September - Blessing

The drop-off liturgy begins two blocks from my daughter’s school as I make the turn onto 22nd street. In between navigating other parents pulling into and out of the drop-off lane, kids crossing the street, and double checking to make sure my daughter has all of her gear for the day, I speak these words, “May the LORD bless you and keep you. May the LORD make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the LORD lift up His countenance upon you and set upon you peace. May you be kind and strong and brave today, loving others, showing compassion and mercy.”

I can’t remember if my wife and I intentionally set out to make these words part of our daily drop off rhythm or not, but years in now, I can’t imagine us doing it any other way. In the midst of changing daycares, schools, and teachers, this daily liturgy has remained constant. These are the words that I want my children to remember as they cross the threshold of the doors into the school hallway. In some ways, I want these words to be the ones they remember at all of life’s thresholds - when they experience a relational rupture with a friend, achieve something meaningful to them, welcome a new experience in their life, encounter God in an unexpected way, or come to a place of great confusion and grief. My hope is that these words of blessing are an anchor for my children. It is not because “have a good day” is a bad thing to say. Rather, the language of blessing is an invitation to consider the influential role that words play in shaping our hearts and lives.

John O’Donohue beautifully writes, “A blessing is not a sentiment or a question; it is a gracious invocation where the human heart pleads with the divine heart. There is nothing more intimate in a life than the secret under-territory where it anchors.”

I think there is something really powerful happening when we bless our children - that it is more than wishful thinking, but a deep pleading with God to be who God promises to be and how God promises to be in relationship to our children. Speaking a blessing is to align our hearts in fellowship with God whose “only desire is to bless” as Henri Nouwen observes. It is an act of deep love, drawing from the spring of God’s salvation. Those that are blessed and are loved by God are invited to act in a corresponding way - to bless and love the world. May you be empowered this year with increasing confidence and depth of insight to bless your children.

Questions for Reflection:
How do you want to bless your child[ren] this year?
Is there a blessing in Scripture that is meaningful to you that you can speak over your child[ren]?
Are there daily rhythms or times within the day that invite blessing?
