

THE LORD'S BLESSING – IT'S ALWAYS THERE – NUMBERS 6:22-27

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The LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron and his sons, 'This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them:

""The LORD bless you

and keep you;

the LORD make his face shine on you

and be gracious to you;

the LORD turn his face toward you

and give you peace."

"So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them."



The blessing of the triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – be with you now, and forever more,

This is always a wonderful time of year, isn't it? Here in Arizona we are bracing ourselves for the hot summer months ahead, so it isn't as wonderful as many families who are looking forward to the summer months in the Midwest. But it is a time when graduations from high school and college are taking place, weddings are happening. This year at Grace, we even have a few births we are getting ready to celebrate. May really is a wonderful time of year.

I can remember a few years ago, my oldest sister got married. And she asked me to preach the wedding message. That was something special. One of the "themes" of the wedding was to make it a "wee bit" Irish. One of those Irish things stood out for me, it was the Irish Blessing. I had heard of it at other times, but it really stuck out at me that time. It goes like this: "May the road rise up to meet you. May the wind always be at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face, and rains fall soft upon your fields. And until we meet again, May God hold you in the palm of His hand."

It got me to thinking, what is a blessing, any blessing, all about? Why do we say blessings, when someone is leaving, before we eat our food, or at a wedding? And it is not just something that only Christians do, other religions do it too. Is a blessing just wishing someone safe travels, good food, and a happy life, or is it more? Isn't a blessing really nothing other than the triune God's protecting hand watching over you? We saw this in our first lesson for this morning from Numbers 6, we have the Aaronic blessing. And this blessing conveys a very important truth. THE LORD'S BLESSING – IT'S ALWAYS THERE.

1. When you need it
2. Even when you don't feel it

(1)

The Lord's blessing upon his people was not something that occurred in a vacuum. It was given to the people of Israel during their time of wandering in the desert, when they were at Mt. Sinai. Just a little bit of Bible history for you which we find mainly in the second book of the Bible – Exodus (which we just

started studying today in our Sunday morning Bible Class). Many people know that the Israelites were led out of Egypt on the heels of the 10 plagues, through the Red Sea by the Lord God. Many people know the Israelites wandered in the desert for 40 years before they could enter the land God promised to them, but do you remember how long they were camped out at the base of Mt. Sinai?

The Israelites reached Mt. Sinai three months after they left Egypt. They stayed there until the second month of the second year. So for almost one whole year, the Israelites were camped out at the base of the mountain. That may help to understand the Israelites' anxiousness at Moses going up on the mountain for 40 days. But during those 11 months they were camped at the foot of Mt. Sinai there was more than God giving the Israelites the Ten Commandments. He gave them all their other laws too – laws that would govern their relationship with one another (political) and laws that would govern their relationship with him (religious).

The laws that God gave his people were part of a two-sided covenant, or agreement. If God's people followed the laws that he gave them, then God would bless them and protect them. That sounds fair enough, right? Except when they realized how impossible it was to keep all of God's laws. The Israelites had just gotten over the incident of the golden calf, when they broke the 1st of God's commandments by honoring another god beside him. God would know how much complaining the Israelites would do for another 39 years in the desert (and parents think a 3-hour car ride is difficult). So God did not just leave them with the despair of not being able to live up to God's standard.

So God reminded them of another covenant, a covenant he made with their first forefather, Abraham. This covenant was one sided, it didn't depend on anything Abraham did, it was just God promising him something. God promised Abraham that through him all nations on earth will be blessed. All nations would be blessed with the sending of the messiah through Abraham's line. And this is why God promises his blessing upon the Israelites. These are words directly from the mouth of God. God conveyed them to Moses, and Moses conveyed them to Aaron, the high priest. And it was Aaron who placed God's blessing upon the people.

THE LORD'S BLESSING – IT'S ALWAYS THERE. It was always there for the Israelites through the 40 years of wandering in the desert, through their time in the Promised Land. And these words are always there for us. These are words we are familiar with hearing from the end of our service, but listen to them again – **"The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you, the Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace."** We see this blessing, we hear it every Sunday, and when we look at the words we have true comfort. THE LORD'S BLESSING – IT'S ALWAYS THERE when you need it.

