



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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May 26, 2013
Trinity Sunday
Sermon Text: [Numbers 6:22-27](#)
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Numbers 6:22-27](#)
Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 150](#)
Second Lesson: [1 John 5:5-12](#)
Gospel Lesson: [John 16:12-15](#)

Marked By The Name of God

Marked by His care
Marked by His grace
Marked by His peace

In Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

Have you seen the Toy Story movies? Do you remember the Toy Story movies? I don't, so I'm going to need someone's help here, an adult or a child who remembers the Toy Story movies. I remember Woody. I remember Buzz Lightyear. They were trying to get back to the guy who had owned them when he was a kid and now he got older. If I remember correctly, doesn't Woody from time to time lift up his foot and look at his foot? Is that right? What name was on the foot? Can someone tell me? "Andy." Who is the Toy Story fan? Thank you, Joy.

Andy. Do you remember that? Andy's name was written on the foot of the toy. As he is getting older, he is going off to college. From time to time they go back and look at the name that was written on the foot, right? The whole movie is then about how they wanted to be with Andy because Andy had marked them as his own and written his name on them and how important that was.

Look at your foot. No one is looking. Do you have anything written on there?

In the First Lesson that I read to you today, didn't it say that when you have the blessing spoken over you, you are marked by the name of the Lord? "So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them." Think about that for a minute. You have "Lord" written on your foot, your forehead, wherever you would like it. You have the name of the Lord written on you. You are marked by the name of the Lord so that you always remember you belong to God. This is kind of a neat thing to think about.

If you remember the setting in which these words from Numbers were written, God had just given through Moses the Law. Not just the Ten Commandments, but the whole Sinaitic Covenant that said "Do all these things and I will be your God and I will bless you. I will make you into a great nation. Your foes will never overcome you. You'll live long in the land the Lord your God will give you." If you've ever taken the time to read that Law, one thing that becomes obvious is that they couldn't keep it. There is no way they were going to do all those things. In fact, before they left Mount Sinai and the giving of the Law, what had they done? They had built that golden calf, started

worshiping it and said “This is the god that brought you out of Egypt.” Three thousand of them got run through because they were taunting the Lord, and Moses had the Levites kill them. So now they are supposed to keep the Law and God will be their God and God will bless them. It’s obvious they weren’t going to keep it. They had to know in their hearts this wasn’t going to happen. They said, “We’ll do everything that’s written in the Law,” but in the back of their minds they had to be thinking, “This can’t happen.”

In the middle of all this, here comes God and he says, “Here’s what I want you to do Moses. You tell Aaron this is what I want him to say whenever you guys assemble together. I want you to speak this blessing to them because it then will assure them that even though they can’t keep the Law, I remain faithful to myself and I will mark them as my own.” That’s pretty powerful stuff, isn’t it? That’s a wonderful proclamation of God’s love and forgiveness and acceptance in the midst of confrontation of the fact that we can’t do what God wants us to do.

So that blessing that we hear Sunday after Sunday after Sunday is really God taking a sharpie and writing somewhere on your body, “You belong to me. And here is what I am promising to do for you. Here’s the blessings I am promising to give you.” It’s a three-fold blessing of the Lord’s name, and it has two pairs in each one of them. If you look at it or think about it, you’ve heard it all your life. It starts with a more general blessing and then it gets more specific in each of the pairs. They relate really closely to the work of the Trinity if you stop and think about it.

In the First Article of the Apostles Creed, we say, “I believe in the God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth,” and if you remember what you learned to recite about Luther, what Luther wrote as the explanation, not only is he the Creator, but he preserves the world. “He provides for me richly and daily, providing clothing and shoes, food, drink, house and home,” and all those things that you learned to recite once upon a time.

That’s really what the first part of the blessing talks about...the Lord, the God of full and faithful love, the God of the Covenant, the God who is faithful to the promise that he made to Abraham that all nations on earth will be blessed through Abraham, that a Messiah would come and take away their sins. He says, “I’m going to bless you,” but he says, “Here is how I am going to bless you. I am going to keep you. I am going to preserve you. I am going to give you what you need for body and life. Not what you want, but what you need.” That’s what God promises us. That’s First Article blessings.

Our God keeps those promises. For us, we have more than we need for life. We have a super abundance of physical blessings that God has given us that at times you and I have to admit we take for granted. I’ve talked to some of our members that have traveled in other countries, third-world countries. They tell me that they are just shocked by the abject poverty that some people live in and how we in the United States are so blessed and we don’t even notice it. I believe that to be true.

The professor that taught me how to preach, blame him if you'd like, he's in heaven now, his name was Ernst Wendland. He had been in Africa for many numbers of years as a missionary. He would talk to us in class at times. He had a powerful voice. He would start real low, and he would build up and he would be thundering at us at times about how we as Americans take for granted the rich blessings God has given us, because he had lived in the Bush for a number of years in Africa. After class, if we'd go on a break or something, we'd be standing and talking and some guys would just get so mad about "Why does he hate Americans so much? Why does he keep saying that we don't appreciate things?" Duh! It's because we don't! Just the fact that we're upset that we're told we don't tells you that we think somehow that we earn it, we deserve it, or God should give me all the things that I want. And when God doesn't bless me the way I want, when I want and how I want, we get mad at him, don't we?

