

Grace and peace to you from Him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood.

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them: "The LORD bless you and keep you; THE LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace." ' "So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them."

Numbers 6:22-27 Trinity Sunday A 6/11/17 1 Pet. 1:1-9 Mt. 28:16-20 Ps. 148 Resp. Ps.: 115
Hymns: 246, 250, 39, 800

THE TRIUNE GOD BLESSES US

- 1. We have our Heavenly Father's protection**
- 2. We have our Savior's grace**
- 3. We have our Comforter's peace**

Dear fellow believers in the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

The Lord told Moses, *"Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel.'"* Aaron and his sons and descendants were the priests. God told them that they were to pronounce His blessing on His people. Because God first gave this blessing through Aaron and his sons it has come to be known as the "Aaronic Benediction," or "Aaronic Blessing." We New Testament believers as spiritual descendants of Aaron and members of God's "royal priesthood" (1 Pet. 2:9) still proclaim this blessing: ***"The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace."*** "The LORD" is named three times here, referring to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. This morning we'll consider from the "Aaronic Benediction" how **THE TRIUNE GOD BLESSES US: We have our Heavenly Father's protection; We have our Savior's grace; and We have our Comforter's peace.**

1

The name "LORD" is found a total of four times in our text. "The LORD" in the Hebrew is Jehovah, "the existing One," that is, the only living God. Jehovah is the God of the Covenant who promised and sent His Son, Jesus Christ, as the Savior of the world. Jehovah is our God, and we are His people. Jehovah is always with us. Jehovah loves us. Jehovah protects us. Jehovah saves us. Jehovah is taking us to heaven. We can have no greater blessing than to be blessed by the living God!

"The LORD bless you and keep you." The idea from the original text is that God "continually guards and protects" us, keeping us as His own. When the Lord first gave this blessing to His people, they were traveling through the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land. What a comfort for them to be told, *"The LORD ... keep you continually."* The living God – their God –

was ‘keeping’ them. The Lord had ‘kept’ them during their four hundred years in Egypt as they grew from some seventy members of Jacob’s family into the nation of Israel. The Lord had ‘kept’ them during their years of slavery in Egypt, and set them free. The Lord had ‘kept’ them safe from Pharaoh and his army, destroying the Egyptian army in the Red Sea. The Lord would ‘continue to keep’ them throughout their forty years in the wilderness, and bring them safely into the Promised Land.

“The LORD bless you and keep you continually” – “guard you and protect you continually.” When we think of the particular Person of the Trinity who protects us, we think of God the Father. Whatever we go through in life, wherever we are, we always have our Heavenly Father’s protection. The psalmist says, *“My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. ... The LORD will keep you from all harm – He will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore”* (Ps. 121:2, 7-8). Our Heavenly Father is ‘protecting’ us and ‘keeping’ us as His beloved, blessed children all through our lives. Finally our Heavenly Father will lead us into the Promised Land of heaven where He will *“protect”* and *“keep”* us safe with Him for all eternity!

2

We’re told, literally, *“The LORD make His face shine upon you continually.”* When a child knows he has done wrong, how it hurts him to see his father or mother look at him with disappointment, upset, and disapproval. Because of our sins we deserve to have God look on us in anger and judgment. But remember, *“the LORD”* who here gives us His blessing is the Covenant God – the Savior God who looks on you and me, sinners though we are, with a face beaming with love: *“The LORD make His face **shine** upon you **continually.**”* We pray with King David, *“[LORD] let Your face shine on Your servant; save me in Your unfailing love”* (Ps. 31:16).

We’re told, literally, *“The LORD ... be gracious to you continually.”* When we think of the particular Person of the Trinity through whom we receive God’s grace, we think of God the Son. In blessing us, God turns to you and me a face radiating with His grace: God’s undeserved love in Jesus for us sinners. In his Gospel John says about Jesus, *“We have seen His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, **full of grace and truth**”* (Jn. 1:14). The fullest demonstration of God’s grace – God’s undeserved love – is found in Jesus’ perfect life, and His innocent death for us on the cross. Jesus has taken all of our sins away and won for us God’s forgiveness and grace: *“The LORD ... be **gracious** to you continually.”*

3

We’re told, literally, *“The LORD lift up His countenance upon you”* (or, *“turn His face toward you”*) *“continually.”* Because of our sins we deserve to have God turn His face **away** from us and forsake us. The psalmist says: *“How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?”* (Ps. 13:1). At times, when our sins and our guilt weigh heavily on our conscience, it can feel as if God actually **has** turned His face away from us. Praise God, because Jesus was forsaken by His Father for our sins in our place, God will never forsake us. For Jesus’ sake, God has given us His blessing: *“The LORD turn His face **toward** you **continually.**”*

Because the Lord's face is turned toward us we also receive **this** blessing, literally: "*The LORD ... give you peace continually.*" When we think of the particular Person of the Trinity who works faith in our hearts to know Jesus and the peace He brings, we think of God the Holy Spirit. This is why Jesus calls the Holy Spirit "*the Comforter*" when He says, "*The Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance that I have told you*" (Jn. 14:26, KJV). One commentator states: "The Comforter ... reveals to us the things of Christ. He works faith and salvation in our hearts. He fills us with the joy of forgiveness, the hope of salvation and the confidence of eternal life" ("Sermon Studies On The Old Testament," series B, p. 52, NPH). The Holy Spirit gives us faith in Jesus who died for our sins on the cross, giving us peace. Jesus assures us, "*Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you. ... Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid*" (Jn. 14:27). In her book, "Praying The Names Of Jesus," Ann Spangler writes: "The Hebrew word for peace: *shalom* ... means much more than the absence of conflict or the end of turmoil. *Shalom* conveys not only a sense of tranquility but also of wholeness and completion. ... Jesus [is] the One who brings peace to the world. ... Paul ... [said] of Jesus, "*He Himself is our peace*" (Eph. 2:14). [Jesus is] ... the source of all peace...." "Jesus reconciled us making peace through His blood. Peace with God produces peace ... within ourselves" (pp. 106, 108).

After instructing Aaron and his sons to pronounce His blessing on His people the Lord said, "*They shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I*" (literally, "*I Myself*") "*will bless them.*" We put our name on something that belongs to us. For God to say that He 'puts His name on us' means that God has made us His children by faith in Jesus. For Jesus' sake, God pours out His blessings on us, His dear children.

One Christian will often end a note to another Christian with the word, "Blessings," or something similar. When a fellow believer has a trip or a task ahead of him or her we say, "May the Lord bless you." We're expressing the desire, and prayer, that God would bless that fellow believer in what he or she is undertaking. The three-fold Aaronic Benediction, spoken to God's people back then and to God's people today, is not just an expressed desire: "I hope the Lord blesses you in this way." When we hear the words, "*The LORD bless you and keep you continually; the LORD make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you continually; the LORD turn His face toward you and give you peace continually,*" those are **God's** words. When God's Word is proclaimed, **God Himself** is speaking to us. Through the words of His blessing proclaimed to us, God actually **gives** us the blessing expressed in those words. As God said, "*I Myself will bless them.*" **THE TRIUNE GOD BLESSES US: We have our Heavenly Father's protection; We have our Savior's grace; and We have our Comforter's peace.** Truly, we are **blessed!** Amen.