

## First Sunday after Pentecost — Holy Trinity

June 16, 2019

Christ the Rock Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Farmington, New Mexico

**Number 6:22-27** The Lord said to Moses, **23** “Tell Aaron and his sons, ‘This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them:

**24** ““The Lord bless you  
and keep you;

**25** the Lord make his face shine on you  
and be gracious to you;

**26** the Lord turn his face toward you  
and give you peace.”

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

### “Blessed Trinity Brings Blessed Relationship”

As soon as the door opens, the pitter patter of paws races across the floor. Before she even has time to close the front door and put her keys down, Fritz is on top of her, jumping up, licking her, excitedly welcoming her home. Even as she walks through the house putting down her purse and putting away the groceries, Fritz won't let her out of his sight. He follows her everywhere. He nuzzles up against her to remind her he isn't going to leave her side. Each little pat and scratch she gives is met with wide eyes and gleeful shaking. These are the moments Fritz lives for. He can't get enough. It never gets old. Being with his family makes him feel more like who he is supposed to be and he is proud to belong to them.

Throughout that entire exchange, Mitzi just watches from a distance. Her ears perk up when the door opened and she quickly gets out of the way once Fritz comes bounding clumsily past. But Mitzi could not care less. It doesn't really matter either way whether the family is home or gone, whether they are looking to play with her or they've forgotten all about her. Mitzi is fine all on her own. Actually, as Fritz's front door celebrations grow more and more out of control, Mitzi starts looking for her opportunity. One day her owner will be so distracted by all the jumping and licking that she will forget to close the front door. That's when Mitzi will make her move. She will just sneak by unnoticed during all the commotion and be outside. All on her own. Not answerable to anyone. Not made to do tricks or obey commands. That is the life Mitzi envisions for herself.

At the risk of offending this who aren't particularly fond of pets, which best pictures your attitude toward God? We are familiar with these few verses from Numbers chapter 6. Maybe you've heard this blessing from God a couple times or a couple hundred times. But as we dig into these verses, something stands out. God describes this blessing first given to Aaron the brother of Moses as the way he will put his name on his people. Now, my initial thought was the way ranchers and shepherds keep track of their livestock. And you may remember those times from your childhood or have heard the stories from your parents and grandparents. But I'm guessing more of us have one or two or eight furry critters inside our homes than still regularly care for cattle or sheep or horses. And we can easily think of

the way people react to the presence of God in their lives. It's either an all-important relationship bringing indescribable joy. Or God is just there. Not really making any difference. Just as soon avoid him. You can embrace God putting his name on you celebrating with all the joy in your being. Or you can take that attempt as an insult to your dignity and do your best to run away.

But here is the big takeaway from Numbers 6:22-27, whether those words are super familiar or this is the first time you've heard them. We can acknowledge that they don't specifically mention God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We can appreciate the way our three-in-one God is scattered all throughout Scripture, making his presence obvious the way you can stand back and admire artifacts you just discovered out on the Bisti even though they have been left there for centuries. The truth about the Holy Trinity — that's the name Christians have come up with for our God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — speaks to our essential relationship with God. Because he reaches down to put his name on us and bless us, we have a personal relationship with the Blessed Trinity. We have a personal God who created each one of us. We have a personal God who cares for every soul. Our God brings his presence into our lives in infinitely impactful ways. The Blessed Trinity brings God's people a blessed relationship.

A friend of mine who frequently works with college students threw out an interesting comment recently. He told me he was surprised by how many people in their early twenties suffer from anxiety. From all appearances they look successful, beautiful, popular. But inside they are filled with self-doubt. Depressed even. And it wasn't just one person. He kept running into more and more young people with similar stories. My friend's experience is backed up by research. So many people who we think should be happy and healthy are deeply troubled. There is a shocking number of people suffering from anxiety and other identity-related issues.

Those researchers and their studies always suggest issues that may contribute to the general unhappiness and struggles. Causes as simple as more assignments and more challenging courses for college students to theories as complex as the role of ever-present devices for an entire generation are suggested by some of these experts. But they point us to some basic truths we can all settle on. Something is missing. And one thing they aren't finding is a deep and meaningful relationship.

Think of how many times you have heard someone tell you "the universe" was giving them a message. People can acknowledge that some power out there is in control and giving some direction to their daily decision making. Yet people are pushing back against the idea of a personal God and a personal relationship with that God. We can point to the way human beings have destroyed biblical authority for their lives then gotten rid of any kind of all-powerful, all-knowing God. We can trace back the influence of people who claim impersonal origins of our world plus time plus chance brings about my existence. That trend over the past few centuries away from a transcendent God has left so many people in despair.

