21 again:

Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove.

Luke 3:21-22a

In other words, the manner of the Spirit’s descent was like the way a dove glides or floats gracefully through air.

Darrell L. Bock, [Baker Exegetical Commentary: Luke, Volume 1](#) (Baker Academic, 1995), p. 338

Now I know this will ruin a lot of bumper stickers and coffee mugs, but the Holy Spirit didn’t take the form of a dove; what Luke says here is that whatever the bodily form the Holy Spirit took—and Luke doesn’t tell us what that was—descended like a dove descends through the air in flight.

Now back to verse 22:

And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased.”

Luke 2:22b

This voice was heard by everyone, by the way. When God speaks, the Bible typically describes it as a clap of thunder (2 Samuel 22 and Psalm 29; Job writes, “Keep listening to the thunder of his voice and the rumbling that comes from his mouth” (Job 37:2).).

The booming voice of God the Father is now heard from heaven. I would have loved to have been there to see and hear this take place.

And by the way, this event happens to be a wonderful expression of the triune God—the trinity; you have God the Father speaking from Heaven; God the Holy Spirit descending like a dove and God the Son dripping wet here, praying.

Now what we need to do is remember Jesus was not only God the Son, but he was also still fully human.

He had grown up and grown into the understanding of who He was. He had been guided by the Holy Spirit all along the way.

He had learned the scriptures at home, from Joseph and Mary as they implemented the passion of Deuteronomy chapter 6—to model and teach the word of God.

Jesus would also have been instructed in the local synagogue; in fact, he would have been tutored as all the young Jewish boys were, in their local rabbinical school where the rabbi's taught them the word.

Just a few years ago, a synagogue was discovered and excavated in the small town of Magdala, and in the front of the synagogue was a classroom, used to teach children the scriptures in what would have been similar to our schools today.

Keep in mind that Jesus wasn't born with BibleGateway or Logos software hardwired into His mind.

Our last glimpse of Jesus was at the age of 12, asking difficult and discerning questions of the religious leaders; and then, overnight, here is Jesus, at the age of 30, having spent his entire life—into his early adulthood years—in obscurity.

One of the problems we have is that as we attempt to protect the deity of Jesus as fully God, which He is, but we overlook and underestimate what it meant for Jesus to be fully human, touched with the feelings of our infirmities (Hebrews 4:15); acquainted with grief; experienced in sorrow and affliction (Isaiah 53:3).

Jesus didn't just taste humanity, He was human.

And in our well-meaning attempt to protect His full divinity, we miss the incredible joy that would have swept over Him here as He heard the blessing from God His Father.

These words were an incredible gift to Him from His Father.

I'd like to point out at least three elements here is the blessing of Jesus.

The element of acceptance.

*“You are my beloved Son,
with you I am well pleased.”*

Luke 3:22

“You are mine, right now—you are!”

Not, “You will be mine in a special way and I will publicly claim you as mine after you do some miracles, or graduate from college and get a good job—then I’ll claim you.”

No—before Jesus barely put away his carpentry tools and washed His calloused hands or brushed up a rather ordinary resume—*right now, you are my Son.*



Why is unconditional acceptance so important to a relationship between a father and a son? How do you demonstrate acceptance with your family on a daily basis?

What a great gift of words to speak to our own children, and even one another in the body of Christ! We belong to the same family, not because we have done something great, or because we avoided doing something wrong, but because we are related. I will claim you, in Christ.

How many children grow up with this sense that they have to earn this element of acceptance; that they never do get their parents approval?

What a model for us dads, especially, as we bless our wives and children with words of acceptance.

The element of love.

“You are my beloved Son.”

Luke 3:22

“I love you.” He didn’t need to say this, did He? I mean, Jesus at this point will be well aware of His deity and His calling and His origin and His perfect relationship with God the Father, but God the Father still said it!

You may think, “my children know I love them. I’m sure they know I love them.” Do you ever tell them?

You may think, “my wife knows I love her, I told her on Valentine’s day, at least once a year.” Well, good for you.

God the Father didn’t need to take up air space to say this to Jesus. But He said it because He was delivering this blessing, and how sweet this was to Jesus.

The element of encouragement

*“You are my beloved Son,
with you I am well pleased.”*

Luke 3:22

This is most likely a reference to the prophecy of Isaiah 42, where the Messiah is described as suffering and dying. This phrase comes—nearly word for word—from Isaiah’s prophecy and this is related to the messianic mission of Jesus.

Jesus is essentially accepting His commission; you could call this His ordination into full-time ministry here. His private life is ending, now His public ministry is about to begin.

And God the Father here, in human terms, is cheering on His Son, encouraging His Son.

And again, you would think that Jesus doesn't need to be encouraged—He doesn't need to be patted on the back—but He is.

We tend to forget that Jesus will depend throughout His life on the same spiritual resources that we depend on:

- He will depend on his Father to meet His needs—which is why He often thanks His Father for food (Luke 22);
- He will depend on the Holy Spirit to guide Him and lead Him, like we do (Luke 4);
- He will depend on the Father to sustain Him in difficult and painful times, like we do (Luke 22);
- He will depend on the Father to give Him the words to speak, like we do (John 8:27);
- He will even make the statement that without God the Father, He will not be able to do anything—just like we can't; Jesus will say in **John 5:30, "By myself I can do nothing."**

In other words, as fully man, Jesus models for us what it means to depend on God the Father and God the Spirit for *everything*:

We also depend on God for our needs and our food and our guidance and our

strength in difficult times and our words to speak—just like Jesus.

In a very real sense, beloved, I want you to hear God the Father cheering you on as well.

The blessing belongs to you.



When you apply the words of this blessing to yourself, what does it mean to you? How do you feel accepted, loved, and encouraged by God through these words?

Luke drops in here the genealogy of Jesus, appropriately, to prove Jesus' lineage through David.

Luke gives the family tree here through Mary. **Verse 23** mentions that Joseph is the son of Heli, or Eli. This was Mary's father. Joseph was his son-in-law and it's not unusual to leave out the woman's name in a genealogy and refer to the son-in-law as a son.

The genealogy tracks all the way back through David, all the way back to Adam, who was the son of God—crafted by God without any human origin.

And Luke tracks all the way back to Adam to emphasize that Jesus was truly a member of Adam's race—the human race.

With this, Jesus now stands on the threshold of His public ministry. His private life is over, His carpentry vocation is set aside, and He now prepares to enter the wilderness of temptation.

But He will head into the wilderness with the words ringing in His ears: “***You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased.***”

Acceptance; love; encouragement.

When was the last time you passed along words like those to your spouse, your children, your parents, your grandchildren, your great-grandchildren, your brothers and sisters in Christ?

The truth is: everybody needs a blessing—everybody.

And we know that because Jesus, even Jesus—a perfect human being—needed to hear it too.

And if He needed it, so do you, and so do I.

Let me close by giving you the blessing from the Apostle Paul, who delivered this to the congregation in Corinth:

*Now may the grace of the
Lord Jesus Christ*

And the love of God

*And the fellowship of the
Holy Spirit*

Be with you all, amen.

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