

In Nomine Jesu!

Trinity Sunday

June 7, 2009

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Hecla

Zion Lutheran Church, Ipswich

Redeemer Lutheran Church, Bowdle

Hymn: 243:1-2 "Oh, that I Had a Thousand Voices"

Text: Numbers 6:22-27 - ***And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 23 "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. 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 lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace." ' 27 "So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them."***

Theme: The Benediction - The LORD Puts His Name on Us

God the Father

- Bless you
- Keep you

God the Son

- Make His face shine on you
- Be gracious to you

God the Holy Spirit

- Turn His face toward you
- Give you peace

Dear fellow redeemed in Jesus Christ, the Son of God from eternity,

Our text for this morning contains some of the most familiar words in our liturgy. Today we refer to our benediction as the Aaronic Blessing, because it was first given to Aaron and his sons to bless the children of Israel. It is the most ancient part of our liturgy, going all the way back to its institution by God for the Children of Israel in the wilderness. It is so familiar to our people that it is not uncommon to see little ones mimicking the actions of the pastor as he gives the benediction. Nor is it uncommon to see an aged Christian dying in the hospital bed mouth these words with the pastor as he says them.

How often we hear it, be how seldom we realize how precious this blessing is. The LORD God Himself tells us why it is so important in the last verse of our text. In giving this blessing, He says, ***"They shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them."*** In giving this blessing Aaron and his sons were putting the name of the LORD on the Children of Israel to bless them. That is why you will see the pastor raise and angle his hands a bit when giving the benediction as though he were laying his hands on your heads and putting God's name directly on you as you leave the House of the Lord to your lives in the world.

In the prescribed words of this blessing we have what is known as a Trinitarian format. That is the name of the LORD is repeated three times. If we knew nothing about who the one true God is, we might well simply pass over this observation. But this is the one true God who has revealed Himself as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit - the holy Trinity, Three-in-one.

As we examine this glorious blessing from the LORD we can easily see the work of the Triune God in each of these phrases. That is why this is such a fitting section of Scripture for Trinity Sunday. As we consider the Triune God putting His name on us, let us consider how God the Father blesses us and keeps us. How God the Son makes His face shine upon us and is gracious to us. And how God the Holy Spirit turns His face to us and gives us peace. May we rejoice as the LORD's name is put on us!

## I. GOD THE FATHER

As the LORD told Moses how to tell the priests Aaron and his sons how to bless the Children of Israel this is how the LORD told them to begin, "***The LORD bless you and keep you.***" We've heard these words countless times, but as we examine this more closely what do we find? The LORD has a desire to bless His people. The word "bless" means "to cause to prosper," while the word "keep" has with it a meaning of watching over, guarding, or protecting. Do you hear this? The LORD God Himself wants to cause His people prosper and to protect them.

This matter of causing us to prosper and protecting us are actions that Scripture attributes to God the Father doing for us. God the Father blesses by supplying for all our daily needs. James writes, "***Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights.***" (James 1:17) Has the LORD blessed you? Well it depends on what you consider it is to be blessed. God blesses us by giving us what we need - not always what we want. For instance, when was the last time you were worried about your next meal? Jesus said that if our Father in heaven cares about the worthless sparrow, how much more will He take care for you who are much more valuable than a sparrow? Indeed God the Father has blessed each one of us FAR beyond what we need as He answers our prayer, "*Give us this day our daily bread.*"

God the Father also keeps us, protects us, and guards us. We may never know in this life all that God did to keep us. How He sent His angels to make sure you got home safely. But above and beyond our physical protection is what we pray in the Lord's Prayer - "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." God the Father has kept us from the evil one by sending His Son to save us. And in this blessing which the LORD Himself has commanded, He blesses you and keeps you.

Martin Luther summarized well how God the Father both blesses us and keeps us in His explanation to the 1st Article. Let us join together:

I believe that God has made me with all creatures, giving me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my faculties;

And that He still preserves me; therefore richly and daily providing clothing and shoes, meat and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, cattle, and all my goods, and all that I need to keep my body and life; defending me against all danger, and guarding and protecting me from all evil;

And all this purely out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me;

For all of which it is my duty to thank and praise, and to serve and obey Him.

