

What was he thinking? Why would he do it?

He was getting ready to put his life on the line. He had fled the country he grew up in years before because he had committed murder. He had committed murder in the hope that he could start and lead a revolt, an uprising of his countrymen. But his own people rejected his leadership, the uprising didn't happen, and he was forced to flee and live in exile for years. And now he was planning to go back.

Why? He had built a life for himself – gotten married, had kids, found gainful employment. Why would he go back? Especially when things had gone so incredibly poorly in his past?

Why?... well, standing there sandal-less before a burning bush that didn't burn up might have had something to do with it. And hearing the voice of God himself telling him to “go” certainly played a part.

So he, Moses, was getting ready to put his life on the line, to go back to Egypt and try and get the Israelites to follow his lead; to go back to Egypt and tell Pharaoh, the leader of an incredibly powerful and influential country, that he should let a large part of his labor force go simply because Moses said so.

Moses was about to take an awfully big leap of faith, which is kind of surprising, especially when you consider that Moses didn't even know that much about the God who was telling him to “go”. He didn't even know this God's name. He said to this burning bush, “Say I go back to the Israelites and tell them that God told me to come and lead you out of slavery. Follow me. And they ask me, ‘Who sent you? What is the name of this God?’ What should I say? How should I answer?”

And so right there, from that burning bush, God told Moses about himself. He told Moses his name – a name that revealed *a lot* about this God.

In the Old Testament God uses a lot of names to describe himself, but there is one name in particular that God wanted his people to know and use – in Hebrew the name is something like *Yahweh*. If you pick up your Bible and read through the Old Testament, it is the name that is translated LORD (all capital letters). This is God's special name, the name God gave in answer to that question of Moses, “Who should I say sent me?” – *Yahweh* – which means “I AM”, I AM what I AM.

And this special name teaches us a lot about God. It's a name that talks about God's eternal existence (he just *is*, he always has been, he always will be), but it is so much more than just God's eternity.

*Yahweh*, I AM, talks about a God who is always the same, which means he is a God who always remains faithful to who he is, his promises, the covenants he has made with his people. For Moses, those Israelites, and us, this is a name that tells us again that we have a God who, as promised, would be a Savior-God – a God of free and faithful love who looked at his people lost and enslaved in this world and he decided to act, to bring his people from slavery to the promised land for no other reason than that that is just the kind of God *he is*.

Moses asked for the name of God, and he got to know his God that day. And it turns out that when you get to know God, it makes you do some amazing things.

For Moses, getting to know the name of God meant he would put his life on the line. He would go back to Egypt, stand up to Pharaoh, rally the Israelites to his cause, and lead them out of slavery, through the Red Sea, across the wilderness, right up to the very edge of the land God had promised these people generations earlier. And he would do all of it because he knew his God's name – he knew who the LORD was and what the LORD wanted for him and the Israelites.

Today we are celebrating Trinity Sunday. Our God is a Triune God – meaning he makes perfectly clear in the Bible that there is only one God in this world, but that one God is three different persons – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. All three persons are completely distinct and unique from each other. All three persons are true God, but there are not three Gods, but only one God (*Triune* = Latin for three-in—one). If thinking about that makes your head spin, that's a good thing because this is a mystery that God has revealed to us about himself. It's not something we can understand. It's kind of like a chimp trying to understand the mind of Einstein – we can't make sense of what God says about himself. We just believe it.

We believe it because the Bible tell us that is how it is, and because it tells us that everything about this God is meant to bless us.

Every year, the first Sunday after the Festival of Pentecost, we celebrate the fact that we have a *Triune God*. It is one dedicated Sunday each year where we, like sandal-less Moses on that mountainside in front of that burning bush, have a chance to learn more about the God we worship – the God who has called us to “go” and make every thought word and deed an intentional act of worship to him...

Look at the reading from Numbers 6 again. **The LORD** (there's that name) **told Moses, “Tell Aaron and his sons** (Aaron and his sons were designated by God as the priests, the pastors for his people), **this is how you are to bless the Israelites: Put my name on them** – my covenant name – **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.’”**

And just like on that mountainside from that burning bush, in those simple words God says an awful lot about himself and what he wants for you and me.

So let's take a closer look at what God is teaching us about himself today in Numbers 6. There are three distinct blessings here. Long ago Christians recognized that each one of these three blessings describes the work of the three different members of the Trinity – take a look and see what I mean.

