



GAELIC BLESSINGS FROM OUR SCOTTISH FATHERS



- Columba
- Will Wallace (Braveheart) and Robert the Bruce
- John Knox
- Charles Edward Louis Phillippe Casimir Stewart

Scripture:

Ecclesiasticus 48:22-49.3

Ecclesiasticus (also known as Sirach) is part of the Deuterocanonical collection of scriptures that appears in Pre-Reformation collections of Hebrew Texts.

Three Reformers

Hezekiah

²²For Hezekiah did what was pleasing to the Lord, and he kept firmly to the ways of his ancestor David, as he was commanded by the prophet Isaiah who was great and trustworthy in his visions.

Isaiah

²³In Isaiah's days the sun went backwards, and he prolonged the life of the king.

²⁴By his dauntless spirit he saw the future, and comforted the mourners in Zion.

²⁵He revealed what was to occur to the end of time and the hidden things before they happened.

Josiah

⁴⁹The name of Josiah is like blended incense prepared by the skill of the perfumer; his memory is as sweet as honey to every mouth, and like music at a banquet of wine.

²He did what was right by reforming the people, and removing the wicked abominations.

³He kept his heart fixed on the Lord; in lawless times he made godliness prevail.



SCOTTISH EXPORTS

I have had Scotland on my mind lately. I have had a Scottish song that I can't get out of my head. And there is a story about the earliest roots of Christianity in Scotland that I have been itching to tell you. So today's the day.

How many of you have seen Braveheart – the story of William Wallace and Robert the Bruce? Rob Roy? Sherlock Holmes and Scotland Yard? Are there those who benefit from products that originate in Scotland? Scotland's most famous exports are the Presbyterian Churches, and for a period of time, Presbyterian ministers were their most valued commodity.

How many of you have seen or read any of the films or scripts about Mary Queen of Scots, Elizabeth, and the Stewarts? Raise your hand if you know who Bonnie Prince Charlie is. Extra credit if you can remember why they called him the Bonnie Prince. I'll tell you in a moment.

THE SCOTS BATTLES FOR INDEPENDENCE

Whether or not you are of Scots or British or Irish descent, Scotland is important to you if you are of Presbyterian descent. It was the place where one of the great battles for religious and political independence was waged. Before that it was a competitive collection of the fiercely independent clans that gave Scotland part of its character. That is where my first story begins in the 6th century.

A SCOTS "TABLE OF CONTENTS"

This morning I have a "table of contents" message that begins a series that I will be developing entitled the Spiritual Gifts of Scotland. I have some highlights and some musical teasers that form a prolog to some messages about great Scottish theologians, Scottish churches, Scottish music, fiddle tunes and crafts, and the Scots Confession that is in our Presbyterian Book of

Confessions. The lessons of the Scottish wars for independence foreshadow our own American Revolution.

So I have three stories for you this morning. I hope you will do some reading on your own about the spiritual gifts of Scotland in the next few months.

FROM JESUS TO COLUMBA

The first Christian Churches met underground throughout the Mediterranean in secret following the death of Jesus. With the rise of Constantine to power, the Christian church became the official church of the Roman Empire, with a structure not unlike the ranks of the armies of the Roman legions.

As the Holy Roman Empire grew, it spread all over the Mediterranean and reached north into the Germanic territories, and across the Channel to the British Isles. It reached as far north as Scotland, except for a small thumb of Scotland on the very western coast near the Isle of Mull. In the 5th and 6th centuries, this was sparse country that was about as rural as could be imagined, with woolly, waterproof sheep producing wool that could be made into sweaters and kilts, and scenery not unlike the pastures we pass on the way out to Bodega Bay.

COLUMBA

That brings me to our first Scots theologian, who was actually an Irishman. The Scots and the Irish would find no confusion here. He was Columba, who later was raised to the status of St. Columba. Here's the story in a nutshell.

In 563 Columba travelled to Scotland with twelve companions, where according to his legend he first set foot on the far west coast of Scotland. He was granted land on the island of Iona off the west coast that became the center of his Christian mission efforts to the Picts. The Picts were the forerunners of the Scots, and are the painted people whose tribal practices reminded the Brits of the tribal Druids.

Columba brought Monastic Christianity to Scotland, and he was a diplomat among the tribes. There are also many stories of miracles which he performed during his work to convert the Picts. He founded several churches in the Hebrides, and he worked to turn his monastery at Iona into a school for missionaries. He wrote several hymns and has been credited with having transcribed three-hundred books.

I have visited Iona in Scotland, and if I get the chance, I would like to make a second visit next year. There is a thriving Christian community that still produces music and liturgy for the Christian churches, that has a tribal freshness to it that the modern Christian church needs to hear. For today, our first Scottish father is Columba who brought Christianity to the Celts in the 6th century that was a very different practice than the Roman Christianity practiced throughout the Roman Empire.

