**Number 6:22-27 (ESV)**

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, **23** “Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel: you shall say to them, **24** The Lord bless you and keep you; **25** the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; **26** the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. **27**  “So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them.”

**“Blessed Through God’s Name”**

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. The start of a new year on the secular calendar always has the same goal. It is about endings and beginnings in terms of life in this world. When we consider 2016, we hear names from our past that maybe had been a part of our identity. Star Wars fans lost Carrie Fischer who played Princess Leia. Others felt the final K.O. when Muhammad Ali died. Even less known names caused shock like the deaths of those at the Pulse Night Club in Orlando, Florida.

Likewise, when we consider 2017, plenty of predictions arise that might affect our identity. Big names offer big pictures. Buzz Aldrin sees a new “space race” on the horizon. George Church of Harvard Medical School ponders this year to be even greater strides for, “…reading and writing Genomes, organs, and ecosystems.” Finally, Kare Darlying researcher at M.I.T. expects more growth with artificial intelligence as products in the home.

The world celebrates New Year’s Day one way, but the Name of God given to the baptized makes for a New Year’s Day more than this present life. January 1st is the eighth day after the birth of Mary’s child on December 25th. This marks the circumcision and naming of Jesus. It was how any male became part of Israel. Yet, the presence of the Christ child changed everything. Life with God and belonging to His family now rested on this Savior alone. Circumcision would surrender to the better gift later given by baptism. God blessing us by His Name goes with us every day all our days.

1. **Any blessings God gives always come first through His Name.**
2. Israel already knew the name of God, but that was not enough.

* It was by the Name of God that they had delivered them from Pharaoh and the Egyptians.
* God revealed His Name in glory on top of mount Sinai with giving of the Law.
* Now as Israel prepared to go into the wilderness toward Canaan, God’s Name was still important for their life.
* The Name of God continued to give so Moses heard, “Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel…”

1. This day matters far more than another new year for every blessing arrives through the name of God.

* Where parents might fret and battle over what to name their child, not so with Mary and Joseph.
* This child born of the virgin already was given His name from God by the angel Gabriel prior to conception.
* Those first drops of blood from the Law’s demands now met the name God gave His Son, Jesus that means “Savior.”
* Blessings come through His Name even when human efforts fail and worldly glory fades this child will help and save from sin, death, and hell.

1. **Having God’s Name is a special relationship for all good.**
2. Israel had no greater gift for their life as they prepared to travel to the Promised Land.

* It was a Trinitarian blessing, “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.”
* God alone provided this protection, grace, and relief at no cost to them.
* The gods of Egypt that held them captives were no good and the false gods in Canaan had no future.
* However, what God kept giving by His name to be special constantly came into question and even rejected by Israel that came at a great cost.

1. As we have a special relationship to our parent’s name, even more wondrous is the relationship we have received with God’s name.

* We end worship often with Aaronic benediction, but that is not how we begin.
* The baptized come together before the only God for sinners saying, “In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”
* Looking back at the past year, forgetting God’s holy name is what we do best for worldly comfort (Nike/Microsoft), glory (family/self), and deliverance (elected president/doctor).
* Yet, the Christ child Jesus proves the Law demands payment and His blood by the cross would earn forgiveness for any bearing His name.
* Outside of God’s Name, no good exists only the curse of sin and death for, “there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

1. **God gives the blessing of His Name to go with us.**
2. Israel belonged to God and God branded them with His Name.

* God authorized Moses to have Aaron and his sons to keep delivering the blessing of His name.
* Regardless of situation before them, they had this promise, “So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them.”
* God’s Name is what gave His blessing, so the people could only receive it by faith.
* It was outside of their hands for God with them was making His claim of ownership, goodness, and protection.

1. Since we now belong to Jesus, Jesus branded us with His Name and every blessing.

* As God with us, He gave authority to His Church to baptize all nations.
* And with baptizing in God’s Name came the need for blessing, which like Aaron, pastors as called and ordained servants deliver to God’s people.
* The benediction ends our service with God confidently promising, “I will bless them.”
* The richness of forgiveness is how God will bless. Your past sins are put away in Christ. Your life right now rests in His Name. Your future this year has the light of His love upon all your darkness.

Whether together or daily in our lives, appealing to God’s Name makes the difference. Israel wandered in the wilderness with that Name that kept them safe along the way. The Promised Land for the baptized is better than what a few more years can offer us. The child Jesus brought eternal life is in His hands. These hands of our Lord still serve us with the blessing of His Name. His Word and sacrament are the greatest good, richest forgiveness, and perfect peace. Since Christ secured eternity for us, we leave today sent out with God’s favor even for the present time. God blessing us by His Name goes with us every day all our days. Amen. Now the peace of Christ that passes all understanding be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.