



Pastor Mike's Bookshelf

The Lord Bless You & Keep You: The Promise of the Gospel in the Aaronic Blessing

By Michael J. Glodo

Most of our worship services conclude with the familiar words of the Aaronic Blessing as the benediction: *"The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace."* In this book Michael Glodo unpacks these words and invites us to hear them in their original context, as well as the echoes of them throughout the Old and New Testament. In this way, he invites us to consider the depth and richness of this take-for-granted blessing, and instead treasure it as the gift from God that it is.

Any time we speak of God, we are speaking analogically or metaphorically. Since God is spirit, it is only in a derived sense that we can speak of God's "face" and that with it He "looks" upon us. But these images, along with that face "shining," appear frequently in the Scriptures. For God's face to shine upon you is to be visited by His grace and favor. On the contrary, for Him to remove His face from you, to turn His face away, is the most severe of judgments. Glodo provides rather exhaustive examples of this in His book.

But ultimately, where he is going in this study is to show how the grace of this blessing is seen and given most abundantly in Jesus through the Gospel. In Him, all that would lead the Lord to turn His face away has been forgiven. Instead, the gracious face of the Lord shines on us through the work of Jesus on our behalf. What then should be on our minds when a pastor pronounces these words over the congregation? How should we receive them? What is being given and received?

As a Lutheran, I would have taken a different approach in the chapter, "The Aaronic Blessing and Worship." Glodo writes that we are to think of God as being the audience of worship and we ourselves as the actors. He writes this to counteract trends in worship toward entertainment, and the notion that the leaders are performing for the congregation as audience. He is quite right to point to the faults of thinking of worship in this way. But actually, I think a Lutheran approach to worship better supports his main point about the Aaronic Blessing. God is not just the audience, but also the actor. God is present to shower His blessings upon us as we gather. He does through His Word and Sacrament, delivering the goods of salvation. The Aaronic Blessing is the final way in which God

serves us in worship, placing His name and grace upon us one more time as we set off to embrace our vocations in the world.

I recommend this book if you would like to get behind and into these familiar words and to be led into thinking more deeply about words that sometimes just roll right by us. There is a copy of this book, along with most of the previously recommended books on the Church Library cart in the Narthex, available for checking out. Previous recommendations can be found here: <https://stjohnslutheran.net/pastor-mikes-bookshelf/>