

June 16, 2019 (Pentecost 1 / Trinity Sunday C)

Numbers 6:22-27

“Timeless Words”

Years ago, back in Ottawa, I had an incredible opportunity: I got to see the *Dead Sea Scrolls* with my own eyes. The exhibit (on loan from Israel) was making its way across North America, and came to our city. That amazing discovery was further proof that God’s **timeless words** have been accurately transmitted down through the centuries and millennia. Liberal critics of Scripture had assumed (and been teaching) that the Old Testament was edited and changed dramatically over those years – and they had their theories blown up when they discovered these manuscripts that were a full 1,000 years older than what we had to that point, and – *shockingly to them, but no surprise to us* – the TIMELESS WORDS of God had been faithfully transmitted during that millennium too; according to God’s own promise.

There was one thing in that exhibit that didn’t receive a whole lot of attention – but I found it absolutely fascinating. They had there, on display, a tiny piece of silver with the oldest Hebrew writing we currently have. It predates the Dead Sea Scrolls by another 700 years (~700 B.C.). It was carefully etched on to a tiny piece of metal, then rolled up, and worn around someone’s neck as a piece of jewellery – a way of keeping God’s Word close to one’s heart. The timeless and precious words in that necklace are the words of our text / words we too treasure and rejoice to hear at the end of every worship service:

Numbers 6:22-27 (NIV 84 – the translation of these verses that we’re most familiar with and hear every Sunday.)

The LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron and his sons, ‘This is how you are to bless the Israelites. [Aaron and his sons were the priesthood – so this was to be a regular part of their worship lives, just as it is to this day.] 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 look on you with favor
and give you peace.’**

So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.”

We had opportunity in the Bible class just before worship to look at what Scripture says (and teaches) about the TRINITY. I’m going to throw out there a little theological tidbit that we didn’t get into this morning. Confessional Lutheran theologians (who pour over Scripture so carefully

and in depth) wrote, regarding the Trinity and His working in the world, that: **“Opera ad extra sunt indivisa aut communia.”**

English please: “The external workings of the Triune Godhead are indivisible and in common.” *English please:* Well, you likely learned in Catechism class that the Father is the Creator, the Son is the Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit is the Sanctifier. That’s legitimate; Scripture speaks that way. But the point of this theological phrase is to remind us that Scripture speaks of ALL the members of the Trinity working on those things together and in common. The Son (John 1) and the Spirit, mentioned in Genesis, were active at creation. The Father and the Spirit were at work in the redemption of the world; just think of Jesus’ baptism. Jesus says no one can believe in him unless the Father draws him (John 6:44) we usually think of the Holy Spirit doing the converting. And we’re told in Romans 8 that Christ lives in our hearts along with the Holy Spirit, while Jesus told us that He and the Father come and make their home with us (John 14:23).

So why on earth am I bringing up this point? We’re going to look at this **blessing** of our Triune God this morning – and as we focus on the 3 parts of the blessing, we’re going to notice: **“Hey, that sounds like what the Father does / that sounds like what the Son does / that sounds like what the Spirit does.”** There’s nothing wrong with saying that, I just want you to tuck it away back there that what you say about each part of this blessing, you could also say about each Member of the Triune Godhead, that’s legitimate too – when they work in this world, they all participate in the saving work that is done.

Before we jump into this 3-fold BLESSING before us today, we need to examine that name **“LORD”**. It’s used in each of the 3 parts of the blessing, and it could refer to any Member of the Triune Godhead – and it’s defined for us and explained by the LORD Himself in **Exodus 34:6-7** **“The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.”** His #1 job is showing compassion, grace, and love – through bringing us the forgiveness of sins. THIS is the LORD who blesses us in countless ways. His Name is placed upon us, His people – here in these *timeless words*:

1. **The LORD Bless you.** We say that when we sneeze, and it doesn’t mean a whole lot. To understand its meaning here, recognize this word is the opposite of curse. When you curse someone (and I hope you don’t) it means you wish something bad would happen to them, and you want them to suffer and be punished. When you bless someone, you want the best for them; you want them to prosper and to be happy and satisfied. Parents want the best for their children, so this sounds like our Heavenly Father doesn’t it? He wants what’s best for

us; He wants to bless us and see us happy and satisfied – both here and in eternity.

