

4. The Benediction

There is a very special Scripture text you have heard many, many times. Perhaps you have heard this text more often than any other. This text would be fitting at a baptism, confirmation, wedding or funeral. It would be fitting for any and every season of the Church Year. It's a Word of God that is spoken, chanted and sung. It's a Word of God that is frequently used in making hospital calls, calls at nursing homes, at sickbeds anywhere and everywhere. It is *Numbers 6:24-26*: "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."

A very old retired professor was no longer able to get to church, but she would call her Pastor and ask if he would stop by and, as she would say, "Lay the name of the Lord on me." She really knew the significance of these precious words of our Lord's Blessing. Briefly consider the words:

LORD, BLESS US

Every good and perfect gift comes from the Lord. Whether we're talking about the physical or the spiritual - the Lord is the source of all good. Knowing that, believing that, it makes a lot of sense to go to the Lord and to ask for His blessings, yes, to pray: Lord, bless us.

AND KEEP US

Keep us safe. Keep us in Your protection. Keep us in the faith. Keep us from temptation. Keep us faithful: faithful to You, faithful to Your Word, faithful to one another. Keep us faithful in prayer. Keep us as Your very own for time and for all eternity.

LORD, MAKE YOUR FACE SHINE UPON US

According to the Scriptures, when one's face is upon us or toward us - that signifies pleasure, satisfaction and approval. But when the Scriptures speak of one's face being against us, or turned away from us, that signifies displeasure, dissatisfaction, disapproval. Relying solely upon His amazing grace, mercy and love - with the Psalmist we say: "God be merciful to us and bless us and cause Your face to shine upon us." *Psalm 67:1*.

AND BE GRACIOUS UNTO US

Lord, we have experienced Your gracious call, Your gracious invitation. We know about Your gracious will and work and words. Surround us with Your gracious presence. Continue to bestow upon us Your gracious love. Enfold us in Your gracious arms. Undeserving though we are, Lord, be gracious unto us.

LORD, LIFT UP YOUR COUNTENANCE UPON US

By countenance is usually meant the expression on one's face. A person's face often reflects his or her feelings. Displeasure is apt to cast a shadow over one's face - cause a frown. On the other hand, approval, assent, good news, will light up one's face. Now, we know that there is nothing in us or about us that is so great and wonderful as to light up the face of God. And yet, because of Jesus Who, through His suffering and death has made atonement for us, has cleansed us in His shed blood, and has made us, once again, God's very own, we can rest assured that God smiles on us. We ask that He continue to do so as we pray: Lord, lift up Your countenance upon us; look upon us with favor -

AND GIVE US PEACE

By peace, here, is meant peace between God and us brought about by Christ, the Prince of peace. This peace is rooted in the knowledge that in Jesus, God and sinners are reconciled, and that "God loves us dearly, grants us salvation." Knowing this, believing this, resting on this - our hearts are filled with wonderful peace, peace that passes all understanding, peace that knows no measure.

Let us boldly and daily pray the Aaronic Benediction!

The Benediction

We Begin

- L:** This day, dear Lord, is lived in your Name.
R: Yours is the power and the glory forever. Amen.

We Search Scriptures - Numbers 6:22-27

- L:** The LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron and his sons, 'This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them:
R: "The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift His countenance upon you and give you peace."
L: "So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them."

We Meditate

Follow this outline as the meditation is presented

"Lay the Name of the Lord on me!"

- Bless us
- Keep us
- Make you face shine upon us
- Be gracious unto us
- Lift up your countenance upon us
- Give us peace

We Respond

- R:** Lay the Name of the Lord on us.
L: **Lord, bless us.**
R: Lay the Name of the Lord on us.
L: **Lord, keep us.**
R: Lay the Name of the Lord on us.
L: **Lord, make you face shine upon us.**
R: Lay the Name of the Lord on us.
L: **Lord, be gracious unto us.**
R: Lay the Name of the Lord on us.
L: **Lord, lift up your countenance upon us.**
R: Lay the Name of the Lord on us.
L: **Lord, give us peace.**

We Pray

So many times, our heavenly Father, we've heard these most familiar words. So many times they trigger in us the sense of an ending. So many times our minds are consumed by other thoughts as the Name of the Lord is laid on us. We pray for awareness, for boldness, for thoughtfulness. As your word of peace is proclaimed, help us to hear and see it as a beginning, a sending forth in your protection, your mercy, your grace, your atonement and your peace.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

