**Advent Theme: Benediction**

**December 18th 2024 Midweek Advent III**

**Text: Numbers 6:22-27** 0755

**Theme: Benediction: Imparting His Name.**

May God’s benediction be multiplied unto you all each day, through the gift of His Son Jesus Christ, born into the flesh for our good. Amen. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ: Two weeks ago we began this series of sermons, looking closely at the benediction given by God through Aaron in the Old testament. It is a benediction meant not just for the people of the nation of Israel, but for all Christians of all time, and it is a benediction which should be highly prized by all who receive it. And thus we heard that God blesses us first by keeping us, it was a study of God’s preservation of mankind, both in body and in soul. He preserves and keeps His Christians in body by giving them all that they could ever need for their bodies in this life. Luther enumerates many of these things in the explanation of the First Article, in his Small Catechism. In truth God has given us all that we need to support this body and life, such as food and drink, clothing and shoes, house and home, spouse, children, and the like. Every one of these gifts is given for our benefit and health, and always in view of the greatest gift, that of God’s Son sent to mankind to save them. In addition, and more importantly, God keeps His children in their souls. He guards and protects their faith as a bruised reed that He nurses it, He keeps it from breaking altogether by giving His Word and sacraments for their strengthening and comfort. It is by these means that God keeps us in the faith and they too are precious gifts of God, for they are comprehended in the one great Gift of Jesus Christ, manifested to us at His birth.

And so it is that our faithful God blesses us with a second benediction, that of His grace and mercy, of which we studied last Wednesday evening. By His mercy He gives us a gift of nothing, for His mercy is that which does not give us what we deserve, namely His wrath and damnation on account of our sin. Now His wrath and damnation are such that fear overtakes our flesh when we seriously consider our own deaths or the prospect of Judgment Day. And truly it is the very work of the Law, a good and right work, to make us fear His wrath and punishment, for without such teaching it is impossible to receive the second of these benedictions, that of His grace. This being the case it is evident, and undeniable by all serious Christians, that grace is just that, grace. It cannot be merited or earned, it cannot be infused into us as a result of our taking hold of it. It is a gift of God’s love when we truly do not deserve such. Indeed it shines upon us as the warm sun on a cold day. And it is here that we find the last of God’s benedictions unto us. It is here that we find imprinted that which was promised in Scripture: *“And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of God in their foreheads.” (Rev. 7:1-3)* The revelation of Jesus Christ, which the apostle John received was a glimpse of eternal things. It is not a recording of earthly events in chronological order, but truths which are carried out in eternity, and hence beyond the realm of time. What John here sees is the work of God, yea the blessing of God, in putting His name upon His children. The idea of marking them upon their foreheads is to show to whom they belong, where their allegiance lies, similar to how we wear hats with our sports teams emblazoned on them, to show our allegiance. God puts His name upon them and blesses them. Thus it is that our theme for this evening is: Imparting His Name. We will hear of this according to our text for tonight which is found in the sixth chapter of the book of Numbers beginning at verse twenty two.

**Quote text here.**

Let us pray, O Lord almighty, our Savior Jesus Christ, we are ever thankful to Thee for Thy many precious gifts. Time would fail to speak of them all, and our mere words of thanks are not near enough for all the great kindnesses Thou hast shown to us. We implore Thee, despite our unworthiness, to continue to impart them unto us, give us Thy benediction, bless us and keep us, cause Thy face to shine upon us and be gracious unto us. Imprint upon us, O Lord, Thy name, and cause us to be Thy children evermore. Please forgive our many trespasses and sins, for we are utterly corrupt and wicked according to Thy holy Law. Do not cast us away from Thee forever, but save us. Show unto us the miracle of Thy birth, restore in us the joy of Christmas, remembering that it is the day of our salvation come down to us. By this gift grant unto us peace. Peace in this world of chaos and confusion, and peace in our souls because of Thy Gospel Word. Help us to learn of this great peace that our lives may be ones of peace and not of bedlam and anarchy. We implore Thee to be our God, and we Thy people that when we shall see Thee coming in the clouds of heaven, we not fear, but rejoice, for we have Thy name imprinted upon us. Grant these things, O Savior, for Thy great mercy’s sake. Amen.

