

Holy Trinity Sunday – Year C
May 30, 2010
Faith Lutheran, Radcliff, KY
Numbers 6:22-27
Pastor Paul Horn

“Receive a blessing from your Lord and Savior...”

²² **The LORD said to Moses,** ²³ **“Tell Aaron and his sons, ‘This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them:**

²⁴ **“““The LORD bless you
and keep you;**

²⁵ **the LORD make his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you;**

²⁶ **the LORD turn his face toward you
and give you peace.””**

²⁷ **“So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.”**

The World War II Memorial in Washington D.C. honors the 16 million who served in the armed forces of the U.S., the more than 400,000 who died, and all who supported the war effort from home. The Second World War is the only 20th Century event commemorated on the National Mall’s central axis in our nation’s capital. The memorial was dedicated 6 years ago yesterday.

Erecting memorials is nothing new. In the Old Testament God’s people set up pillars or piled up rocks and gave the monuments names to remember what the LORD had done for them. Joshua 4:1-7 tells us that the Israelites took 12 stones from the middle of the Jordan River, one for each of the tribes of Israel, and set up a monument to remind future generations of what had happened at that place. If you recall, the LORD caused the flow of the Jordan River to stop so the entire nation of Israel could cross into the Promised Land on dry ground.

In today’s lesson from Numbers 6, the LORD is giving instructions to Moses from Mount Sinai. If you go to Mount Sinai today, there is a monument to commemorate the great events that took place there. A Greek orthodox chapel was constructed in 1934, in a place that is believed to enclose the rock from which God made the tablets. In the western wall of this chapel is a cleft in the rock where Moses hid himself as the LORD’s glory passed by.

While the exact location of these events is unsure, we have the exact words that were spoken by God himself from the Mount. These words from our God are sort of a monument; a permanent reminder of what the LORD promises to do for you. As we explore this familiar blessing, I pray that every time the benediction is spoken, these words become more meaningful to you and increase your faith and trust in your God.

Aaron, Moses’ brother, had been set apart by the LORD as high priest. His sons were ordained to serve as priests in the tabernacle. They were to care for the sanctuary and sacrifice offerings.

In our lesson, Numbers 6, the LORD also told Moses, “**Tell Aaron and his sons, this is how you are to bless the Israelites.**”

The purpose of this blessing is actually found in the last verse of our lesson, vs27, **So they (the priests) will put my name on the Israelites and I will bless them.** God reveals his name in the Bible as Father, Son and Holy Spirit; three persons in one God. When the Triune God puts his name on us we receive everything that he as Father, Son and Holy Spirit have done for our salvation. Just as we are baptized into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we receive from our Triune God everything he’s done for us, the same is true with this blessing. Christ’s perfect life becomes ours. We stand holy in God’s sight. His death is our payment for sin. His resurrection is our rescue from our grave.

We also know that this blessing was not some pious wish on the part of the priest, like, “I hope it doesn’t rain this weekend.” There are six verbs in this blessing; *bless, keep, make shine, be gracious, turn,* and *give*. Each of them is in the imperfect tense in the Hebrew language which indicates continuing action. So when the people heard Aaron the high priest say, “The LORD bless you,” they knew that he meant, “The LORD will bless you now and into the future and forever.” This blessing actually transmitted the divine power of blessing to the people. Every Israelite that believed these words as pronounced upon him by the priest went back to his tent with the blessing of the Lord resting on him. In the same way every Sunday, when your pastor lifts his hands and pronounces God’s blessing on you, you will go home and know that the Lord has given those blessings to you personally.

Vs24 – The LORD bless you.

This opening phrase sets the foundation for the entire blessing. The divine favor of the LORD will be upon his people. He will give them prosperity in material and spiritual things to the richest measure.

The LORD bless you **and keep you...** In Psalm 121.7 the writer says, “**The LORD will keep you from all harm; he will watch over your life. The LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.**” For peace of mind, it might do you well to have an alarm system installed in your home, others prefer to have security by *Smith and Wesson*. Is not the kind of security we need in life come from a God who is all powerful, whose Almighty Word created the world in six days, whose Word works through water to change your life around, who promises, “I will guard you until the end of your life?” The LORD, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, will keep that promise to you as long as you live on this earth, and keep you in their protecting care through death into life eternal in heaven. The LORD will keep you.