He's promised to give us what we need for life and he's done that and more. Yet how often do you and I struggle with what God hasn't done for us? That's when you and I need to lift up our foot and see the name the Lord, right?

Even though you and I don't like at times how God takes care of us, he still forgives us. He still says, "You're mine. I've marked you as my own." How wonderful that is. Just like the Israelites, you and I don't do what God says, yet he still says, "You are mine."

The second part of the blessing of the name of the Lord, "the Lord make his face shine upon you," the Lord shine blessings into your life. The Lord pour out blessings into your life. But notice how the second part of the blessing focuses on something much more specific...grace. The Lord "be gracious to you." God's grace, it's a word that means undeserved love. God loves us even though we don't deserve it. While we were still enemies, he loves us. God's grace is chiefly revealed to us in Jesus Christ. He left heaven. He lived in our place. He died in our place. Not because we are so good or because he knew we would do good things and that somehow then he owed that to us. While we were his enemies, Jesus lived and died for us. Jesus left the glory of heaven and became human. God becoming the God-man. He then took on the requirements of the Law. He didn't have to do that, but he did it. That's grace. That's undeserved love. That's what he's done for us.

That's why we can be so confident that we are marked with the name of the Lord because we can see just how desperately he wants to be a part of our life because he left heaven to live and die for us. So when we are confronted with all the things in our life where at times it seems like God seems more hidden, when we are struggling, when we are facing hardships and heartaches and we are saying, "God, why would you let this happen to me?" This is when we have to go back to the cross. This is where we have to go back and see that there is no doubt that he loves us. He's just infinitely smarter than we are and he knows what is for our eternal good. All we can see is what is in front of us. We can't see into eternity. We can't see into all these other things. But we know that we can trust that our God loves us because of this grace.

Book Study meets tonight. I don't know if any of you guys read Chapter 11 yet, but I'm going to quote from it. I thought there was a real great thing Jeske wrote in there. This chapter deals with God's discipline and how at times we struggle when God is hidden and why he allows certain things into our lives. He told the story of a man whose son died in the Korean War. The man asked his pastor, "Pastor, where was God when he allowed my son to die like that?" The pastor said to him, "I don't know. I suppose he was in the same place he was when his Son died for you." I thought that was pretty good. I wish I came up with it on my own.

God is always in the same place. He's always watching over what is for our eternal good, not our earthly happiness, our eternal good. His grace assures us of that. So when we struggle, run back to that cross and there see this incredible love that God has for you that led him to die for you. Then you know that his love will never be removed. That's why the Psalms talk all the time about God's unfailing love.

The final blessing that marks us with the name of the Lord is "the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace." The Lord turn his face toward you. That's a phrase that I've always thought is really interesting. We say, "The Lord look on you with favor." The Lord turn his face toward you, the Lord turn toward you. Think about the things in your life that make you want to turn away, that you don't like to see, and if you were to see it, you're initial reaction would be to turn away.

My sophomore year in high school, in biology class, Warren Dietrich teaching it, he was my football coach. I loved the man. He showed us this Red Cross video, what to do when someone gets hurt. The video had this guy brake his leg and the bone sticking out, and here I was, sophomore, big tough football player. The next thing I knew, I was looking at the ceiling. I dropped to the floor at the bottom of my chair. That had to make a loud thud, right? I don't like that kind of stuff. I could never be a nurse like my wife is. That stuff is just not for me. I would turn away from it.

That's how God views you and me because he is holy. We are sinners. God is a holy God. By all rights, he should turn his face away from us and never give us any blessing, because he demands perfection and we are imperfect. But instead of turning his face away from sin that repulses him, he turns his face towards us and gives us peace by giving us the gift of faith, whether it's in baptism or whether it's through the Word. He gives us the gift of faith. The Holy Spirit, Third Article, "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 and enlightened me with his gifts." He gives us peace. He gives us comfort because he connects us to the truth that what Jesus did for the whole world he did for us personally. He did it for me personally. He did it for you personally.

This peace of knowing that sins are forgiven fully and freely and completely are the life and death of Jesus. The gift of faith gives us this peace of knowing that God has not turned his back on us, nor will he ever. God does not treat us as our sins deserve. Instead he is unfair. He punished Jesus in our place. He was unfair. He gives us

Jesus' perfection. He is unfair. He says, "You are my child through faith. Come and join in the wedding feast of the lamb." He gives us heaven. That's the peace. That's the comfort.

As you and I go through life, there are times when we need that peace. We need that comfort. We need to pick up our foot and look at the bottom of it and see that we are marked with the name of the Lord, because as we live in a sinful world, there are all kinds of things that take away peace, that take away joy, that take away confidence at times. That's why we need the Holy Spirit and Word and Sacrament to be a part of our life. That's why today, when we come to his altar, his very body, his very blood says "I gave this. I poured this out for you. You are my own. You are forgiven. Depart in peace. Your sins are forgiven."

That's what our God does for us. That's what he does every Sunday when we hear the blessing of the name of the Lord. He's marking us as his own. He's telling us "No matter who you are and what you've done, this is what I've done for you. This is what I've promised to do for you." So when you hear the blessing, don't just think about, like I did when I was a kid, "Where are we going for lunch today." Think about how you are marked by the name of the Lord and what an incredible truth that is. Then rejoice in it. Amen.