Look up St. Columba sometime this week. It's an interesting story.

BEN LOMOND

The tallest mountain in Scotland is Ben Lomond, and at its base is a beautiful lake that is the largest freshwater source in the British Isles. Loch Lomond sounds like just the place for a lad to meet a lassie, and a place to symbolize the Scottish Highlands themselves. "Loch Lomond" is also a song that helps us jump 1,000 years after Columba to Scotland's fight for independence ... an event that foreshadows the fight for independence from England in our own country.

MUSIC: "LOCH LOMOND"

By yon bonnie banks and by yon bonnie braes,
Where the sun shines bright on Loch Lomond,
Where me and my true love were ever won't to gae
On the bonnie bonnie banks o' Loch Lomond.

Chorus

O' ye'll tak the high road and I'll tak the low road,
And I'll be in Scotland afore ye

But me and my true lov will never meet again,
On the bonnie bonnie banks o' Loch Lomond.

Tw'as there that we parted in yon shady glen,
On the steep steep side o' Ben Lomond,
Where in deep purple hue, the Hieland hills we view,
And the moon coming oot in the gloaming.

Chorus

O' ye'll tak the high road and I'll tak the low road,
And I'll be in Scotland afore ye

But me and my true love will never meet again,
On the bonnie bonnie banks o' Loch Lomond.

The wee birdies sing, and the wild flowers spring,
And in sunshine the waters are sleeping,
But the broken heart will ken nae second spring again,
Though the waefu' may cease fae their greeting

Chorus

O' ye'll tak the high road and I'll tak the low road,
And I'll be in Scotland afore ye

But me and my true love will never meet again,
On the bonnie bonnie banks o' Loch Lomond.

This song may well have been not just a love story between a lass and a laddie who had an encounter along the shores, but a song of a young man about to be executed for his participation in one of the many battles for independence between England and Scotland. The "low road" is the road of the fallen soldier that leads him quickly back to the homeland, while the "highroad" is above ground taken by the living. I'll be in Scotland before you, proclaims the fallen hero.

Our own church history comes out of Scotland and a battle between the Catholics represented by Mary Queen of Scots, and John Knox, who was a Scots preacher who wanted to keep Scotland protestant and free from Catholic England.

JOHN KNOX

My second story is about John Knox. He was a Scottish clergyman and leader of the Protestant Reformation who is considered the founder of the Presbyterian denomination. He was educated at the University of St. Andrews and he joined the movement to reform the Scottish church. He was caught up in the ecclesiastical and political events that involved the murder of Cardinal Beaton in 1546. He was taken prisoner by French forces the following year and exiled to England upon his release in 1549.

While in exile, Knox was licensed to work in the Church of England, where he quickly rose in the ranks to serve King Edward VI of England as a royal chaplain. In this position, he exerted considerable influence on the text of the *Book of Common Prayer*.

But when Mary Tudor ascended the throne and attempted to reclaim England for Roman Catholicism, Knox was forced to resign his position and leave the country.

KNOX MEETS CALVIN

Knox first moved to Geneva where he met John Calvin, from whom he gained experience and knowledge of Reformed Theology and Presbyterian polity. He created a new order of service, which was eventually adopted by the reformed church in Scotland.

THE RETURN TO SCOTLAND

On his return to Scotland, he led the Protestant Reformation in Scotland, in partnership with the Scottish Protestant nobility. The movement became a religious and political revolution, and it led to the ousting of Mary of Guise, who governed the country in the name of her young daughter, Mary, Queen of Scots.

Knox helped write the new Scots Confession of Faith which is part of our Book of Order. He continued to serve as the religious leader of the Protestants throughout Mary's reign. In several interviews with the queen, Knox admonished her for supporting Catholic practices.

Who has been to St. Giles, the Church that Knox served in Edinburgh? I was there a dozen years ago, and John Knox's home and church are also on my wish list for next summer.

COUNTER REFORMATION

But not everyone was happy with Protestant Scotland, and among them was an unhappy, pampered boy named Charles Edward Stuart.

One of the most popular Scottish folksongs is about a young prince who led an army of the French into Scotland for the bloodiest battle of the Jacobite reformation. If we weren't Presbyterians in this room, rooting for the survival of this democracy, we might be rooting for this prince, who dressed as a serving maid, and was rowed to safety under the care of his serving maid Flora, to the Isle of

Skye after leading his troops into bloody defeat. You will need to follow the words in your bulletin, and I think you will love the melody as much as I do.

