

**The LORD, the LORD, the LORD**

Have you ever realized just how much the Trinity appears in our regular services? Despite the fact that the words “Trinity” and “Triune” don’t appear anywhere in the Bible, this teaching is so core to our faith that we mention it all over the place in worship. We begin our services by remembering our baptisms, that we are sealed as a child of God in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. In the Gloria, we praise God with a song that gives glory to all three persons. Every week, we confess our faith in the Triune God, whether we use the Apostles’, Nicene, or Athanasian Creed like today. In our communion services, we sing “Holy, holy, holy,” remembering that the Trinity is holy and perfect. Whichever name we start with in our prayers - Father, Son, or Holy Spirit - we often end by naming the others, for they are one God, now and forever. The Trinity is everywhere in our service!

And then we end with the blessing. Most often we use what’s called the Aaronic blessing. It’s called “Aaronic” because it was first given to be spoken by the high priest Aaron and his sons. God had established the priesthood in the OT as his representatives, the go-between for the LORD and his people. But even though it was Aaron or his sons speaking these words for generations, and even though now you hear these words spoken by pastors, it’s the LORD’s blessing. The LORD bless you and keep you, the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you, the LORD look upon you with favor and give you peace.

Of all the passages to talk about the Trinity, why talk about this? Father, Son, and Spirit were all present at Jesus’ baptism. We could talk about the Great Commission, where Jesus sent his friends out to make more disciples in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. We could even look at one of the other two texts today, where all three persons are clearly named. But here, we have the LORD, the LORD, the LORD. Father, Son, and Spirit - all are the LORD. Here we see the character of our Triune God, who he is and what he does. We marvel at the majesty and mystery of the LORD, the LORD, the LORD.

Do you know why God’s name is sometimes in all caps? There’s such a grandeur, such an other-worldliness about the LORD, that his name deserves the highest treatment we can give it. The LORD is so special

that God’s people were often afraid of misusing it. Our English translation of “the LORD” represents the Hebrew word “Yahweh.” Yahweh is the best approximation for pronouncing the 4 letters the LORD gave as his name, and the word literally means, “He is.” God exists with no beginning and no end. This is who our Triune LORD is - supreme and eternal, a being unlike any other, far beyond us.

The Holy, holy, holy LORD has high standards, and as puny humans, we have to realize we can’t approach the LORD in his perfection. God has every right to turn away from us, to hide his face from our hideous sins. He shouldn’t bless us; God could pronounce curses upon us. If he were to turn his face toward us, we would expect that God would be scowling at us with fiery judgment. That’s what we rightfully deserve. And since we are naturally separated from the LORD, our lives are anything but peaceful. With sin infecting every moment, our lives are chaos, bitterness, darkness, pain. Instead of living in the presence of the Triune God, we dwell among our three worst enemies: the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh.

But the LORD longs to bless us. He wants to see us prosper and thrive - not always in the way the world expects, but in a much better way. As we look at the LORD’s own words of blessing, we rejoice to see the good things God has in mind for us. Now, the words of God aren’t just wishful thinking. When an earthly father blesses his child, he has good intentions. He wants what’s best for his child. So, he may offer parting words on his death bed, a blessing for the generations to come. But the LORD’s blessing goes beyond hopes and dreams for the future. The LORD’s words have the power to make his blessing a reality. The LORD isn’t a dying dad who won’t be with his kids to see their blessed days. The LORD is Yahweh, the God who exists, who was and is and is to come, the eternal One. The LORD is always present to make his blessing true every day.

As we see the LORD’s name repeated, we can think of each person of the Trinity making these truths happen. The LORD our Father blesses us. You earthly fathers do your best to provide good gifts for your family, to care for their bodies and souls. Ultimately, we know that every good and perfect comes from above, from the Father of the heavenly lights. The Father, who loves the Son, has adopted us as his beloved children in the waters of baptism. So, the LORD does everything in his almighty power to provide for us.

We can think of Luther's explanation to the 1st Article of the Apostles' Creed: "God created me and all that exists; he gave me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my mind and all my abilities. God preserves me by richly and daily providing clothes and shoes, food and drink, property and home, spouse and children, land, cattle and all I own."

The LORD our Father also keeps us. Think of a young child who becomes instantly smitten with a little puppy or kitten, and they ask mom and dad, "Can we keep it?" That child will do everything it can to love and care for that pet, to protect it from any harm. Even inanimate keepsakes, knickknacks, your precious possessions - you want to keep them, so you preserve them with extra special measures, you go to great lengths to guard these items. Are you not worth far more than these, that your heavenly Father wants to keep you? Won't he guard you from all harm and send his angels to protect you?

In those moments where you don't feel blessed and protected, that may be the Father's loving discipline. The LORD doesn't promise that we won't have trouble in this world, but he powerfully uses even our lowest moments to draw us closer into his arms. The trials of this life often point our eyes upward. The LORD reminds us that he is preparing a home for us, where he will bless and keep us forever in his care.

Our LORD Jesus Christ makes God's face shine on us. Think of all the gentle, smiling pictures of Jesus you've seen. When we think of the face of the LORD, we don't need to cower or worry that he's angry with us. In Jesus, we see the love that the LORD has for us. That's the face we see when we hear God say, "Don't be afraid. I am with you always. I'm by your side. You are mine." This love that radiates from Christ is so bright, someday we won't need the sun in the sky. The LORD himself will be our light!

That same light that pierces the darkness of our hearts is the light of God's grace to us. In Jesus, we see that the LORD is gracious to us. We deserve to be sentenced to death in hell. We fail to meet God's standard of perfection. Without our Savior, we stand condemned. But there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus! It is by grace you have been saved. Whoever believes in Jesus, the LORD made flesh for us, they will not perish but have eternal life.

What grace is this? What did I do to earn this? Why does God love me so much? This is who the LORD is. God is love, a love so big that he paid for the sins of the whole world. The LORD doesn't harbor grudges or seek out vengeance. The LORD wants all people to be saved, so much that our LORD Jesus Christ lived a perfect life for us, died the death we deserve, and rose again to free us forever. The LORD is indeed gracious to us.

The LORD, the Holy Spirit, turns his face toward us. The LORD has given his attention to hard hearts that didn't know him. The LORD is looking with care at this darkness, and he's not running away; he's not ignoring our need. He turns his face toward us. What favor the Spirit shows us! When we think of the work of the Holy Spirit, we focus on the gift of faith. The Spirit works through God's Word and Sacraments to create and maintain this saving faith in our hearts. Our belief in the Triune God isn't something we came up with on our own. Our simple minds, even with the gift of faith, can't fathom the mystery of the Trinity. But by the favor of the Holy Spirit, we say, "Yes, I believe."

Finally, the LORD, the Spirit, gives us peace. *Shalom*. The ideal life of blessing. Without the LORD's grace, we are at enmity with God and one another. We would be lost forever in darkness. But the Spirit shines the light of the LORD so that we know we have peace with God now and forever. We have the peace Jesus promised, peace unlike what the world gives, peace that means we don't need to be troubled. The LORD is with us.

This Aaronic blessing in the book of Numbers came when God was preparing the Israelites to set out for the Promised Land. They arranged their camp and their worship structure, and then the LORD gave them words that would help them in their hard journey ahead. We end our services with this same blessing. And the LORD himself prepares you for whatever difficulty lies ahead. You can go rejoicing in peace, knowing that the LORD himself has put his name on you. The LORD, the LORD, the LORD, the majestic and mysterious Trinity goes with you wherever you are to give you all the gracious gifts that come with his name. The LORD bless you and keep you. The LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you. The LORD look on you with favor and give you peace. Amen.