We can point out cultural and societal trends. But the root cause is much more basic. There is a part of everyone one of us that bristles at God's promises. When God says: "**The Lord bless you and keep you,**" there is a little part of us that has the little hairs on the back of our neck rise up in defensiveness. (Numbers 6:24) Humans find the promises of God as their heavenly Father too limiting and confining. Like he is trying to put us on a leash. Even God's people suffer from a reluctance to fully embrace this kind of relationship with God. We all want to live free by our own rules on our own terms. We don't want anyone else in control of our lives and we don't want to be answerable to anyone.

It's actually because of that tendency inside every human heart that we need the blessings that can only come from our blessed Trinity. Your heavenly Father wants to bless you and keep you in a relationship where he can exercise great care over you. So he doesn't back down or give up when you try to wrestle control of your life away or downplay your relationship with God. He is persistent. He is gracious. Today we celebrate fathers who are there for their children. Your heavenly Father isn't just present in some hazy sense like some unknown powers of the universe. Your Father is personally involved to do what is best for you.

The second part of this blessing says: "**the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.**" (Numbers 6:25) When that phrase about the Lord's face shining on his people is used in the Bible it refers to the way God gives his attention to his people and comes to their rescue. God is your Father who looks at rebellious and wayward children the way only a proud parent can. He sees the messes we make of our lives and he responds in loving compassion. That graciousness describes the heartfelt response of someone who sees a serious need and gives to take care of that need. Your Father in heaven responds to your efforts to being your own person by sending His Son to be one of us. For all your efforts that lead away from God toward the dead end of despair and fear, Jesus steps in by running toward your need. For all the things you are struggling with in your life, for all the good things you can't find, Jesus gives you blessings through his ultimate sacrifice made on the cross, the blessings transferred to you because of his perfect life. You are blessed by your relationship with the blessed Trinity to have a Father who keeps you by pouring out grace from Jesus, God's Son.

Because you have God the Father and God the Son working for you, you also get to enjoy lasting and practical benefits of your relationship with God the Holy Spirit. The third part of the blessing says: "**the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.**" (Numbers 6:26) This part of the blessing lets you know God doesn't turn his back on you. God looks on you and sees you through the lens of everything Jesus did for you. Instead of anger and wrath, you have God's favor and acceptance. Instead of worrying about what you've done and wondering about your worthiness, you have God's peace. The Holy Spirit delivers to you what you most desperately need and can't get on your own. Through the care of your Father and the sacrifice of His Son, you have a whole and wholesome relationship with your God. Your God doesn't leave you to fend for yourself to find meaning and happiness on your own terms.

You can comb through the Bible to help piece together the truth about the blessed Trinity and still struggle to understand all the ways the Bible defines the nature of your God. But God doesn't record these teachings in the Bible so you can pass theological tests or check all the right boxes. It's not even absolutely essential to be able to explain the inner workings of the Trinity. It's enough for God to get across to you that you benefit in life and for all eternity through your relationship with your God.

She couldn't help it. When she saw him on the side of the street, she had to slow down her car. As she opened the door to get out, he flinched and moved farther away. But she kept after him, moving gently, slowly. And finally when she communicated that she wasn't a threat, that she wasn't going to hurt him, that when she got close enough to see just how miserable was his condition. His fur was dirty and matted. Scratches and scrapes were signs he had an unfortunate run in with a bigger dog or worse. And when she picked him up she could feel how frail he was, how malnourished he looked. None of that stopped her. In fact, it just made her more determined to give him the care he needed, to bath and feed and take care of him. And after those selfless acts of love, he would be devoted to her forever.

In your sorry and wretched state, your God reached down to you. In Jesus Christ, you are cleansed of every impurity. Your Father shields you with his love and protection. The Holy Spirit brings you to faith to give you a home. You have the blessing of belonging.

When you struggle, remember your baptism. Through water and Word the Holy Trinity reached down and brought you into his family. When you received the sign of the cross and the name of the blessed Trinity, God placed his invisible tattoo on you. When you question and doubt, embrace your identity as a child of God. God's name is still on you. When things are going well for you, prize above every other blessing in life your relationship with your Triune God. In your relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit you have an abundant life filled with his gifts. The blessed Trinity brings you into a blessed relationship. Amen.