

Between the Pastor and the Pot Roast

ben-e-dic-tion (*ben'ú dik'shun*) n. [ME. *benediccioun* < L. *benedictio* < *benedicere*, to speak well of, in ML.(Ec.), to hallow, bless, < *bene*, well + *dicere*, to speak] **1.** a blessing **2.** an invocation of divine blessing, esp. at the end of a religious service **3.** blessedness.

THE SERMON HAS BEEN DELIVERED. The invitation has been given and the final hymn sung. We are all standing with Bibles and purses in hand and a growling emptiness in the pit of our stomachs. And we all know what comes next. The Pastor lifts his hand and utters one from a handful of familiar passages—perhaps this Sunday the most familiar of all: “The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you...”

And if you're like me, you probably didn't hear a word of it; your mind was elsewhere. Maybe on one of the pastor's sermon points; maybe on those who came forward today (or on those who didn't); maybe on the pot roast that will soon be filling that emptiness in your belly; maybe on that important Monday meeting. Maybe you just figured that you had heard that same passage so many times before—indeed, could recite it from memory—there was no point in paying attention this time.

A benediction is usually a verse or group of verses found in Scripture that calls down God's blessings. There's nothing about a benediction that says it must be invoked at the end of a worship service; in fact, many of the benedictions in the New Testa-

ment will be found at the beginning, as well as the end of an epistle. But we have established the tradition (when benedictions are used at all) of sandwiching it between the pastor and the pot roast.

The word benediction is not in the Bible; it is a more modern word that could be said to mean a “good word.” Some of our favorite benedictions aren’t. For example, Jude 24-25 is more a *doxology* than a benediction, since it is upward praise:

To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

But isn’t it a lovely way to end a worship service!

Benedictions are not just platitudes for pleasantly ending a Sunday service. They contain powerful truths—gems to clutch in our hands as we meditate throughout the week on our God and Savior.



**“The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine upon you,
And be gracious to you;
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you peace.”**

Numbers 6:24-26

May God forgive me for adding to His holy word, but I see this benediction as a confirmation of His love for us. As I read these verses, I find myself inserting the word “will” before every verb:

The Lord *will* bless you and *will* keep you; The Lord *will* make His face shine upon you, And He *will* be gracious to you; The Lord *will* lift up His countenance upon you, And He *will* give you peace.



Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Hebrews 13:20-21

Sometimes, in the face of a rude and disbelieving culture, our faith in God may flag. And without even voicing the words, our prayers weaken; we begin to doubt the Lord’s ability to answer our needs. This benediction is a reminder that the God who raises the dead can certainly answer your every prayer.

Looking at them, Jesus said, “With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God.”

Mark 10:27



The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

2 Corinthians 13:14

How reassuring it is to know that every member of the Trinity is working in concert to give of Themselves for our well-being.