2. **The LORD Keep you.** This Hebrew word that God chose means to guard, to watch over, and to protect. When you hear “the Lord KEEP you” recognize that you go out into this world with the most advanced, powerful, unbreakable, priceless security system in the universe. The Almighty God is guarding and protecting you. *So how on earth could bad things EVER happen to God’s children?* They ONLY happen when our Loving God determines that it has to be that way for His loving plans to be accomplished. In order to save human souls and achieve His glorious plans, sometimes human bodies need to get mashed up a bit, or a lot. Jesus’ resurrection is proof that there’s nothing He can’t fix, and according to His promise He’ll give us (in eternity) so much more than He’ll ever allow to be taken from us down here. Take comfort knowing nothing gets by His security net, so if trouble happens, God’s got a loving plan and purpose for it. You can count on Him – that sounds like our heavenly Father doesn’t it?
3. **The LORD Make his Face shine upon you.** We don’t speak that way today. But we do have a similar saying: “Bright eyes.” It means the person is happy and filled with joy. This phrase pictures the grandparent after much time seeing the grandchild again. They both light up with joy. A happy face – that sounds like Jesus doesn’t it? How incredible is it to know that because He atoned for all your sins, He lights up like this when He looks at you!
4. **The LORD be gracious to you.** This Hebrew word specifically means to have mercy and take pity on the poor and needy. This is God who saw the lost condition of Humanity and DID SOMETHING ABOUT IT. It sounds like Jesus doesn’t it? He took on human flesh and solved the seemingly impossible problem of sin that infests us all and keeps the sinner from entering God’s holy presence. He did something about it, and now because of His perfect life, and death on the cross, we can have the gift of forgiveness, His perfection, and eternal life.
5. **The LORD look on you with favor.** Think of things you did/said/thought that were wrong and sinful. If you know the extent of God’s Law and His high expectations, you probably don’t have to think too hard. Would you want your loved ones standing around you watching when you mess up, when you give in, when you make the wrong decisions? We might be able to hide certain things from them, but God is always watching! He SHOULD turn around in disgust and walk right out of our lives shouldn’t He? If God was watching everything we did, heard all we said, and knew every thought – He

would give up on us, because we disgust him. But – the Spirit says to my heart and yours through the Gospel – Christ took all your sins, He covers up all your mistakes; ALL of them – 100%. God looks at you **without** disgust because Christ bore God’s disgust over you on Calvary 2000 years ago. You are His child, and He lovingly looks upon you, He doesn’t see your sin because it’s gone – that sounds like the Holy Spirit speaking to us doesn’t it? He takes the Gospel message off the page and plants it in our hearts and convinces us that everything Jesus did . . . was for us.

6. **The LORD give you peace.** “*SHALOM*” is the word. It means everything is OK. It’s tranquility and calm. Everything is as it should be; therefore contentment is yours. That sounds like what the Spirit does for us doesn’t it? He convinces the believer through the words and promises of Scripture that everything is alright with God and it’s all going to be just fine – even when the believer is losing everything that life has to offer, or losing life itself. He says that you can have peace knowing your Lord loves you, your sins have been atoned for, He’s got a plan for you, and what you’re going through, and He’s got an eternal home for you that He can’t wait to show you. Be at peace; God is with you, and God is never out of control.

I hope these **timeless words** take on fresh meaning for you today. I hope they help you come closer to God and appreciate how close He is to you. I hope they help you see your life in view of the big picture. I hope this blessing stays with you . . . forever.

I began the sermon by telling you how these ancient words were found in a little piece of jewellery that’s about 2700 years old. Will anything in your life still be around in 2700 years? Will anything about you still remain after that length of time? YES - your soul (and by then maybe your resurrection body), your relationship with God will still be there, your fellow believers will still be at your side. Jesus also says the things we **do** for Him and His followers (down here) will be remembered off into eternity too (Mark 9:41). They touch souls, and souls last forever.

The unbelieving world has nothing that truly LASTS, and it deals with death by saying things like this: “*He will always be alive as long as he lives in our hearts.*” It sounds nice, but, after 2700 years have gone by, does that mean the person is finally dead? 2700 years is a long time (I doubt any of our possessions will last that long) – but souls last forever. Make your time here count. Know that it does. Soak up God’s **Timeless Words** – words like these, which last forever. Then go out and live for Him. God has put His NAME on you, and He **will** bless you – He promised that!