

## Sermon for June 15, 2025 – Holy Trinity

Numbers 6:22-27 EHV

Theme: **You belong to the LORD:**

- 1) To the Father, who keeps you.
- 2) To the Son, who is gracious to you.
- 3) To the Holy Spirit, who gives you peace.

*<sup>22</sup> The LORD told Moses <sup>23</sup> to speak to Aaron and to his sons and to tell them to bless the Israelites with these words: <sup>24</sup> The LORD bless you and keep you. <sup>25</sup> The LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you. <sup>26</sup> The LORD look on you with favor and give you peace. <sup>27</sup> In this way they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.*

The words are familiar. You hear them most Sundays. Many think they signal the end of the service, but they signify something far more important: the continuation of God's gracious service toward you.

The Benediction (also known as “the Aaronic Blessing”) is like God telling you: “Don't be afraid: you are my dear child, whom I love. I forgive all your sins and will be with you. Hold on to me in faith, for I will deliver you from every evil attack and bring you safely into my heavenly kingdom.”<sup>i</sup>

Let us meditate on these truths, under the theme: **You belong to the LORD:** 1) to the Father, who keeps you, 2) to the Son, who is gracious to you, 3) and to the Holy Spirit, who gives you peace.

Part One: You belong to the Father, who keeps you.

The Israelites who first heard the words of our sermon text had been journeying in the desert for over two years, travelling from Egypt to the promised land. During this time, they faced many challenges, including arduous travel, food and water shortages, attacks from raiders, and much more. Their desert journey compelled them to rely on the LORD for the most basic necessities. I can imagine them being tempted to wonder, “Where will we find provision and protection in this wilderness if the LORD stops leading us? Our journey to Canaan is difficult and daunting.”

Your journey through life can be difficult and daunting, filled with countless dangers that threaten both your body and soul. You may be tempted to worry about your finances, health, and loved ones. The world seems increasingly confusing and godless. Where can you find safety? Only from the LORD!

Yes, because of the many dangers that threaten God's people, *<sup>22</sup> The LORD told Moses <sup>23</sup> to speak to Aaron and to his sons and to tell them to bless the Israelites.*

The LORD has commanded his representatives throughout history to bless Israel. But who is Israel? To God, Israel is not just a geopolitical place or a specific race of people. Instead, the LORD considers everyone who believes in Jesus for salvation to be part of His Israel, as the Bible says: *Understand, then, that those who believe are the children of Abraham.*<sup>ii</sup>

You belong to the Israel that God wishes to bless with the wonderful assurance of his loving presence throughout your pilgrimage on this earth. That is why He commands His representatives to say to you:

*<sup>24</sup> The LORD bless you and keep you.*

The word “bless” has a basic meaning tied to happiness. Therefore, the first thing God the Father wants to encourage you through His representatives is that He will make you truly happy.

“But if that is the case,” someone might ask, “why did God allow troubles in my life like sickness, financial hardship, crime, mental anguish, chronic pain, or loss of a loved one?”

God the Father does not provide specific answers to these questions in the Bible other than saying that all these things stem from humanity’s sinfulness. Instead, He invites you to trust His promise to work in all things for your good. Why? Because the ultimate happiness He desires for you is not wealth and health here on earth, but an eternity with Him in paradise. God knows that many of the things we think will make us happy are actually harmful to our souls. Allow me to illustrate what I mean.

If I had my way, I would lounge on the couch every day, eating burgers with French fries, drinking root beer, and indulging in ice cream. I could imagine that would make me happy, but would it?

The truth is that my idleness would lead to boredom and depression. My joints would hurt from the extra weight I’d gain, my tummy would ache from all the sugar and carbs, and nights would become sleepless as what I ate came back to haunt me.

True physical happiness comes from eating healthy and exercising physically. Even though I don’t find joy in doing these things, they will enrich my sleep, help my joints, and improve my mood in the long run.

Similarly, the things we think will make us happy in life may actually hurt us in the long run. The hardships we want to avoid may be exactly what we need to strengthen our faith. The Lord knows these things, which is why He asks us to trust that He will work in all things, even the evil we experience, for our good.<sup>iii</sup> That is why the apostle Paul could write what He wrote in our epistle lesson for his morning:

*And we rejoice confidently on the basis of our hope for the glory of God. <sup>3</sup>Not only this, but we also rejoice confidently in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces patient endurance, <sup>4</sup>and patient endurance produces tested character, and tested character produces hope. <sup>5</sup>And hope will not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who was given to us.<sup>iv</sup>*

Yes, regardless of the trials that come your way, you can be happy in the LORD because He promises to will keep His gracious care, as the second part of the verse says:

<sup>24</sup> *The LORD bless you and keep you.*

The word translated as *keep* has the basic idea of “exercising great care.” God the Father exercises such care over you by keeping you from evil. He helps you avoid spiritual and physical harm, provides all that you need to stay alive, and much more. In the Small Catechism, Martin Luther summarizes the Father’s keeping us in this way:

“I believe that God created me and all that exists, and that he gave me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my mind and all my abilities. And I believe that God still preserves me by richly and daily providing clothing and shoes, food and drink, property and home, spouse and children, land, cattle, and all I own, and all I need to keep my body and life. God also preserves me by defending me against all danger, guarding and protecting me from all evil. All this God does only because he is my good and merciful Father in heaven, and not because I have earned or deserved it. For all this I ought to thank and praise, to serve and obey him. This is most certainly true.”

