

“Blessings Through the Day: Celebrating God’s Presence in Each Moment”

A sermon by Pastor Steve Easterday-McPadden
for First UMC, Grand Junction, Sunday, July 5, 2020

This sermon can be listened to on the FUMCGJ
website: www.fumcgj.org/sermons-2/

Scripture Text: Matt. 6:11; Psalm 113:2-4 [NRSV]

OPENING - The Basics of Celtic Spirituality

[Source: Trevor Miller of the Northumbria Community.

<https://www.northumbriacommunity.org/articles/celtic-spirituality-a-beginners-guide/>]

(*Some preliminary comments about my excitement for this series for several years and my relative ignorance, if fascination with and sense of connection to the subject. So, what I will be sharing with you over the course of the next 7 weeks, I am discovering *with you* as we journey together in worship *AND* through a weekly small group invitation that I’ll be sharing with you later in the sermon.*)

“... the heart of Celtic spirituality...[is] simply living the life, following the Way, travelling the journey in the everyday ordinariness of life –

- the pain and the pleasure,
- the heartaches and the hopes,
- the disappointment and the dreams.”

This holistic underpinning is reflected in the resistance of Celtic Spirituality to separating the sacred and the secular, the spiritual and the physical.

Rather, all of life is seen as sacred, revelatory of the presence of God in all things.

Historical Grounding

“[In ancient times,] the Celtic peoples and languages were...found in much of Europe including Brittany, Gaul and the British Isles. Then, following the invasion of the Anglo-Saxons [ca. AD sixth century], the Celtic people were largely pushed to the western extremes [of the Roman Empire] settling in Cornwall, Wales, Cumbria, SW Scotland, Isle of Man, and the whole of Ireland.

“So, from the earliest times almost all of Britain and Ireland was, culturally at least, Celtic. So...the word ‘Celtic’ covers a whole culture which included pagan and pre-Christian elements, as well as the so-called Celtic church.

“...The Roman church was unsure how to respond to these people as they were

- relational rather than rational,
- inspirational rather than institutional.

“Ireland (unlike Britain and Gaul) was untouched by the Roman Empire, thus it was from Ireland that Celtic spirituality had its roots and passion and expansion.”

Hence the modern-day association of Celtic Spirituality with Ireland. But, it is more accurate to think of its roots as being in what we would call today the UK *and* Ireland.



SERMON THOUGHTS

I. The Heart of Celtic Spirituality: Spiritual Practices

[Source: U.S. Catholic. <https://www.uscatholic.org/articles/201905/12-celtic-spiritual-practices-celebrate-god-our-world-31727>]

These are rich and varied, and we will be considering them in greater detail in the coming segments of this series. For today, we're going to consider just one, which: *Blessing each moment in the day*. This explains today's sermon title, "Blessings Through the Day: Celebrating God's Presence in Each Moment".

Let me share with you a little bit about what *U.S. Catholic* says about this spiritual practice:

Blessing each moment

"In the Celtic tradition, one of the practices that aids in loving attention to daily life is blessing.

"Blessings are prayers celebrating the ordinary tasks of the day. There is a beautiful book of Scottish blessings called the *Carmina Gadelica* (*6 volumes!!*), collected by Andrew Carmichael in the 19th century in Scotland's Outer Hebrides [islands off the west coast of Scotland]. It is filled with blessings of the day's unfolding.

"Blessing is an act of acknowledging the gifts and graces already present and offering gratitude to God for them. All the mundane activities of the day are opportunities to witness grace at work."

But this Celtic spiritual practice is more than just the focus for today's message; "Blessing" is the focus of this whole 7-week series.

II. Beth Richardson and *Christ Beside Me, Christ Within Me*

(*Describe this book by Beth Richardson and share the list of poems for the first movement, "Through the Day" (from today's sermon title), from the Table of Contents.*)

(*Read the poem, "A Blessing for the Morning"*)

Going back to *U.S. Catholic*:

In daily life

"We can begin to see the everyday things of our lives as openings into the depths of the world. The steam rising from my coffee, the bird singing from a tree branch outside my window, the doorbell announcing a friend's arrival, the meal that nourishes my body for service all bring me closer to God's grace."

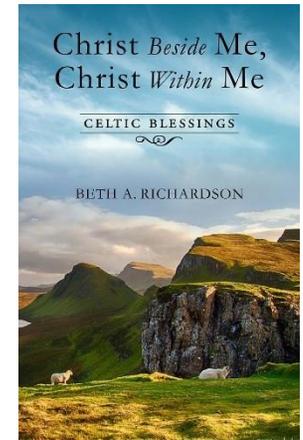
Scripture meditation

God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth."

—Genesis 9:12–13

Practical suggestion:

"Consider writing a blessing of gratitude for each of the ordinary things that sustain you during the day."



TO THE SCRIPTURES

Now, you should be able to see the connection to the Scriptures for today, beginning with the opening verses from Psalm 113

*Psalm 113:2 Blessed be the name of the Lord
from this time on and forevermore.*

*³ From the rising of the sun to its setting
the name of the Lord is to be praised.*

*⁴ The Lord is high above all nations,
and his glory above the heavens.*

Now we can appreciate more fully the simple text that started our readings this morning, Matt. 6:11

Matt. 6:11 Give us this day our daily bread.

Today, may we experience the celebration of Holy Communion as “the Blessing of blessings”.

TRANSITION TO COMMUNION

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(Same mtg, two different times)
- July 14 – August 18
- Book available at Cokesbury, Barnes & Noble, Amazon, etc. (about \$10)
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Send e-mail to Ashley Goldthwaite:
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