



## river west church

A Prayer for God's Blessing

Numbers 6:22-27

Pastor Guy Gray

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### **A Father's Love and Longing**

Today is December 11, 2011. 35 years ago this day, Maureen and I pledged our lives to one another in marriage. For us, today is a very special day! We are grateful today to have our whole family together at church. We are thrilled to have our son Trevor and his wife Kassi back from Qatar for a visit. On top of that, our daughter Crystal is getting married to Tom McGregor – next Saturday! Also, this morning at the 11 am service, our daughter Jena and her husband Joel will be dedicating their son Ezra to the Lord. Wow, what a great day!

As I think about this special day, I am keenly aware of two things. First, I am overwhelmed by the gracious blessing of God on our family. Today, I am filled with a sense of deep gratitude to God. But secondly, my heart is moved with love and longing. When I look at my children and grandchildren, I desperately want them to be blessed by God. I want their lives to be filled with love, peace, provision, security, and meaning. Sometimes, I worry for them. I know we live in a dangerous world. I don't want them to be hurt. I want them to be protected. But that's not enough; I also have great hopes for them! We live in a world rich with life, beauty, and opportunity. I long for them to find ultimate fulfillment in life. I long to see them prosper in every dimension of life: spiritual, emotional, relational, and physical.

So I pray. I pray for protection and provision; for faith, hope, and love. I pray with great longing. But I also pray with confidence. I've learned that my love and concern as a father is but a pale reflection of the love and concern of God our Heavenly Father. This is a truth I cherish and depend on. It's a truth I want to celebrate with you this morning. Numbers 6:22-27 will be our guide.

### **God's Heart, God's Promise**

It's one of the most powerful little paragraphs in the Bible. It's what we call the Priestly Blessing, and it's wildly beautiful and profoundly deep. It's a favorite prayer of blessing, because it speaks to our concerns – protection, provision, and fulfillment.

But the most important thing about this passage is what it reveals about God Himself. The amazing thing about this prayer is that God is the one who wrote it and directed the priests to use it. That means this prayer is more than a reflection of human longing; it's a revelation of the very heart of God.

So read it again! Now you know the heart of God for your life, for your family, and for all those you love and care for. This morning we'll take some time to unpack the rich language of this prayer. As we do we will marvel at the heart of God our Heavenly Father.

But is this really a prayer? The language of the passage takes the form of a "benediction." A benediction is a way of conveying God's blessing through words. In that sense, these words are more than a prayer, they are a promise of what God is doing and will do in our lives.

### **God's Promise Fulfilled**

The blessing of God is rich and multifaceted. It includes protection, provision, and peace. But at the

center of it all is a relationship with God. That's why the passage repeatedly speaks of the "face of God." This is personal. This is being loved by God, and loving Him in return. This is "seeing God" and belonging to God as His child by grace.

The promise of Numbers 6:22-27 is a powerful preview of the good news of the Gospel. It's a promise that ultimately points to the miracle of Christmas morning: God with us; God and sinners reconciled; the light of the face of God revealed in Christ. This is a promise that goes beyond a blessing just for you, or your family or my family. This is a promise that actually creates a whole *new* family, the family of God through faith in Christ!

### **God's Promise – Your Prayer**

So now we know how to pray. We pray the promises of God. We pray for those we love. We pray for our families. We also hear the Gospel proclamation of a "new" family, the family of God. We pray for this family too; our brothers and sisters in Christ. We long for God's blessing and pray for it in faith. As we do, we trust the love, wisdom, power and promise of our God. So now, let us pray!