



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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January 1, 2014

New Year's Day - The Name of Jesus

Sermon Text: [Numbers 6:22-27](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Numbers 6:22-27](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 8](#)

Second Lesson: [Philippians 2:9-13](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Luke 2:21](#)

Promises Kept: Blessed by the Name of the Lord

In Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

I was 13 years old. I started 9th grade. I went to Michigan Lutheran Seminary in Saginaw about 12 miles from home. I lived in the dorms. From the time I was 13 on, for those months of the year I lived away from home, and as a 13-year-old going off to live in the dorm, mom seemed to have gone through a lot of laundry markers. The kind of markers where you can write on the tag so it wouldn't wash off. I remember going to the store and buying them and all of a sudden I'd look in my clothes when I went off to school, and my name was all over the tag. I don't know if she thought I was going to forget who I was or what was going on at first, but if you are going to go live in the dorm and you have all your stuff... it was written on all my stuff. Soap dish so someone didn't steal your soap dish. Who is going to want to steal a soap dish is what I thought. Still, mom did it. She put my name on everything so that it was marked as mine so someone else wouldn't take it. It makes sense. It's what a lot of the other kids' moms evidently had done also when I was living at the dorms. It declared to everyone that it was mine. Don't take it. Their name told me it was theirs so I shouldn't take theirs.

Have you ever thought about it? Every week when you hear the words that I read to you a little bit ago, the Word that God told Moses to tell Aaron, "This is what you are to speak over the Israelites when they are assembled together," that every time that's been spoken over you God has been taking his marker and scribbling his name on your forehead? Isn't that kind of what God said? "So they will put my name on the Israelites and I will bless them." For over 3,500 years those words have been spoken over God's people as a blessing, as a promise from God. A promise from God that reminds us we are his. We are bought and paid for by the life and death of Jesus Christ. We belong to him. We don't belong to Satan anymore. We are God's. We are his heirs. We are his children.

And also, those words are spoken as a promise of God's blessing, a three-fold blessing that he is very specific with Moses about. "This is what I want Aaron to say. I want God's people to know these things about the blessing that comes from the name of the Lord." He uses that name, that special name of God, the covenant name of God, the name that the children of Israel wouldn't even speak because it said, "Don't misuse the name of the Lord your God" in the Commandments. So when they read their Hebrew Bible, they didn't read this name, Yahweh, which means "I Am," the name he told Moses to tell the Israelites "This is who sent me. The I Am." They would never read

that name. They would substitute another one. Adonai instead of Yahweh, thinking that if they didn't speak the name, they couldn't misuse it. That kind of misses the point.

But it's the special name that God uses for himself. The name that is the God of the covenant love. The name which he proclaimed a sermon to Moses about to say "This is who I am. The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love" and so on that he spoke in the Book of Exodus. That name, slow to anger and abounding in love, brings us these blessings. These are the promises God has made to us. And these are the promises he has kept and he continues to keep day after day in our lives.

In this three-fold blessing, he talks about blessing us with protection or providing for us with grace and with peace. When you look at that three-fold blessing, it's hard not to think of God revealing himself as baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Each of the blessings has two pairs of parallel phrases. The first one is always more general. The second one becomes more specific. The Lord bless you. The Lord bless you is not just something for sneezing. It's a general thing saying the Lord pour out his favor upon you in a sense. The Lord be with you and bless you, bring blessing to you. But the specific blessing he says he is going to give you is the Lord keep you. The Lord bless you and keep you. Keep you... the phrase has a picture like someone standing guard watching over you. God keeps us day after day. He didn't just create the world and forget about it. He preserves us daily. Isn't that what we learned to say when we memorized the First Article, in the explanation? He still preserves me richly and daily by giving me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife, children, land, cattle, all I need to keep my body and life. The Lord keeps us. He preserves us. He gives us all that we need for body and life. He does that not just for his people but for all people. Such is the grace of our God. He pours out blessing on those who love him and those that don't love him.

He pours out blessings on those who love him maybe a lot one day and a little the next. He pours out the blessing of providing for us and keeping us even though we often don't acknowledge that the blessing comes from him. We pat ourselves on the back. Often we take it for granted. Or we're like the Israelites and grumble about what he has blessed us with. We look at what someone else has and we think the Lord should have blessed us with something different. Everything that we have comes from the hand of God.