Dear Christians let us listen to the benediction of our Lord God, learning first that He imparts His name to us:

1. **To give peace of mind.** We read verses twenty two through twenty seven of our text: **read verses here.** The prophet Isaiah told the Church: *“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee.” (Is. 26:3)* Perfect peace is a blessing of God. Peace is a rare thing in this world, especially in the chaotic and turbulent time in which we live. We are always on the go, always with things to do, the lists seem endless, and there never seems to be enough time in the day. We fly and flitter from one thing to the next, hardly ever able to accomplish in full one task before we must move on to the next. Sometimes we deal with trouble and anxiety about certain events in our lives; a loved one becomes sick or we are sick ourselves; perhaps we have run into a rough patch concerning money; really the lists of things that trouble us are as numerous as the sand upon the beach. Hardly a day goes by without some sort of trouble, disaster even striking upon us. This world of sin is such that we cannot trek through this world without touching these trials upon us. Yet our Lord, in a seeming contradiction to the experience of life, declares that all such as have their mind fixed on Him will have perfect peace. Our text also declares that God will give us the benediction of peace. How can such a claim be made? How can it be declared that we will be in perfect peace when the world around us is exploding in chaos and confusion, bedlam and turmoil? It is a peace which cannot be explained, a peace as if the whole world was going normal speed and we were in slow motion. We are calmed in spite of the things we experience, in spite of all that we see, feel, and hear around us. Now this peace is not always what it could be, even for a Christian, for it is a gift received in faith, as are all the benedictions of God. And thus when our faith is weak, so too will our peace be weak. However, God has a way of causing peace to arise in our hearts through the strengthening of His Word and sacraments. Often as the days in a week travel on to Thursday and Friday, we often are more troubled in our minds than we were at the beginning of the week, and many would tell us that the stress of work and everyday life has worn us down, that we just need the weekend to refresh ourselves so that we can recharge. But truly it is, at least for a Christian, that often days have passed since the last time that we received the refreshment of God’s Word wherein He gives us the benediction of peace. And so as the days go on we become more troubled, more anxious, and we come to worship on Sunday and are refreshed by the peace of our God.

Again we hear Isaiah say: *“I create the fruit of the lips; peace, peace, to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord; and I will heal him. But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.” (Is 57:19-21)* The flesh of every man, and the person of the unbeliever, is like the storm tossed sea, which has no rest at all day or night, but is blown by swirling winds which toss its waves to and fro. The waters are murky and muddy, there is no rest at all. But to the Christian our Lord comes to us, and says as He did to the Sea of Galilee: “Peace, be still.” And by His Gospel Word he calms our troubled minds. Sometimes we need to be reminded of this peace given in His Gospel, for it is therein that we are imprinted with His name which gives us peace. Yet the peace of our minds is only possible because when God imparts to us His name in benediction it is:

1. **To give peace of soul.** We read verses twenty six and twenty seven of our text: **Read verses here.** The peace which we experience according to our bodies, is as a result of the peace which is found within in our souls due to what Christ Jesus came to earth to perform. It is a two fold peace of our souls which we experience. The first is the peace of our conscience due to the knowledge of sin forgiven and guilt removed. Our consciences, which have been aroused by the Law, accuse us of our sin night and day, but the work of Christ in our behalf shows to our consciences that those sins have been forgiven and covered by Him, so that our souls are at rest because of His work. Once again Isaiah said, as we heard this past Sunday: *“Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned.” (Is. 40:1-2)* You see our comfort, our peace is accomplished because our warfare is finished, our iniquity is pardoned. Our souls are at peace because we have received the benediction of our Lord by the gift of Jesus Christ into the world as a little infant. It is a peace which is unknown by the rest of the world, and it results in peace of mind because we know that no matter what goes on in the world around us, we have forgiveness and salvation through our Savior.

Now there is a second and higher peace of soul which we experience along with that of our consciences. It is peace between us and God. The apostle Paul said: *“Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called the uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us: having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace.” (Eph. 2:11-15)* Paul here shows us that Jesus is Himself our peace with God, for He, as God, became man, and served us as the Substitute for us, and the Father accepted this sacrifice on our behalf as full and complete, and so in the God-man peace is made between us and God. This is truly where all the benedictions listed come from, it is found in the peace which God has imparted to us through His Son. For in His Son He has imparted His name upon us, marking us upon our foreheads with His name, with His mark, with the cross.

Therefore, dear Christians, let us always remember and value highly the benedictions of our Triune God, our Creator and Preserver; our Redeemer; our Sanctifier. For He gives a triple benediction to teach us that He is Three in One and One in Three. He is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, putting His name upon us and blessing us forever through what we now remember and celebrate: the birth of Jesus Christ, our Savior. May God ever bless us and keep us; may He ever make His face to shine upon us and be gracious unto us; may He ever lift up His countenance upon us and give us peace. May we ever be marked as His children, bearing His name and hoping in His forgiveness and salvation. Amen.