But maybe because it's always there we take it for granted. There have been times too numerous to count when I have taken this peace for granted, when my eyes have deceived me into thinking my sins are not so bad, when my mouth has opened and spewed out hateful, hurtful words, when my mind makes me think because I've worked so hard that God should love me because of that. How much we reject God's grace when we let these thoughts creep into our minds. How sad it is when we can't look past the thin veneer of what we think is good, to realize how utterly wretched, rotten, and sinful we are.

Brothers and sisters, I am no better than you when it comes to my sins before God. I need God's blessing and peace just as much as you do. And it is because of all those shortcomings that I am so glad

getting this peace has nothing to do with me. We have such wonderful passages of comfort in the Bible that remind us of this, **“God demonstrates his own love for us in this, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us,” “If we are faithless, he will remain faithful.”** This is the promise we cling to. We focus on God’s faithfulness, and not our own. And if there have been times when you have felt weak, when you have felt inadequate, when you have felt depressed, listen to the words of our God once more, and listen to them spoken to you!

“The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you, the Lord look upon you with favor, and give you peace.” This is the Lord’s blessing and IT’S ALWAYS THERE when I need it.

(2)

Now you know as well as I, we don’t always feel the Lord’s blessing. It’s not like when we come out of church you can see God sending down his angels to protect you, we still have the worries of life weighing us down, and perhaps you don’t “feel” any different emotionally. And that’s OK. You don’t have to feel different. Feelings certainly are nice to have, but they are not proof, and they can be deceptive.

For instance, take an example from dating. You’ve all heard (or heard of) the songs on the radio about falling in love, having that feeling inside of you, when you couldn’t wait until you saw that person again. And it’s a great feeling, but is that the only way you know you’re in love, when you “feel” it? Then you look at a couple that has been married for 50 or more years. I dare say they don’t have the same “feeling” of love there as when they were first dating. And yet there is no doubt that love is there – a love is seen in their actions, in their words towards one another, in their unconditional commitment to one another. Love is there, even though the “cloud 9” feeling is not.

That is the same way it is with God’s Word, especially for those of us who have been blessed to be in a relationship with God since early on. Perhaps after a particularly rousing hymn, or a great sermon we “feel” good, we feel refreshed, happy, forgiven, and that’s great. But THE LORD’S BLESSING IS ALWAYS THERE, even when you don’t feel it. Even when the kids were acting up in the service and you didn’t get much out of it, even when you feel baffled by something you read in the Bible that goes beyond your understanding, even when you think God has abandoned you and your wicked behavior. THE LORD’S BLESSING – IT’S ALWAYS THERE, because it doesn’t depend on you.

It isn’t about what we feel, it’s about what God has done. It isn’t about what we feel, it’s about what God has told us. It isn’t about what we feel, it’s about what God has promised us. God is the doer, we are the receiver, so it doesn’t matter what we feel, but rather what God has said. And on this Trinity Sunday we hear the threefold blessing of our triune God, **“The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you, the Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.”**

As if that wasn’t enough comfort, God tells Moses one more thing, **“So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.”** The name of God goes upon anyone whom this blessing is spoken to. God wrote his name on your hearts, notifying anyone and everyone that you are his. **“And I will bless them.”** So when you hear that blessing at the end of the service, it isn’t just Pastor Rieke up there

bestowing a blessing on you, it is God. We may not feel anything different, but we have the comfort of knowing that THE LORD'S BLESSING – IT'S ALWAYS THERE.

If you have been coming to Grace-Vail for any amount of time, you have perhaps noticed that we have a set order of service called a liturgy. This is a way that we have chosen to worship our God in an orderly and glorifying way. And one of the parts to a normal liturgy is a blessing at the end, most oftentimes we use this Aaronic blessing. Why wouldn't we? Like the rest of the service, this blessing is placed there for a reason, it is important. It is a blessing that is not made up by man, but it is a blessing from God himself. It was God who gave this blessing to Moses to give to Aaron as a blessing on the people of Israel. This was God's one-sided promise to his people – that no matter what the circumstances, no matter what we have done, God is there. That is what you can take away from every service. THE LORD'S BLESSING – IT'S ALWAYS THERE. Amen.