Numbers 6:22-27

6/15/2025

That probably sounded familiar. Because it is! In fact, it's been familiar for more than 3000 years! What we just read, what we read almost every Sunday to end church, is called the "Aaronic Blessing." At this part of the Old Testament, God is giving details to his people about how to worship at the tabernacle, and eventually the temple. And after the morning sacrifices and worship, the priests are to say this blessing over God's people. And this blessing has been dear to God's people ever since. For example, the oldest writings of the Old Testament we have come from the 600's BC, and it's not a whole copy of the Old Testament, or even a book, but one little part of the Old Testament has survived from that long ago, which is remarkable. And it's a copy of this blessing- a little silver scroll kept in an amulet for someone to wear at all times. This blessing was precious to God's people. In the New Testament, the apostles, especially Paul, would greet his churches by saying, "Grace and Peace" to you- alluding to this blessing. This blessing continued to end the worship service in the synagogue, and eventually Martin Luther incorporated it into his "Deutsche Messe," the German Worship service that he mostly translated from Latin into German so Christians could actually understand what was going on in the worship service. The blessing is not just the sign that it's time to get your purse together and get your hymnal out and flip to the final hymn. Embedded into it is the entire life of the Christian and everything God has done for his people and continues to do for his people. And not just that, it's power. God's Word and God's blessing has power embedded into it- what God declares becomes true- so this blessing, these words have real, supernatural power. And even more remarkable about these words is the way it's structured- in many ways this is a poem with three parts, and two parts within each of the three parts. Notice the repetition- "The LORD, The LORD, the LORD," and the LORD is going to do two things in each part. Why three parts?

The Bible never uses the word "Trinity." It never explicitly says that the Father is God, the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit is God. What we see the Scripture say is that God is one, there is one God over all the earth and the creator of all things, but we also see in the Old Testament the "Spirit of God" mentioned many times, we see the "Angel of the Lord" throughout the Old Testament- specifically in the burning bush, where this "Angel of the Lord" figure is said to be the Lord, yet, distinguished from the Lord. In the New Testament, Jesus refers to God as his Father, but also claims to be one with the Father, and to be the great "I AM" and the Son of God, which would be considered to be God, and then he proves it by rising from the dead! Also, Jesus mentions that he will send the Holy Spirit, and that the Holy Spirit does things that God claims to do, like create things, create faith, and do miracles, and inspire prophecy. We see also in the New Testament God the Father mentioned, but also Jesus, the Son, and the Holy Spirit- like in one of the blessings we use: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." But there's only one God! And yet, the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Spirit is God! What is this? This is what we call, "The Trinity." The God of the

Bible reveals himself as one God, and yet three distinguishable persons- the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Not three Gods, but one God. And the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not mushed together, but three distinguished persons that interact with each other as one God. You don't understand how that all works? Neither does anyone! That's partially the point. If God is truly God, and he's infinitely greater than all of us,then we shouldn't expect to fully understand everything that he says or who he is and how he works. The Triune God cannot be fully understood or comprehended- but as we see today, he can be trusted, he can be loved, he can be praised- and we see this in the **Blessing of the Triune God.**

Firstly, God blesses and keeps. The word "bless" in the Old Testament is much more powerful than the way we use it today. Often, we say it when someone sneezes, which is a tradition saying, "I hope that sneeze doesn't mean you get sick and die! May God bless you and keep that from happening!" When God blesses people, it's not simply him giving stuff. God's blessing means this: God delights in something, God speaks, and God through his Words makes things happen. In creation, God blessed Adam and Eve and said, "be fruitful," and then they were! God delights in his children and he blesses them- that doesn't always mean he gives them what he wants! Sometimes, God specifically blesses us by not giving us what we want, or even taking away something we love, and he does it in love and it's really a blessing to us. And in doing so he also keeps us. That's a fascinating word, and we've talked about it before. God tells us in the Old Testament to "keep" the commandments, which means to hold them dear, to love them, to prioritize them, to treasure them, and so when we say that God keeps us, that means that God cherishes, treasures, holds, protects, and embraces his people. What do you notice here? This is "father" language. God is not your boss, or just your master, or your judge, or even your teacher. He is your Father who delights in you and gives you only good gifts like any good father- he blesses, delights in, loves and keeps, protects, and cherishes his people.