**First, God the Father: The LORD bless you and keep you.**

The first person of the Trinity describes himself as a Father because what does a good father do? They protect and they provide for their families. God the Father blesses (provides for), and keeps (protects) his family.

How does he provide for us? Maybe that good confirmation explanation is still rattling around in your mind somewhere: By providing clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, land and cattle, all that I own, and all that I need for body and life.

It's a truth the Bible tells us "every good and perfect gift is from above – coming down from the Father." The Bible clearly says it, but that doesn't mean we are very good at remembering that. I mean, it is so easy to slip into the mindset that you have a house because you write a mortgage check each month. And you have the money for the mortgage because you put in the hours at work this month. And you have that job because you put in the time and investment to get a degree.

It's so easy to think of life that way – in terms of things that *you* earned by *your* hard work, things *you* deserve because *you* made it happen. But do you know what that is like? It's kind of like a kid thinking he can feed himself because he poured himself a bowl of cereal in the morning. Who bought that cereal? Who paid for the milk? Who paid for the bowl, the spoon, the refrigerator, the table he is sitting at? Just because he can pour himself a bowl of cereal, doesn't mean he can feed himself.

Friends, you couldn't own a house, hold a job, earn a degree... you couldn't take another breath if God the Father didn't enable you to. God is the one who has blessed you, provided you with every single thing you have.

God the Father provides *everything* for us, and on top of that he keeps us – protects us. He promises that nothing will happen to you in this world without him allowing it. Understand what God *is* saying and *isn't* saying in this promise. He's not saying that you will never experience pain, loss, or hurt in this world. But he *is* saying that he will remain with you and protect you *through* whatever pain, loss, and hurt this world can throw at you - that he will remain true to his promise and rescue you from this world and bring you to the home he has prepared for you.

In this first beautiful blessing that's what God wants us to know about himself, and what he wants for us. Which begs the question: why in the world would he do that for me? Because nothing about me and my behavior is worthy of that kind of free and faithful love. Most days I don't even recognize him as the giver of *everything* I have and am able to do. Most days I do more complaining about in my life in this world than quiet, trusting, thankfulness. Most days I spend my energy focused me and what I want, what I think I have earned or deserved, and not on him and what he wants and deserves from me.

Why would God the Father love us like this?... Why? Well, because he is a God who has a Son, a Son who came to save.

**Look at that second blessing: The LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.**

Have you ever watched the grooms face at a wedding. It's a truly special moment at any wedding, when those doors open in the back and he sees his bride walking down that aisle towards him, brining with her a lifetime of companionship, love, and family. His face just explodes. I remember on my wedding day, my face physically hurt because I couldn't wipe the goofy grin off my face.

The Bible tells us that is how Jesus looks at us. As a groom's face lights up, shines when he sees his bride, so Jesus' face shines on his bride, the church, you and me. And to be clear, this goofy, grinning, face hurting, shining love that Jesus feels

toward us is a product of his graciousness toward us – his grace, his undeserved, unearned love that drove him to live for us, to die for us, to save us, to be the God of free and faithful love who did what it took to rescue us from the bondage of this world because that is how much he loves us, his undeserving bride.

And knowing this about God the Father and God the Son, who they are, and what they want for us, gives us peace that passes human understanding. How do we find out about that blessing, keeping, face shining, and grace? Well, that too comes from our Triune God.

**Look at the third blessing – the work of the Holy Spirit: The LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.**

He found us. He turned his face toward us. He didn't wait until we found him. He didn't wait until we tried hard enough, or proved we were worthy. He found us, and taught us all about this blessing, keeping, face shining, and grace. Because that's the kind of God *he is* and what he wants for us.

When did the Holy Spirit find you? Was it through the waters of baptism? Was it when you sat snuggled in footie pajamas as a child on your parent's lap and they read you the stories of God's love for you in the Bible? Was it when someone from St. Paul's or some other Christian church invited you to come and hear about this amazing love?

Friends this blessing in Numbers 6 is who our God is, and what he wants for us – it's his name.

Are you getting it yet? Do you understand why we would spend one Sunday a year simply answering the question, "Who is God?" Do you understand maybe a little bit what drove Moses to do what he did? Knowing who God *is* (always has been, and always will be), and what he wants for us is a life changing thing – something we need to be reminded of and re-taught on a very regular basis because the applications of who God is for our daily lives are truly limitless.

Do you get why after almost every service here at St. Paul's Pastor Adams or I stand up here and put this name on you – bless you with these words? It's the name that is above all names. It is the name of your Triune God of free and faithful love.

So... **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.