Think about that for a minute. That means everything I have comes from the hand of God. It also means that everything you have comes from the hand of God. If I'm upset that I don't have what you have, I'm really saying, "God, you messed up and didn't provide for me the way you should have." Then I'm sinning against our God.

It's an amazing thing that you and I probably often take for granted that he blesses us and keeps us. He gives us what we need for body and life. But he has promised to do it, and he has kept that promise. With as much at times that hangs over some of our belts, he's done it abundantly, hasn't he? That's our God. Abundant grace and blessing.

The second part of the blessing of the name of the Lord is the Lord make his face shine upon you. Again, more general. Then it gets very specific. And be gracious to you. May God make his face shine on you... may he bless you. But may he do it not in the way you deserve. Isn't that what grace is, giving us the exact opposite of we deserve?

We don't deserve what we have for life, but the one thing we certainly don't deserve that involves God's grace is what he gives us in his Word and in the Sacraments. That's the forgiveness of sins. You and I don't deserve the grace of God. You and I could never earn the grace of God. Yet God's grace caused God to leave heaven and be born. It caused him to be under the Law in our place, which means that his blood first flowed to pay for our sins I suppose at his circumcision, when he was placed under the Law. Our God's grace does all this for us, not because we've earned or deserved it, but merely because he is gracious and merciful.

If you want to know what God's grace looks like, look in the manger, look in the life of Christ in the Gospels, and look at his death and what he endured because you and I sinned. He was sinless. He didn't deserve any of it, yet he took it all on his back so that you and I might have our face warmed by the sunshine of God's grace. And you and I live in it day after day. You and I might become so familiar with it that we take it for granted. Every morning when we wake up and lift our head off the pillow and we think, "I am a forgiven child of God," it should just amaze us that God loves us that much. All I deserve from God is to be squashed like a bug and sent to hell for eternity because I'm a sinner. You too.

But God, in his grace, day after day forgives us, loves us and for the sake of Christ, think of how many times he's forgiven us for the same sin that we commit over and over and over. That's his grace. We see it in Jesus. God's grace is poured out on all people. Christ came to be the atoning sacrifice not only for our sins but the sins of the whole world. That's what the Holy Spirit tells us in Scripture.

But for you and I who believe that Jesus is our Savior, we probably know what the last part of the blessing of the name of the Lord is all about then. The Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace. Again more general. The Lord look on you with favor, or turn his face toward you. Turn his face toward you is literally what it says. And give you peace.

What Jesus did for the whole world becomes ours when God works faith in our hearts and now there is peace between us and God. The Comforter, the Holy Spirit, is the one who works this gift of faith. We'll confess it in our Confession of Faith this morning in

Luther's words of the Third Article. But think about the first part of that phrase for a minute. The Lord turn his face toward you or the Lord look on you with favor.

There are a lot of things in life I couldn't do. I couldn't fix your car no matter how much I might want to. I don't think I'd make a good EMT. If I was the first one to show up at an accident scene and it was a car accident and there are bones sticking out of flesh, they'd be putting oxygen on me. It wouldn't do you any good if I was the one there to help you. My natural inclination at a site like that is to look away from it because it's not something I enjoy and it's not something that is going to be good for me to look at because I'll drop over and faint or something like that.

God in Scripture tells us he hates sin. In the Book of Psalms he is even more specific. He says he hates sinners. When he sees sin and sinners, it's repulsive to him and he should turn away from it, like I would that accident. But that phrase, the Lord turn his face toward you, the Lord look on you in that grace, the Lord look on you with favor, the Lord give you the blessing of peace by sending the Spirit into your heart and not abandoning you to your sin, but sending the Spirit into your heart who leads you to believe that what Jesus did for the whole world he did for you. That's one of the blessings of the name of the Lord, the promise that God has kept and he continues to keep day after day. He longs day after day to pour out the Spirit into your heart and increase your trust in that peace and help you through the difficulties of life by helping you to focus on that peace. He wants to pour that Spirit out in you through Word and through Sacrament. The more you spend with that, the more the Spirit will strengthen you and keep you in the faith and sustain you in the faith and help you through the troubles and the trials that we have as we walk the face of this earth.

God's protection, God's grace, and God's peace. It's the same blessing he's been giving to you since the day your first believed. Don't become apathetic to it just because it's always there. Recognize your own sinfulness, and then rejoice that God, week after week, continues to scribble his name on your forehead and say, "You belong to me. You're mine. Therefore, I'm going to bless you." That's what he does. Amen.