

GOD'S NAME BRAND PEOPLE
NEW YEAR'S DAY

NUM 6:22-27
JAN 1, 2017

²² 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.”

Numbers are useful for identifying many things, like 1/1 of 2017,
But we put names on things that are special or unique
like decades: the roaring 20s,
or generations: Baby boomers, Millennials
We put names on things that that are special to us:
Children, of course, and pets, even boats or cars
These days almost everything has a name, a brand name.
There may be something you got for Christmas
that has a brand name prominently printed on it,
a certain brand of clothing, candy, electronics, etc.
It may cost more than a similar item with another name
even if made in same way or even same factory.
Part of what you are paying for is simply advertising
But brand name can imply is it has reputation to protect
it has been prepared with attention to quality;
if it has flaws, maker will stand behind it, fix it;
it can be expected to do well what it was made for.
So a name can tell you ahead of time what to expect.
As we begin a new year, we consider
what a name tells us to expect,
Today is the eighth day of Christmas, which has a name,
the circumcision and name of Jesus
because it is the day the name Jesus was put on the baby
who was the top of the line of God's brand,
But text reminds us of name the same God puts on us
at the beginning of our lives in Baptism
and the beginning of our worship,
and also at the end of our worship
as we go out to begin another week.
God branding us in the same way shows that...

GOD CARES FOR AND KEEPS US FOR THE FUTURE
GOD LOVES AND FORGIVES US FOR THE PAST
GOD PAYS ATTENTION AND EQUIPS US FOR USE

GOD CARES FOR AND KEEPS US FOR THE FUTURE

²⁴ The LORD bless you and keep you;

In old west, cattle were marked with a brand to identify
which ranch they belonged to: triple Z, bar X, lazy X, circle T,
so if it was lost or stolen, it could be reclaimed.

In O.T., God gave Abraham & Israel new names
to remind them of his special plans for them.

his he also gave them mark, circumcision, to identify them
as special people that he intended to keep.

With this came the promise of his care & blessings
and promise they would be blessing to others.

Jewish boys were always circumcised on 8th day
and traditionally this is when they were given their name.

Both circumcision and name identified Jesus
as one who was part of God's plan.

Circumcision was parallel to Christian baptism

A name is put on us, not just name given by parents,
showing we belong to them & are special to them,
but name of God, Father, Son & Holy Spirit, & sign of cross,
which makes us part of special people of God.

As parents take care of helpless child because it is theirs,
God promises to take care of us as his helpless children.

We use triune name of God at beginning of worship
to remind us whose we are and who speaks to us here.

Martin Luther initiated also ending worship
with words God used to put his name on his people
to remind us God goes with us to keep doing good for us
and to remind us he wants to keep us as his own.

He claims and intends to keep us from that old rustler, the devil,
who wants to lead us off with his lies & false promises.
and keep us from wandering off to blend in
with the wild ways of the world.

The one true God is the only one who is to be Lord of our life.

We are to trust only in the one named Jesus
to save us and assure us of God's blessings,
especially the blessing only Jesus can give:

GOD LOVES AND FORGIVES US FOR THE PAST

²⁵ the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;

Names can have both positive and negative connotations.

Years ago, makers of Chevrolet Nova were disappointed to learn Nova in Spanish means "doesn't go."

Now lot of research goes into developing brand names to be sure they are both unique and positive.

Parents naming children usually try to do same thing.

Some names become popular because someone else with that name has become well known in a good way.

Parents may also use special affectionate pet names.

God's name in benediction is positive sign of affection.

It means his face is shining on us.

Is not hard to imagine what this Hebrew expression means.

A dark scowling face means one is angry or upset.

A shining face is smiling, with eyes lit up, is happy

God delights in you & loves you.

"You" in benediction is always singular.

You are special to God

Is this because we are so wonderful & do wonderful things?

If we look back on past year, even past week,

we will see many things that show

we have been unworthy of God's name.

Because of defects that ruin our maker's reputation, we deserve to be recalled.

But the name God puts on us means good things

because of what someone else has done.

God's loving attitude toward us is always

because of the wonderful things he himself does.

People in O.T. were aware no sinful human

could see the glory of God's holy face and survive.

But we can see God's shining, happy face

because of God's gracious love from Jesus.

Jesus has kept the whole law of God for us.

This is why he first shed his blood at his circumcision

and why he finished the job on the cross.

Because of Jesus, we unholy people can come

before the face of a holy God, confessing our sins

and by pure grace receive his forgiveness in his name,

that is, because he says so,

as we are again marked with his cross.

Because of this we can now look at God's smiling face
and be at peace as we worship & pray to him.
But we can also take this peace with us as we go because

GOD PAYS ATTENTION AND EQUIPS US FOR USE

²⁶ the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

One of the things our president elect does that makes money
is simply allowing his name to be put on buildings & things
because of the value of his brand.

Names carry power. The right name written
on a check or a presidential executive order
has power to give things and make things happen.

When God puts his name on us, he is giving us his own power
to use in making things happen for him.

One thing names have power to do is get attention.

God gives us his name to use to call on him in prayer.

If you want someone's attention, get them to look at you
instead of a TV, cell phone or computer screen.

This is what it means to lift up a countenance,
it means to look up and pay attention.

This is what God does for us.

His benediction says he doesn't just send us out on our own
but he is backing us up, watching over us all the time.

This gives us peace and confidence.

Hebrew word for peace does not just mean lack of conflict
but being complete, not lacking anything.

God is promising to give us all we need
to be his spokesmen, people who use his name
to speak boldly for and about him

When God puts his name on us, he is authorizing us
to speak and act in his behalf in teaching truth
and in speaking his words of forgiveness.

This is important for our church leaders being installed today.

It is important for them to know they are responsible
and authorized to speak and act in our behalf

but even more important for all of us to know
that we speak and act in God's behalf

as people who are called by his name & use his name.

He is standing behind us, watching over us.

When God puts the brand of his name on us,
as he does in benediction, it means

GOD CARES FOR AND KEEPS US FOR THE FUTURE

Because we belong to him, he guarantees his blessings
and intends to keep us faithful to him.

GOD LOVES AND FORGIVES US FOR THE PAST

He graciously smiles on each of us individually
because of what Jesus has done for us.

GOD PAYS ATTENTION AND EQUIPS US FOR USE

He is watching over us as we go about his business
so we can be confident we have all we need
to live as his people now and live with him forever.