MUSIC: THE SKYE BOAT SONG

The Battle of Culloden, April 16, 1746, was a clash between the French-supported Jacobites, and the British Government. Culloden dealt the Jacobite Rising a decisive defeat. Bonnie Prince Charlie, leader of the Jacobites, and pretender to the Scottish throne, escaped to the Isle of Skye with the aid of Flora MacDonald, by disguising himself as a serving maid.

The sheepish escape became the basis for a favorite Scottish Folk Song glamorizing the event, called "The Skye Boat Song."

chorus:

Speed, bonnie boat, like a bird on the wing,
Onward! the sailors cry;
Carry the lad that's born to be King
Over the sea to Skye.
Loud the winds howl, loud the waves roar,
Thunderclaps rend the air;
Baffled, our foes stand by the shore,
Follow they will not dare.

chorus

Though the waves leap, soft shall ye sleep,
Ocean's a royal bed.
Rocked in the deep, Flora will keep
Watch by your weary head.

chorus

Many's the lad fought on that day,
Well the Claymore could wield,
When the night came, silently lay
Dead in Culloden's field.

chorus

Burned are their homes, exile and death
Scatter the loyal men;
Yet ere the sword cool in the sheath
Charlie will come again.

The Skye Boat Song is about the boy who wanted to return Scotland to the control of Rome. This song has gained the reputation of a traditional Scottish song recalling the escape of the young pretender, Charles Edward Stuart (Bonnie Prince Charlie) after his defeat at Culloden in 1746. He escaped to the Isle of Skye in a small boat with the aid of Flora MacDonald. He was disguised as a serving maid. The 19th century adherents of Scottish romantic nationalism (which included sentimental Jacobitism) enlarged the anecdote to a legend.

The lyrics were written by Sir Harold Boulton Bart (1859 - 1935), to an air collected by Miss Annie MacLeod (Lady Wilson) in the 1870s. The song was first published in *Songs of the North* by Boulton and MacLeod, London, 1884, a book that went into at least fourteen editions.

TWO ADDITIONAL VERSES

There are two more verses that tell the story of the great battle at Culloden. And this song was more about the battle than the boy who would be king.

For this morning it is enough to remember that the Scots kept their freedom, and while England returned to Catholicism for a period of time, Scotland, St Giles, and the Presbyterian churches were for many years the largest exporters of Presbyterian ministers to England and Europe.

Well I told you this was to be a table of contents, rather than a history book this morning.

I'll put a book mark here, with the reminder that the religious roots of America are closely tied to the Reformation in Europe. Many of the original colonies such as Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Virginia, and Pennsylvania are descendants of Presbyterian-like churches who fought for religious and political independence from the heavy hand of the Catholic Church, and the rule of the British Empire. The French Revolution and the Scottish fights for independence should be remembered in tandem with our own.

FEDERAL HILL

Two weeks ago Cheryl and I looked across Baltimore Harbor to Federal Hill. A few days later we were in Washington, DC at the Smithsonian Museum of American History. The flag that had flown on Federal Hill, the stars and stripes, was the flag that had been brought to the Smithsonian to display as the flag that Francis Scott Key watched on the morning that he wrote our national anthem. We didn't just see that flag, we experienced it.

Next week our nation celebrates Independence Day. Some of our heroes are the Scots. Some of the battles they fought, and the songs they wrote, and the theology that they penned are at the very heart and soul of the religious freedom you and I enjoy today.

I'm proud of that history. We need to get outside the small worlds in which we live from time to time and experience that history, in order to understand the meaning of the present times in which we live.

SUMMER HAPPENINGS – FAMILY NIGHTS

In the next months I am going to tell these stores in greater depth, and in our summer happenings we are going to experience Scottish artworks, music, theology, and food.

But for today, the president has reminded us that there is far more to being a father than being able to produce a baby.

Father's Day 2008: "Any fool can have a child. That doesn't make you a father. It's the courage to raise a child that makes you a father."

Father's Day 2009: "We need to step out of our own heads and tune in. We need to turn off the television and start talking with our kids, and listening to them, and understanding what's going on in their lives."

TWO FATHERLY "GOODBYES"

So that brings us up to the present.

- Many of us joined together in a poignant tribute to Dr. Bob Johnson on Friday. How wonderful to see some of his children in worship this morning. I've adopted them as siblings. I was thinking about Bob's argyle sweaters as I was composing my notes for this morning.
- And yesterday, I looked into the eyes of a father who was saying goodbye to the mother of his children. And whose duties as a father still lie ahead as he reconciles his loss to his family.

This day reminds us that we stand on the shoulders of giants, and some of those giants have not been afraid to get down upon their knees and pray for God's guidance to be the kind of fathers that world has always needed.

Father's day is not a holiday that we should take lightly.

It certainly is not a throwaway for me.



Dr. John H. Cushman
Presbyterian Church of the Roses
2500 Patio Court
Santa Rosa, CA 95405
June 21, 2009