This is most certainly true.

The Lord bless you and keep you!

**GOD THE SON**

In the second section of the Aaronic Blessing as the Triune God puts His name on us and blesses us, He has commanded to say, "*The LORD make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you.*" As we consider our Triune God we turn our thoughts turn to the work of God the Son. This portion of the blessing also addresses us as sinners. But your thinking, "I don't see the word 'sin' in our text anywhere." Consider what the LORD wanted said in this portion of the blessing, "The LORD make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you." The only reason the LORD would need to make His face shine upon us is if it hadn't been shining on us before. Furthermore the LORD being gracious unto us, infers that we need God's love albeit undeserved. So this portion does deal with us as sinners.

Sometimes when we are so upset, so frustrated with someone, the last thing we want to do is look at them. We are so upset that we can't even bare the sight of them and we turn our face away from them. Now imagine God looking down and seeing us, His precious, created beings, and all that we are doing. Does He see a reason in us that He should look upon us in favor? Does He see us loving Him above all things at all times - with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength? Does He see us loving one another in the same way that we love ourselves? Does He see a reason for shining His face upon us or should He look away? Because of our sin, the LORD should look away from us and banish us from His presence eternally in hell!

God should look away, but He does not. As He commanded the way we are to be blessed, He wants to shine His face upon us and be gracious unto us. And He has been. You need look no further than the cross than to see the face of God casting it's bright beams of love on you. It is on the cross that all our wrongs against God were nailed to the cross with the Son of God, Jesus Christ. It is there that God the Father turned His face away from His Son and to us. Because of the work of God the Son, the Triune God now looks upon us and His face shines in love upon us.

Martin Luther's explanation to the 2nd Article summarizes this quite well:

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary is my Lord;

Who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with His holy precious blood and with His innocent sufferings and death;

That I should be His own, and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness; even as He is risen from death, lives and reigns to all eternity.

This is most certainly true.

*"The LORD make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you."*

Hymn 243:4

**GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT**

Finally in the blessing of the Triune God we see the work of God the Holy Spirit. ***"The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace."*** You may have heard of someone whose countenance was downcast. That is to say that he was sad and depressed. To lift up ones countenance is almost like smiling on someone. How is it that God smiles upon us? This is done only through the Gospel - the good news of our salvation. In the Gospel we hear of God's great love for us. That God loved us so much that He gave us His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him shall NOT perish, but instead have everlasting life!

When we hear the good news of our salvation - when Paul writes to the Romans, ***"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."*** (Romans 8:1a); when Jesus tells us, ***"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die."*** (John 11:25-26) these are words of God lifting up His countenance upon us. Through the Gospel the Holy Spirit works faith in our hearts. Through the Gospel the Holy Spirit gives us peace. Peace with God and peace for a conscience burdened by sin. In the Gospel we see the LORD turning His face toward us, smiling upon us, and giving us peace. This is the peace that Paul speaks of and that we will use at the close of the sermon today - ***"and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."*** For God to shine in our hearts through faith and bring us peace through Christ Jesus is the work of the Holy Spirit.

The LORD turning His face toward us and giving us peace in God the Holy Spirit, Luther summarizes well in his explanation to the 3rd Article:

I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, nor come to Him;

But the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith; In like manner as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith;

In which Christian Church He daily and richly forgives all sins to me and all believers; And will at the last day raise up me and all the dead, And give unto me and all believers in Christ eternal life.

This is most certainly true.

Behold the LORD's love for His people! He wants to put His name on you and bless you. In His blessing we see more and more His great love for us. He commanded that this be done for you. That He would bless YOU and keep YOU. That He would make His face shine upon YOU and be gracious unto YOU. That He would turn His face toward YOU and give YOU peace! Rejoice in this most blessed blessing, for in it the Triune God name is put on YOU and He blesses YOU as you depart His house of worship!

To this blessing we have added our fitting reply of the triple amen. AMEN, AMEN, AMEN! That is: Yes, to God the Father, Yes to God the Son, Yes to God the Holy Spirit - great Jehovah three-in-one! God be praised, AMEN.