

# Sermon for New Years Eve

**Date:** December 31, 2018

**Location:** St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

**Old Testament:** Numbers 6:22-27

**Epistle Reading:** Galatians 3:23-29

**Gospel Reading:** Luke 2:21

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

**Sermon Title:** God's Blessing

## Hymns:

- LSB 390 – Let Us All with Gladsome Voices
- LSB 733 – O God, Our Help in Ages Past
- LSB 367 – Angels from the Realms of Glory (v.1,2,5)
- LSB 368 – Angels We Have Heard on High
- LSB 366 – It Came Upon the Midnight Clear (v. 1,4)
- LSB 380 – Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

## Distribution:

- LSB 379 – O Come All Ye Faithful
- LSB 370 – What Child Is This

## Liturgy:

Divine Service: Special



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

The Lord said to Moses, “Tell Aaron and his sons, ‘This is how you will bless the Israelites. Say to them:

The Lord bless you and keep you;  
The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;  
The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

“So whenever they use my name to bless the Israelites, I will bless them.”

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Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

It was the final instruction God gave to Moses concerning the building and service of the Tabernacle. “Put My name on them.” Put My name on them, that they never forget whose they are. Put My name on them, that the last word they hear ringing in their ears and sending them on their way is a word of blessing and peace. Put My name on them because they are Mine; My treasured possession.

Still today those words of the Old Testament, called the Aaronic Benediction are the last words you also hear here nearly every time we come together for worship. As you leave this place and go back out into the world you are sent with:

The Lord bless you and keep you;  
the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;  
the Lord look upon you with His favor and give you peace.

With those words God’s name is placed upon you. So that you remember whose you are, and leave this place with His name, His blessing and His peace ringing in your ears. You are His treasured possession.

Yet how many times has this happened? How many times have you heard those words? A hundred? A thousand? More? Yet have you ever thought about them? What do they mean? These words are not just a wish. God’s Word is always powerful and effective and does what it says. Yet we often take them, and God’s Name, for granted. So as we come to the end of another year and stand on the doorstep to a new one the end seems a good place to start! To appreciate the beginning. To remember what God has done for us this past year, and what He promises for the next.

**The Lord bless you and keep you.** These are words that speak of your loving Heavenly Father, who gives to you, and blesses you, with everything you need in this life. This new year will bring with it many changes and challenges, sorrows and joys, but you will have all that you need to get through it. You have your Father’s name and promise. Your Father who gives you life and health; who gives you clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, land, animals, and all that you have; who gives you your spouse and family, friends, and the people around you who help you. We often want (and try!) to take the credit for ourselves, for working so hard to earn and provide all that we need for ourselves and our families, but it is our Father in Heaven who provides us with those things.

**The Lord bless you and keep you.** With these words we do not only receive our Father’s blessing, we also receive the promise of His keeping – His promise that He will also defend you against all danger and guard and protect you from all evil. Which means He will not allow the devil to have his way with you. He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able to handle. He will send His angels to guide and protect your steps. His keeping means that He will always be there for you, watching over you, giving you His protection, because without that the devil would long ago have destroyed you. Your Father blessing you and keeping you, all out of His Fatherly divine goodness and mercy without any merit or worthiness in you.

Now that blessing and promise alone is enough, but its not for your Father, who extends His blessing and keeping beyond the things of this life; and so the blessing continues.

**The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you.** Here is the Son of God who came into our world, to show us the face and grace of God, and to demonstrate His love for us. His loving work of redemption, begun (as we remember today) with His circumcision. With this He begins fulfilling of the Law for us. Keeping every requirement perfectly for us. To be our perfect substitute. It is on the eighth day after His birth Jesus takes His place with every male baby under the Law, and for the first time sheds His blood for us. A reminder to us that the crib leads to cross. That this is a King born to die.

In Him the face of God shines on us with grace. Because of Jesus, because of His blood and forgiveness, God will never turn His back to us. Think how wonderful that is. Think about those times in your life when someone has turned their back on you. When a person turns their back to you it means that they are angry, and they are walking away from you. God will never do that to you. When a person turns their back on you it is so they do not have to look at you. They want to have you out of their sight, and out of their mind. God will never do that to you. When a person turns their back on you it is an indication that they did not want to speak to you, and they do not want to listen to you. God will never do that to you.

In Jesus, God's face is always toward us; God's face of mercy. Think about what that means – when a person is facing you. When you can see a person's face you can tell a lot about that person. You can see them smile. They can speak to you. They can see you and know what you are doing and if you need help. They can show compassion for you. They can listen to you. Because of Jesus, God's face is always toward you, shining on you with His grace and forgiveness. Because of your sin, that is something that you don't deserve, but because of Jesus, His cross and His blood, that is something that has been given to you as a gift. That you may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom.

Then finally we hear: **The Lord look upon you with His favor and give you peace.** These are a blessing of peace that we receive from the Holy Spirit. Even in among war, increasing crime and disregard for life, the strife and the difficulties that continue in our world and in our lives, still there is peace.

Not the elusive peace for which the world is searching and striving, but the peace which the world cannot understand; the peace which surpasses all human understanding; the peace placed into your heart by the Holy Spirit. Peace with God. Peace in the forgiveness of sins. The peace of knowing that the changes and chances of this world do not determine our destiny, but that we are in better hands – nail-pierced hands. Hands whose care does not end with this life, but continues on forever. Those hands, risen from the dead hands, will raise us up as well, with Him to life eternal.

This blessing and keeping, this face and grace, this peace, is for all. It does not matter where you've been, where you've come from, or where you are. It is for where you are going if you are counted among the faithful who believe and are baptized in the name of Jesus. It is for you.

The eighth day after Christmas is not just the first day of a New Year, but the first day of a new life:

in Christ – the new Tabernacle of God among us!

in His blood, first shed for us this day.

in His Name first placed upon you in Holy Baptism,

and now continually placed upon you here through His blessing. A new life strengthened by His forgiveness and love, as we feed on His body and blood. A new life given to you by the Father, by grace through faith in His Son, by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

Hear those comforting words again:

The Lord bless and keep you;

The Lord making His face shine upon you and being gracious to you;

The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and giving you peace.

It is the Tabernacle Blessing, now yours in Christ.

Amen.