

SERMON FOR MAY 27, 2018
TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 13:14
THEME: GOD BLESS

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen

Many of us have had the experience of being taught or told by our parents an early age to say our evening prayers. For some, it was the simple prayer: Now I lay me down to sleep I pray the Lord my soul to keep and if I die before I wake I pray the Lord my soul to take. When Luann and I first became parents Luann was resolute in making certain that we do not pray this prayer with our kids because Luann didn't want our kids to be afraid of dying in the night during their sleep. So she taught them another prayer: Now I lay me down to sleep I pray the Lord my soul to keep and in the morning when I awake teach me the path of love to take. We both liked that prayer because sent a different message to our kids and had them praying to live a life of love.

However I learned to pray a little bit differently. My mom and dad taught my sister and me to pray the Lord's Prayer every evening before we would go to bed. And at the conclusion of the Lord's Prayer, my mom and dad made sure that we said our God Blesses. And so after the Amen we would run through the list of God blesses: God bless mom and dad, grandma and grandpa, aunts and uncles, sister and even our dog. Then we would be officially done with our prayers and could finally say Amen and go to sleep.

The God blesses have been an important part of my prayer life, and I have learned that the God blesses are an important part of many a Christian's prayer life. All too

often, though, we don't think about the God blesses, but the God curses. Many today don't know who God is or know His name, they only know God as a curse word. I love what Ted Runge, one of our sainted members, would say when someone in his company would take God's name in vain or curse using God's name, Ted would say: "Hey, talk about someone you know!" Many today don't know the love that God has for all people. Instead, they view God as an angry Judge, out to get people. To be certain, God does threaten to punish all who sin, remember what God says in the Close of the Commandments: "I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me but showing love to a thousand of generations of those who love Me and keep My commandments." When God is provoked to anger, He will punish those who are unrepentant. When the people of Israel in the Old Testament did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, they provoked the Lord to anger and He punished those who continued to break His Law. Even today, God will not be mocked. Vengeance is Mine, says the Lord, and He carries out His punishments today in many ways. He does so by subjecting us to the difficulties of life when we go astray, when He hands us over to self destructive habits and the consequences of those sins, and by handing us over to earthly authority when we do wrong. Ultimately God threatens those who break His commandments not only with earthly punishments but also with physical death and eternal damnation in Hell. God, though, desires not the death of the sinner, but that all repent, turn from sin, and live. God seeks to bless, not to curse. Your only Hope of God's blessing and of being rescued from God's damnation and punishment is to turn to Jesus, His only begotten Son.

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, so that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Because of God's loving kindness in Jesus, you are blessed by God through the forgiveness of your sins, God's ever present Help in time of need, the certainty that God will work all things out to your good and His glory in Jesus Christ, and that you have a place with your Father in eternity.

Our text for today speaks about the blessing of the Triune God. When God speaks, things happen. God's Word doesn't return to Him empty but it is an Almighty ever at work Word. Throughout the ages God's people have sought out God's blessings, not as a good luck charm or good luck incantation, but because when God blesses He brings good things to His people! The Old Testament is filled with examples of God's people seeking out God's blessings so that their lives would be filled with good, Godly things.

Adam and Eve received God's blessing at Creation: And God blessed them and said to them be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. God said the same thing to Noah after the flood: And God blessed Noah and his sons and said be fruitful and multiply. At the call of Abraham, when Jacob stole Esau's birthright, when Jacob wrestled all evening with the Lord, for 40 years in the wilderness, time and time again God blesses His people and His blessing works wonders in the lives of His people. The Psalmist cries out: "blessed be the Name of the Lord." Jesus says "blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it." God's blessing is powerful and sinners crave His blessing.

And so God blesses today. The Father blesses you for He has created you and sustains you, giving all that you need to support your body and life. He has given to you your body, eyes, ears, reason, and all your senses, He provides you with all you need and still takes care of you. His Son, Jesus, blesses you by purchasing you from sin, Satan, and death, not with money or gold but with His holy precious innocent suffering and death all so that you can be His own and live under His blessings. The Spirit has called you out of darkness into the marvelous Light of Christ, giving you faith in Jesus in your Baptism, and forgiving you all of your sins in the Lord's Supper.

Our worship service each Sunday culminates with the benediction, or the blessing of God. The blessing first given by Aaron: "The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you, the Lord look upon you with His favor and give you His peace." Or the blessing given by Paul: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you always," these blessings give to you the gifts of God!

God's blessing isn't some sort of magical incantation or spoken to people as if it was some type of good luck charm. The power of God's blessing doesn't rest in the person giving it. In and of myself, I have no power to bless you, for I am just like you, a poor miserable sinner. But God who is rich in mercy has given to His Church pastors to preach the Good News of Jesus and to bless you. There are different ways that a pastor blesses. One way is when during my pastoral every member visits I am asked to bless your home. The blessing of the home is one way in which the pastor fulfills his office of blessing, for in blessing the home the pastor uses the Word of God to bring God's

blessings to that home and all who reside in it. I guess that I shouldn't say that I have been surprised, but I am hearing of more and more pastors blessing homes where the people who live in them feel as if their home is haunted. God's blessing actually brings about peace and holiness to that which was unholy.

But just think of how our worship service is filled with God's blessings for you! The Bible says that the name of the Lord alone is to be blessed. And in our worship service, God's name is acknowledged as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. All blessings come from Him and in Jesus all who believe on His Name are truly blessed. Jesus became your curse so that you can be blessed. Paul says: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places." The Father gives His blessing through the Son by the Holy Spirit in the Church today. No blessings from God are withheld from you, all blessings are available to you now through Jesus Christ.

God blesses through His Word. Blessings are not mere wishes, they are speech acts, actually enacting the blessing of God and making God's blessings happen. Blessings communicate and actually give God's blessings. So when the pastor in the service says: "the Lord be with you." That is God blessing you. When the pastor says at the end of the sermon: "The peace of God that surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ." That is God's blessing given to you because of Jesus earning or gaining that blessing on the cross. It is the Word of God, the Gospel that gives that blessing. The pastor is God's appointed steward or manager of God's gifts. The Pastor doesn't possess what he passes on, like a beggar the pastor only passes on what he

himself as received. The Pastor's ability to bless only comes from Jesus, relying on Him who though He was rich yet He became poor for us, so that through His poverty we might become rich with the Holy Spirit and all other spiritual blessing from God.

The blessing of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are yours in Jesus Christ. While we have nothing, indeed we possess everything, we are indeed rich because God the Father has blessed us in His Son Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. God's blessings are yours, not only to keep, but to pass on to others so that many more will be blessed by God. So may the peace of God, that surpasses all understanding, keep you in faith in Christ, and may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you always!

Amen