

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

To Moses God gave the benediction Aaron was to use to bless His people. It is a Trinitarian blessing, a blessing which placed the Name of the only True God, the Triune God upon them. By speaking it upon Israel Aaron's Words brought the blessing to God's people. The blessing of the benediction was that God would keep them. He would keep them safe. He would keep them as His.

He would keep them before Him and guard them. He would keep them as His people, even when they strayed. His face would shine upon them, as He bestowed His boundless grace upon them. He would look favorably upon them, preferring them to all other people on earth, and granting them peace, a rarity in this violent world.

But a quick look at the history of the political and ethnic nation of Israel reveals very little peace. God's promise still stands. It was not the political or ethnic nation that was blessed. It was the faithful, the Invisible Church, inside of that political nation, those who held the faith of Abraham, those who believed God, the true Israel. It was the Kingdom of God inside of the visible nation of Israel that was blessed.

But a new and better Aaron, a new and better Moses, not a new Law giver, but One who brought forgiveness and freedom and healing and life and salvation, the One promised from of old, a Savior, would come to deliver the true people of God.

So St. Luke records the Incarnate Son of God, the Prophet, Priest and King, standing before the multitudes and blessing them. He brought a blessing that neither Moses nor Aaron could bring, for He brought with Him a New and better Testament, the Testament in His Blood that delivers the blessings the Prophets and priests of old could only foretell.

The Words of our Lord as recorded by St. Luke that you heard this morning are Words spoken in His great "Sermon on the Plain". After a night of unceasing prayer to God the Father, God the Son stood on a level place with a crowd of His disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear Him and be healed of their diseases.

But the multitude was greater even than that. The Evangelist records that there were also those who were tormented with unclean spirits. And they were healed. And then, in what is certainly among the greatest miracles of our Lord, St. Luke records that the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for power went out from Him - and healed them all. They were broken, sinful, dying men. He is Divine, holy, sinless, and perfect.

So where Christ is, there is the New Creation. Where Christ is, all things are being made new. Where Christ is the promised new heavens and new earth are begun. In the new heavens and the new earth there is no sickness, no death, no suffering, no despair, no doubt. So simply touching the Christ, men were healed and received new health. Men were converted and received new lives, eternal lives, lives that could not be taken away.

Just to touch the hem of His cloak brought healing and restoration. And soon that restoration will bring the fruition of the new creation, the new heavens and the new earth. That is our Christian hope. We pray each day for His Coming in Glory, the Parousia, the Day when our Lord comes to judge the quick and the dead, the day on which consuming fire returns this earth and heavens to the base elements created in God's first speaking, and from those elements everything is made new.

And you, O Baptized, you, O Redeemed of Christ, you who are scandalized by your sins and seek a Savior, you who repent of your sins and desire to live according to the will of God, you, O sinner declared to be a saint by the Blood of Christ, the new heavens and the new earth are for you. For in you, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the new creation is begun.

More than just healing the crowds, in the midst of the multitude, the Lord lifted up His eyes towards His disciples, and He taught them. He taught them what it means to be received into His Kingdom, the Kingdom of God. He began with a blessing: "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God."

Then He spoke curses: "Woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation." The Words must have seemed very strange to the Twelve, for according to the fallen world what our Lord taught was upside down and backwards. But the Kingdom of God is not like the kingdoms of men. Our Lord spoke of the new life He gives in His Kingdom, of an eternal Truth, of a new reality.

"Be merciful." "Judge not." "Condemn not." "Forgive." "Give." What He commands is not what fallen men do. These blessed attitudes and actions flow only from faith, saving faith, faith in Jesus Christ, faith that marks the citizens of the Kingdom of God, faith that qualifies you to be part of the new creation.

That faith comes to you as God's promise through Moses and Aaron is made yours. For in Holy Baptism does the called and ordained servant of Christ, the steward of God's Mysteries, put God's Holy Name upon His children. And in that washing of regeneration, God truly blesses you.

For you with faith in Christ, this fallen world is a hostile place. So the Apostle writes that our present sufferings are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed. Our fallenness is a great part of those sufferings. So the Apostle bids you to trust in God's Promise. He bids you trust in the new creation, as that glory is revealed in you, when you are revealed to be a child of God.

So the creation is subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope. With those Words God bids you look through this bitter little hour, trusting in His Promise, and by faith seeing the coming of the new creation.

God the Father has been merciful to you. His Word is full of promises and blessings for you who have His Name, for you who believe in Him, for you who receive His forgiveness and extend it to others, for you who show the mercy you have received to those around you, for you

who see not by faulty eyes blocked by the planks of your own transgressions, but clearly by faith; faith illuminated by the Light of Christ.

And this day, in His mercy, the God who gave Moses and Aaron His blessing to declare upon His children places His Body with bread and His Blood with wine. He bids you, His baptized child, to take and eat, take and drink. By the Holy Eucharist He blesses and keeps you, He is gracious to you, and He gives you His peace.

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