Secondly, the Lord makes his Face shine on us. "Woah. Stop. No way. That can't be right! God, you can't put that in this blessing!" That's what I think Moses said when God told him to write this. Why? Because earlier in the book of Exodus, Moses actually asked to see God's face, and God said "No. No one can see my face and live." The "face" of God is his relational presence, his close presence. Yes, God is everywhere, but his face is where he is specially present, and Moses wanted to see and experience that! But since the fall of Adam and Eve, that has not been possible for humanity. God is perfect, and all of us have sinned against him. That which is unholy and imperfect can stand in the presence of the one who is holy and perfect and continue to exist. Either God would become unholy, or that which is unholy would cease to be. And Moses had to learn that when he asked God to see his face. But now, God is saying, "I want my people to be blessed with this promise, that my face is going to shine on them, that they are going to see my face, even though they are all sinners!" How? God is also going to show grace- God's undeserved love. God is going to do something and give something that his people do not deserve- meanwhile, Moses is saying, "Got that right." But how did God do this? How did God make his face shine on them and give them grace? In Galatians, Paul writes this: *"When the time*

had fully come, God sent his son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive the full rights of sons." How could God dwell with sinful human beings? By becoming a human being so that human beings for the first time since the garden could embrace God and be in his presence and not die. And Jesus Christ, who claimed to be the God of the Old Testament veiled in human flesh, came to offer his life as a sacrifice, to die the death humanity deserved, to have everything we deserved poured on him, so that we could have everything he deserved poured on us. That's grace. God's grace is not that we try our best and God says, "okay, good enough." God's grace is that while we were lost, condemned, with no possibility of ever earning a thing from GOd, God saves us, restores us, forgives us, accepts us, cherishes us, and celebrates us while we don't deserve it, all because of what Jesus has done.

Thirdly, God looks upon us with favor, and gives us shalom. We mentioned this last week, but it needs to be said again. On the cross, Jesus earned for us salvation, forgiveness, and Heaven itself, but how does that become ours? Through faith in Jesus and his sacrifice. By trusting that Jesus is our savior and that we aren't our own saviors. The problem is, no human being is capable of doing that- we are all by nature hostile to God. It's not like God is the one who loves, protects and keeps us, and then dies for us, and then *we* need to make our decision for him. Nope. The very fact that we would ever repent of sin and trust in him is in itself a divine gift of God- the Holy Spirit has worked that out because of his mercy. That is why you and I are believers. That is why we do anything good, because the God in his grace is working and present in a special, unique way. Do you see what's going on here? Everything we have, everything we are, is all completely and only by God's grace. We earn nothing. We deserve nothing. We merit nothing. And God gives us everything only because he loves us. That should make you incredibly confident. If you are still here on this planet, here in this church, trusting in God, knowing you're saved, then God must really, really love you. That should also make you incredibly humble. We are not better than anyone- everything we have, we owe completely and only to God- we don't get any credit! And that place where we are, knowing that God has given us all things, that we are in his hands forever, and we didn't deserve it, and yet get it all- that's called "shalom," or "peace." "Shalom" in Hebrew doesn't mean things always go well or that life is easy. Shalom means that everything is going to be okay. Shalom means wholeness- everything being the way it's meant to be. That is what God offers his children- the absolute assurance and guarantee that even as the world crumbles, which it will, we are going to be okay- that if God is this powerful, enough to bless and keep you, and is so gracious that he would give you everything you don't deserve all because he loves you, then although he can't be controlled or manipulated or even understood, he can be loved, trusted, and praised. That's shalom- we're going to be okay.

A final note- notice what God says about the result of this blessing- his name is upon us. We bear his name. That makes sense. We are "Christians"- those associated with Christ. That means something. It means belonging and family- a Christian is a member of God's house and people. It means accountability- remember that- the way you live, the way you speak, post on social media,

drive, do business, parent, all will be associated with Christ. But finally, it means identity. You are not your success (or lack thereof). You are not your bank account. You are not your number of instagram followers. You are not your degrees. You are not your sexuality. You are not your beauty, accolades, accomplishments, or moral record. Those things don't define you. That's not who you are. Your identity is a son or daughter of the king, chosen, blessed, forgiven, redeemed, cherished, and empowered with shalom. That's what this blessing means. Amen.