

Festival of the Trinity; June 16 & 17

Numbers 6:22-27

The words of our text have been spoken at the close of church services for thousands of years. Almost 3,500 years ago the Lord himself told Moses that this blessing was to be pronounced over the people of God. And ever since that time, in the O.T. synagogue, in synagogue services of the Jews, in the churches of the New Testament and in our church today these words have been spoken. Nearly every single worship service is closed with these words. They are familiar to us. For some, you have heard these words thousands of times. Yet, do we always appreciate the beauty that is found in that blessing? So, today as we celebrate the Festival of the Trinity, let's take a closer look at these words and see how the Triune God blesses us.

God loved his people. He loved Moses, even though Moses was less than perfect. Here was a man who was raised in Pharaoh's house along with, no doubt, the worship of the gods of Egypt. Here was a man who later thought that he could rescue the children of Israel all by himself by murdering a man. Here was a man who had fled for his life. In spite of all those things, here was a man who truly knew how much God loved him and his people.

The words of our text come from a much bigger section of the Bible that speaks about how God wanted his people to worship him. But he also wanted his people to know that part of that worship was God coming down to put his name on his people. He wanted Moses to tell the people for generations to come: **"I (will) put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them."**

This weekend, all across our country, Father's Day is being celebrated. Did you know that Father's Day was founded in Spokane, Washington at the YMCA in 1910 by woman named Sonora Dodd. By that time, Mother's Day had been celebrated since the 1860's. However, Sonora wanted to honor her father, who had been a Civil War veteran. Her father had become a single parent, who raised his six children by himself. She had seen how much her father had loved her and her siblings. Like Mother's Day who remembered the love of mothers, she wanted fathers to be honored for their love as well. She went to local churches, the YMCA, shopkeepers and government officials to drum up support for her idea, and she was successful: Washington State celebrated the nation's first statewide Father's Day on June 19, 1910.

This morning, God also wants us to remember how much God the Father loves his children. He wants you to know that **"The Lord bless(es) you and keep(s) you."** What's a father's job here on earth? - to provide for his family; to protect his family. It's the job of Christian fathers to teach their children about the God who provides and protects them. Isn't that exactly what God the **Father** does for you? God provides for each and every one of us.

We all know that, right? The Bible is full of passages that speak about the Father's love for his children. Yet, even though we all know that, it is so easy for us to forget how much God provides for us. It's so easy for us to stand back and look at all the things that we all have accumulated and think: *"Look how hard I have worked at gathering all these things."* We think that all of the things that we have are the fruits of our hands and labors. Yet, the Bible says that all these things come not from us, but from a Father who loves his children.

They are blessings from a God who wants to bless you and keep you as his child. It wouldn't matter how much gold we had, how many friends we have, how great our insurance coverage is, if we didn't have the protection of our heavenly Father. We wouldn't be able to enjoy a single one of our physical blessings, if we didn't have the promise of the Triune God and his promise of protection.

Why would God do that? Why would he provide and protect us. Our God is a holy God. He was so holy that when Moses stood before the burning bush in wilderness, God told him to take off his shoes because he was standing on holy God. This is a God who demands nothing less than perfection. Yet, this is the same God who loves us in ways that we cannot fully understand. This is a God who loves us because he loves what his Son did for us. This is a God who looks at all our sin and tells us that he will remember them no more because of Jesus.

"The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you." That's what Jesus does for us. Literally, God says that *"the Lord makes his face light up on you."* Think of how the face of a small face of a child that just lights up when they

see Mom or Dad. Think of how a groom's face just lights up when he sees his bride coming down the aisle. Think of how a spouse's face just lights up when the other spouse comes home after serving his country overseas. That's what Jesus does for us. He looks at us and his whole face just lights up.

Then, **"The Lord turns his face toward you and gives you peace."** That's what the Holy Spirit does for us. He brings us to trust in that God who gives us peace. The Holy Spirit has found you. For some, he found you through the waters of baptism. For others, you may have had a parent or grandparent teach you about Jesus. Others may have learned about it as an adult. Whenever and wherever it was, he made you his. He has made you an heir of God. That brings us peace. We have peace no matter what is all going around us. We have a peace that is greater than anything in this life in God.

Yet, what do we do? We think that we can find peace in this world. If only this would happen, then we would have peace. We can even beat ourselves up *wishing* for something to happen. We can make ourselves miserable wishing that we have something that we don't have, comparing ourselves to someone else, or we can trust our God who **"gives you peace."** I'm not telling you anything that you haven't heard thousands of times before. It's easier for us to feel that way here in church. It's calm and relatively quiet. There's no newspaper to remind us of the conflicts and threats to world peace that hangs over our heads every day. There's no e-mail that demands one more thing for us to do. There is no telephone or doorbell to interrupt our thoughts. But outside these walls, well, that's a different story. When we leave, we're faced with bills and demands and frustrations and fear. There are days that seem like everything is but peace. Yet God promises that as we leave his house, the Holy Spirit will give us peace. It is a peace that no one can take away.

Perhaps, that is why it is fitting that these words have been spoken at the end of worship services for 3,500 years. Maybe God knows that we need to be reminded of these blessings. We need to be reminded that we have a Father who loves us, who provides for us and who protects us. We have a Son whose face just lights up when he looks at each and every one of us. We have a Holy Spirit that wants to give us peace. We have a God who puts his name on us. **"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."** Amen.