

**+ Numbers 6:22-27 + The Triune God—Don't Leave Home Without Him +
+ The First Sunday after Pentecost: Holy Trinity + 30 May 2010 +**

This weekend countless numbers of people are traveling to vacation getaways and family gatherings, to noisy barbeques and even quiet cemeteries. For many, this weekend kicks off the summer, even though summer doesn't officially start and school doesn't officially end for weeks. Then tomorrow all those people will glumly head back home for work or school.

Amidst all this traveling, there's a question on most of their minds, "Did we remember to pack everything?" If you're leaving town, you don't want to leave home without toiletries or diapers or shoes or a map. If you're going to a family gathering or a barbeque, you don't want to forget the apple pie in the fridge or the charcoal for the grill. If you're going out to a cemetery to remember a loved one who gave their life in service to the country, you don't want to forget flowers. Then, of course, there's a host of other related questions, "Did you remember to lock the door or turn off the oven?" "Did you remember to feed the dog or the cat or the frog?" Did you remember what you needed to remember before you left home?

Now since you and I are here, we're probably not heading out for a big vacation getaway this weekend, but still all of us are on a long journey. It's called the journey of life. It starts the moment you're conceived and ends at your death, but as you travel through this life, one question needs to be on your mind, "Did I remember to bring everything I needed?" We could spend all day listing things we think we need to get through this life, but today the Lord of free and faithful grace does the packing for us. In fact, as we pause to celebrate the mystery of the Trinity—one God, yet three persons—he sends along the three-fold blessing of his name. That way we remember **THE TRIUNE GOD—DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT HIM.**

It was time for the Israelites to break camp at Mount Sinai. They had spent roughly two years there, while God laid out his Law and called them to lives of complete dedication to him. Even in that short time, however, they failed miserably. Once while Moses was receiving the Law from the Lord on the mountain, the Israelites thought he'd never return, so they formed a golden calf and worshiped it. The Lord's consequences were severe and that certainly wasn't the last time they would stray from the true God, but in spite of their unfaithfulness, God wanted them to be sure of his faithfulness.

So the Lord made preparations for their worship life. He would daily remind them of his presence and deliverance. He had them build and dedicate the tabernacle, a movable tent where the worship life of Israel would take place—a visible reminder of the Lord's constant watch over those he loved. The Lord also commanded Aaron and his sons, the priests of Israel, to verbally remind the people of his gracious presence and faithfulness. ***"The LORD bless you and keep you..."***

This phrase would remind the people of the work of God the Father and still does today. In his gracious love he blesses us. Look around you and see how the heavenly Father has blessed you. No one here is dressed in rags. No one here is without home or shelter. No one here is without food. All our blessings come from the gracious hand of the heavenly Father—body and soul, eyes, ears and all members, the mind and all abilities, clothing, shoes, food, drink, home, family, stuff, everything we need and so much more. What's even more amazing is that he provides all these physical blessings for all creation. David once wrote, ***"The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing."*** (Psalm 145:15-16)

The blessings of the heavenly Father don't end there, however. No, he has spiritual blessings for those who are his own through faith. The Lord of free and faithful grace watches over those who are beloved to him. Watch a parent snuggle a child close when that child isn't feeling well or has had a bad dream. In a similar way the Father keeps you and me. The Psalmist once sang, ***"The LORD watches over you—the LORD is your shade at your right hand...the LORD will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore."*** (Psalm 121:5,7,8) How comforting for the journey ahead is this blessing, as your heavenly Father packs up his faithful name for you!

Amazingly, the triune God watches over you and me, though we deserve it not. By nature we are enemies of the heavenly Father, haters of his free and faithful grace, and born to disobey him at every step. In spite of our inborn wickedness, the heavenly Father poured out his gracious love to make us his beloved children and bring us close to his heart.

How could that be possible if we're conceived and born as mortal enemies of the triune God? Listen to what the gracious love of the Father has accomplished for you through his Son, Jesus Christ. ***"The LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you..."***

When a child is born, the faces of mom and dad beam with love and joy for their little one. Here, in a similar way, the Lord reminds you why he looks at you now with love and joy. Sin left you in the darkness of rebellion and wickedness. Your heart blindly sought to disobey the heavenly Father, but the Lord still shined his grace on you through his Son, Jesus Christ.

It was the gracious, undeserved love of the triune God that sent Jesus to take on your human flesh and became your substitute. Grace moved him to face the temptation to turn away from the Father as you and I so often have, but unlike us, Jesus remained the perfect, faithful Son. At the same time, as true God, Jesus shattered sin's darkness in your life with his perfect obedience and poured in the warm, bright light of his Father's gracious love.

Grace compelled Christ to go to the cross—to suffer the death you deserve because by nature you are lost and condemned. With Christ's holy, precious blood and his innocent suffering and death, the gracious love of the heavenly Father poured out from the cross through Jesus, his Son. There on the cross you see how deep and broad and high the love of the triune God really is for a sinful rebel like you. Then in an empty tomb you see how the love of the triune God conquered death once and for all with Christ's resurrection from the dead. The victory of God's grace is yours now, because Christ has purchased you with his blood. How comforting for the journey ahead is this blessing! Here the Son of God packs up his name for you with all the love and joy and undeserved kindness he can possibly give you through his amazing work of deliverance. The Father's faithfulness is comforting. The Son's grace is amazing, but what really gives you and me peace?

"The LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace." You may be more familiar with this phrasing of the blessing, "The Lord look on you with his favor and give you peace." For any blessing whatsoever, especially the blessing of salvation, we need the Lord to turn his loving face towards us. Now that might seem rather strange for us today, but in centuries past subjects needed the king's attention if they were to get his favor. What, then, could move the King of kings, the triune God, to turn his love towards us? It's not your work or mine!

No, it's the work of the Giver of life, the Holy Spirit, who transforms your heart and mind and life through the message of the Gospel—the good news of what Christ has done for you. The Holy Spirit transforms you through Holy Baptism—where he cleanses you with water connected with the Word and places the name of the triune God on you as a redeemed child of God. The Holy Spirit transforms you through the Holy Supper—where he brings you the forgiveness of sins, strength for your faith and the assurance of salvation as you receive Christ's body and blood with bread and wine. Through that Gospel, the Holy Spirit brings peace between you and God. He brings sight to your blind eyes and breathes life into your dead soul. He alone directs God's love towards you and transforms you into the Father's beloved child.

How awesome to have the Holy Spirit care so much about you that he brings you true peace—not some happy feeling, not by your own thinking or choosing or reasoning, but peace that comes purely from the grace of God! That peace guides you in life and in death. That peace allows you to put your head on your pillow at night confident that the Lord of grace is watching over you and will one day bring you to be with him in heaven forever. When faced with struggle or frustration or pain or grief, the peace that comes from the Holy Spirit leads you to echo the words of St. Paul in Romans 8:(37-39), ***"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*** How comforting is this blessing as the Spirit packs up his peace for you!

It's almost time to go, but don't forget to take with you the one thing that matters most. When you leave for home, when you go to bed, when you go to work or school, when you travel some place, or simply step out your door, don't forget to take that blessing with you. The heavenly Father has packed his faithfulness in there to keep you close to his heart. The Son has packed his grace in there to get you home to heaven. The Spirit has packed his peace in there to strengthen and comfort you for the journey. I hope you never, ever forget to take that blessing with you. When you hear it, recall everything the triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—has done, now does and will do for you! ***"The LORD bless you and keep you; The LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace."*** Amen.