When you consider everything God the Father does to bless and keep you, how can you not be happy and filled with gratitude? Therefore, whenever the devil tempts you to wonder whether God the Father will provide and protect you through life, remember this blessing. Think of the loving care He has shown you in the past and promises to show you in the future. More importantly, remember Jesus and the grace the LORD expresses to you through Him.

Part Two: You belong to the Son, who is gracious to you.

<sup>25</sup> *The LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.*

Have you ever experienced someone’s face shining with happiness over you? Maybe you experienced it as a child when you did something that made your parents happy. Just the thought of my dad’s smiling face brings me joy because of the love it expresses.

Jesus’ face shines upon you, even though you did nothing to deserve it. Instead, your sins give him every reason to be angry with you. Nevertheless, Jesus’ face gleams with joy over the thought of you. Why? For one reason alone: He loves you. He is happy that He could forgive your sins through His sacrifice on the cross so that you can enjoy His loving presence forever. He is happy that you receive this gift by repenting of all sin and trusting Him alone for forgiveness and salvation.

It bears repeating: Jesus’ happiness over you is not a result of your actions; instead, it stems solely from His grace.

“What is grace?” you might wonder. It is God’s undeserved love, freely expressed to you. How did the Lord express His grace to you in Christ? While we were still sinners, Jesus died for us, paying for your sin in full to reconcile you to His Father.<sup>v</sup> By forgiving your sin, He tore down the barrier that separated you from God. Martin Luther describes Jesus’ gracious work for you in this way:

“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. He 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 suffering and death. All this he did that I should be his own, and live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he has risen from death and lives and rules eternally. This is most certainly true.”

Whenever temptation or trouble comes your way, remember the promise Jesus speaks through our sermon text: “I, the LORD, will be gracious to you in the future, just as I have been in the past.” Whenever you feel unworthy of God, remember the gracious love He expressed for you on the cross and how He put His name on you in Holy Baptism. You belong to the LORD.

Part Three: You belong to the Holy Spirit, who gives you peace.

The last part of God’s special blessing deals with the Holy Spirit’s relationship with you.

<sup>26</sup> *The LORD look on you with favor and give you peace.*

As a mother hawkishly watches over her children when she senses danger, so the Holy Spirit is always watching over you. Why? Because you are God’s child through faith in Christ Jesus. Even if you do not perceive it, the Holy Spirit is always with you, working through His Word and Sacraments to keep you in the faith. He guides history and commands his angels concerning you, all to grant you peace.

The Hebrew word for peace (shalom) encompasses wholeness, health, completion, and a restored relationship with God. The Holy Spirit offers you a far greater peace than the world can provide—a peace of conscience through the forgiveness of sins. Because you are at peace with the Almighty God through Christ, there’s nothing you need to worry about. Knowing that the Holy Spirit himself is watching over you, you can face all the troubles that come your way in the peace of knowing that God will make them serve your good.

How does the Holy Spirit offer you this peace? Through His Gospel in Word and Sacrament, as Martin Luther explains:

“I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church he daily and fully forgives all sins to me and all believers. On the Last Day he will raise me and all the dead and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.”

Our sermon text concludes with the LORD saying this about His blessing: <sup>27</sup> *In this way they (God's representatives) will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.*

You belong to the LORD. He sealed you as His own when He put His name on you at your baptism. The Aaronic blessing that we have just considered is God's irreversible contract with believers: The Father promises to keep you. The Son promises to be gracious to you. The Holy Spirit promises to grant you peace.

What incredible comfort there is in hearing God's blessing at the end of each service and taking His promises to heart. They give you confidence and hope as you live your life to His glory, reassuring you that He is with you and working in all things for your everlasting good. Confident of God's loving peace and presence, face each day remembering this blessing and say: I belong to the LORD, and He belongs to me. Nothing can separate me from the love He has for me in Christ Jesus, my Lord.<sup>vi</sup> To Him be the glory now and forever. Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Cf. 2 Timothy 4:18

<sup>ii</sup> Cf. Galatians 3:7-9 and Romans 4

<sup>iii</sup> Cf. Romans 8:28

<sup>iv</sup> Romans 5:2-5 EHV

<sup>v</sup> Cf. Romans 5:8-10

<sup>vi</sup> Cf. Romans 8:35-39