Vs25 – the LORD make his face shine upon you.

In the confession of sins we admit that we are sinful by nature, that we deserve only God’s wrath and punishment, not only here in this life, but forever in hell. There is nothing in us that would cause God to make his face shine on us, yet in spite of who we are, God tells us through this blessing that he does exactly that; his face shines on us, which means, he looks at us with favor and acceptance. He tells us in his Word his Son Jesus, by his life and death and resurrection, reconciled us to the Father by changing our status from sinner and enemy to saint and family. God smiles on you because of his Son Jesus.

And [the LORD] be gracious to you...

To be gracious means *to show mercy or compassion*. I found a psalm where this same word *gracious* is used, the writer pleads with the LORD, “**Be merciful (gracious) to me for I am faint.**” Not faint as in “I exercised too hard in the summer heat,” but faint in soul and spirit because of my sinful condition.

I recently spoke with a friend who is contemplating a new tattoo. He showed me a picture of a man with outstretched arms, eyes gazing heavenward, one side of his body was a blue-ish white color, and the other half was in fiery red, symbolic of the inner struggle that every Christian faces; the struggle with the new man who loves to obey God’s laws and the old sinful flesh who rebels against God’s commandments. The struggle with Satan and the sinful world, who are relentless in their attacks.... We become faint as we fight that battle, especially with those pet sins that we have a hard time putting to death. And in the confession of sins we bow our heads and in shame plead guilty, “Have mercy on me, a poor, sinful being.”

As sinners we need to hear these words in the blessing, “**The LORD be gracious to you.**” He takes pity on you, because he understands your struggle. He too, was tempted. He was attacked by Satan and the sinful world. But He had no sinful nature to entice him and drag him away so he never once fell into sin. He always looked heavenward to his Father for power and strength to withstand these attacks from Satan.

By his graciousness, Jesus covered over your sinful hearts with his perfect life at your baptism. He continues to show that graciousness, so that when you confess your sin, and cry out to him for strength, he reminds you of your baptism, and offers you forgiveness of your sins. Through forgiveness he gives you power and strength to fight that battle against sin, and reminds you that one day this struggle will end. You will shed the sinful nature and be rid of Satan’s temptations forever when you enter the joys of heaven.

Vs26

The LORD look on you with favor and give you peace...

Do you remember the story about Jacob, when he had to leave home because his twin brother Esau was going to kill him? On his journey he rested for the night and in his dreams he saw a stairway that reached from earth to heaven and the angels of God were ascending and descending on the stairway. From heaven the LORD spoke to Jacob and said, “**I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I promised you.**” When Jacob woke up he set up a monument of stone and called it Bethel, “the house of God,” and said, “**Since God will be with me on my journey and will watch over me and give me clothes to wear and food to eat, I will return safely; the LORD will be my God.**” (Gen 28)

That’s the kind of peace you and I have, because we know that God is always looking down from heaven upon us. The LORD will give you that peace every time you walk away from the table having celebrated the Lord’s Supper; you are at peace with your God through his Son’s sacrifice of body and blood. The LORD gives you that peace every time his called servant

announces the forgiveness of sins to you. The LORD gives you that peace every time you remember your own baptism, there, in that same sprinkling of water and the Word, your relationship with God was born anew. Since you have this peace, the LORD will give you peace the next time you head into surgery, peace when you say goodbye to a spouse flying out on their next deployment, peace when you have to move far away from family, peace when you have to face the most difficult situations in life, peace when you feel all alone, peace when a loved one dies, peace as you face your own grave, peace of knowing that he uses his power to do what is best for his people.

If you ever get a chance to visit Washington, D.C., be sure to pay a visit to the many memorials there, and thank God for all the men and women who sacrificed their lives in service to our country. Every Sunday, be sure to visit God's monument of promise to you, the blessing, and thank God that he sent One to sacrifice his life for you, and remember that he will always bless you and he will keep you, he will cause his face to shine on you and he will be gracious to you, he will look on you with favor and he will give you peace. He will do it for Jesus' sake. Amen.