

Put My Name On Them
Number 6:22-27

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

What do you want to happen in worship? Let's take a survey of the congregation and see what styles of worship they'd like? Once done with that, then we can do for worship, what everybody wants. Sounds like a good idea, doesn't it, making everybody happy?

Only thing is, there is a slight problem with that. You see, God has already given directives about what our worship is to be. God tells us by Paul's pen: *Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.* (Rom. 12:1-2)

Dear friends, this means that every moment – of every day – is to be your spiritual service of worship to God. Everything you think and say and do is to be a living and holy sacrifice, pleasing to God. Your life is to be a living witness, the way in which you proclaim to all people – by the way you live your lives on a daily basis – what is good, and acceptable, and perfect to the will of God.

Do we really need to spend the time to discuss this much? You know how this goes. You have been given the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments to keep. They are not the ten suggestions. They are not the ten ideals you are to try to live up to. They are the Ten Commandments. Could you recite all ten? Do you remember what they mean?

In all fairness, Luther's meaning are not suggestions either; he takes what Jesus says, and applies His words to the meanings.

And remember this. How you keep the commandments is your spiritual service of worship.

Something else to remember is this; those who do not keep these commandments, those whose lives are not perfect spiritual services of worship, will suffer God's eternal wrath and punishment.

Jesus summarized all ten in this way. First, you are to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. Do you live up to God's demand for worship?

Secondly, you are to love your neighbor as yourself – all of them! Is your attitude and action toward you neighbor an acceptable service of worship to God?

Of course, the world has other ideas about our lives. The world makes suggestion about the Ten Commandments. In fact, if it were up to the world, they would be suggestions at best. Furthermore, the world suggests that the Biblical promise which threatens God's eternal wrath and punishment against those who transgress these commandments, is not true. Many claim that a loving god would never send anybody to hell.

Remember Paul's word from earlier? *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

If God's attitude about our daily lives is such, what do you think He'd say about what happens when we gather together in His house? Do you think this is a time for letting the world dictate what should happen? Is this the time to gather and let unbelievers suggest what we should do so that they feel welcome? Is it even time when we should feel comfortable, like we feel when we are in the world?

This is that time when we gather for renewal. Here is where Christ comes to us and makes a difference in our lives in order that we can be a blessing to others. In our Epistle lesson, we are told that we have been set apart. You and I have received grace; you have been called to belong to Jesus Christ, loved by God and called to be saints. Yes, you have been called to be saints, that is, to be holy.

That is exactly what our Old Testament lesson is all about. It is telling us what happens when we gather together as the children of God. You have heard certain words in our text before, you have heard them often.

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.

Yes, they are the words in our liturgy which we call the benediction. Do you know the reason that the benediction is spoken at the end of the service? They are spoken at the end of our service because our Lord, in the context of our Old Testament lesson, commands them to be spoken.

Before the words of the benediction our text says, *The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel: you shall say to them; And then God gives them the words which we call the benediction.*

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.

After giving the command that these words be spoken, the Lord continues, "*So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them.*"

Did you hear it? These exact words are commanded by God, to be spoken by those called to speak His Word upon His people. He did not tell them, say something like, *The Lord bless you and keep you; etc...* He did not tell them, "I kind of like these words, *The Lord bless you and keep you;* but you can make up your own." He said, "Thus you shall bless the people of Israel; you shall say to them..."

Dear friends, these are not some words made up by your pastor, or even a group of pastors as they made up some service. This is not just something that can be said every time the service is ending, something that gives you the hint that things are about to be finished. It is not even like they have some special meaning, but little else.

These words come upon you in an incredibly marvelous way. This is God's way to put His name on you. This is the way God blesses you.

Do you remember Jesus proclaiming to His disciples, "Wherever two or three of you have gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of you."? (Matt. 18:20) He gave them that instruction and promise **AFTER** instructing them that they would have the authority to forgive sins and withhold forgiveness.

Maybe you also remember that after His resurrection, Jesus gave the disciples a special use for God's name. When the eleven were gathered, He said to them, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matt. 28:19-20)

God puts His name upon at baptism, and blesses you. The name of God is invoked at the beginning of the service, we are gathered in God's name, the name each of you has been given – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We are gather in His name, at His command, to receive His gifts to us, that we might depart from this place, His blessing resting upon us, that we might be a blessing to other. We depart from this place that we might give

glory to His name in all that we do.

It is appropriate then, that we do what we want to do here in His house? Or, is it better that we gather here to receive from God, His gracious gifts that change us, forgive us, bless us, and send us out from here?

There are many who want to conform this time and this place to the world. They want to do that so people feel welcome here. They want to do it so that everybody feels good here.

This is the place where God gathers you together.

This is where God comes to you with the forgiveness that Christ purchased to make you holy.

This is where God puts His name upon you...

Where He changes you...

Where He blesses you, and sends you out transformed, so that you are a blessing in the world.

The Lord bless you and keep you. Yes, God our Father created and sustains us. He blesses us and keeps us in all that we need to support this body and life.

The Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you. Nobody has seen the face of God except in Jesus Christ. The Babe of Bethlehem is the grace of God revealed to men. Yes, His name is Jesus, God saves. He is Immanuel, God with us. His life is the life of perfect worship, and it was sacrificed as payment for our desires to let the world dictate our worship.

The face of God's grace shines upon us as Christ speaks words of forgiveness to us and feeds us His own body and blood. While hidden in earthly forms, God's grace in Christ Jesus comes to you and changes you.

The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace. God's Spirit opens our eyes of faith to see the countenance of God in Jesus Christ, moving us to believe that we are forgiven and redeemed in Him. It is the Spirit who changes our hearts and gives us faith to cling not to ourselves, but to Christ Jesus. In Christ Jesus we have true peace – peace on earth, God's goodwill toward men, just as promised by the angels that we would receive in the Child of Bethlehem.

So, simple words? No! Indeed they are not! They are so much more! These are the command of God to put His name upon His people, so that through them He might bless 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. Amen.