



Sermon
Rev. Dr. Lang Yang

"The Lord Bless You"

New Year's Eve
St. Michael's Lutheran Church – Richville, MI
12-31-2021

Grace, mercy, and Peace to you from God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

Numbers 6:22-27, The Lord said to Moses, "Tell Aaron and his sons, "This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them: "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace." "So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them." (ESV). This is the word of the Lord. (Cross-reference – Exodus 4:24; 23:20; 22:23, 2 Peter 2:16, James 1:19)

Illustration "Well-wishing"



Wishing one another well is a universal custom. We say Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, Happy Birthday, Good Morning, and Good Evening. (Show blessing)



What's good about it? Yet, when we well-wishing someone or bless someone, we mean it. If you go to someone and say, "Make a drooling face or being tired when you say, Happy New Year – Happy Birthday, or Merry Christmas without genuinely meaning it, then it is not well-wishing at all. So there is never any doubt that God says it whenever He wishes us well. (Show Numbers 6:24)

I. God said, **"The Lord bless you and keep you;"** When God's first blessed and spoken to his people they



were helpless. As you recalled, the Israelites just escaped the Egyptian army at the Red Sea by the Almighty God's miraculous interventions. There was an enemy behind them, in front of them, to their left and their right. The only land they wandered around was the dessert. (Show God's provision for the people)



They only had one helper and friend, which was God. They were dependent on Him, and they knew it. He gave them manna from heaven, water from the rock, and quail in the air. (Show Aaron blessing)

Aaron's words at the end of the church service were, therefore, full of meaning; when lifting his arms, he said: "The Lord bless you and keep you."



People around the world want to be blessed and have a clear conscience that they are truly blessed. (Show blessing with a chicken rite)



Look at the Hmong people, those that are still in "Animism" belief, when the people gather at the entrance to the field where the new year will celebrate the next several days. An elder will have a chicken, and a gate is placed at the entrance for people to enter. He then would take the chicken and make a circular motion while performing his ceremony "Limqab - Chicken rite." Once it's complete, the people could walk through the gate to receive a New Year blessing. It is a symbol that once you walk past the entrance, you are leaving all the sorrow, hardship, and all evil behind

from the old years, and you are coming to a new year with a fresh start. Your life will be fruitful and abundant. (Show plentiful food in a grocery store)



People live in abundance. Our farms produce all manner of food, and the shelves of our grocery stores are loaded. We have good houses, comfortable clothes, water, soda, beer, wine, and all manner of fruit juices. With all these abundant, people will say, who needs God? We need Him because we have nothing which we have not received from Him. He not only created the heavens and the earth. He still upholds all things by the word of His powers.

(Show image of crop and meat)



The sun rises, the seeds sprout, the fruits grow, the rain falls, and the cattle reproduce. Even though we sometimes forget it, we are just as dependent upon God as the Israelites in the wilderness. Without Him, we, too, would perish. Therefore, Christians find a deep meaning and absolute comfort in the words: "The Lord bless you and keep you."

II. "The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you."

(Show kneeling asking for blessing)



As I have mentioned about the Hmong's belief in "Animism," they come to kneel in front of the elders waiting to be blessed once they pass the gate. It is called "Pe Tsab - Bow to the new year." The elder who was selected to do this ceremony rite would then bless the people. He assured the crowd that their elders, decesses, parents, grandparents, or ancestors would remove any obstacle or mishap during the passes year and surely bring many blessings upon them during the coming year and each year afterward. (Show praying to spirit)



What do you think of yourself as you look back over the year just past? Do you believe that your deceased parents and ancestor can bless you? Most Christians would instead not look back. Looking back reminds us of too many failures, too many deeds left undone, too many sins. Looking back makes us feel guilty, disappointed, even depressed. By nature, we were all sinful. (Show sin?)



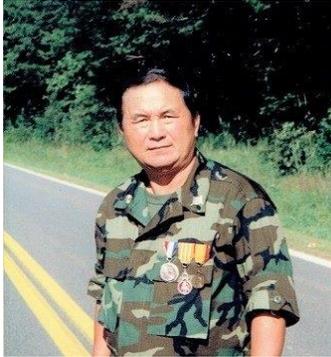
Brothers and sisters in Christ, let us bury our sin of the past. Our pride, lust, greed, envy, sloth, wrath, and gluttony. Do we leave it, or we keep pulling our sins back out every few days to see how our sin is doing? How often haven't we done this with our sins? We confess our sins, receive God's forgiveness, bury our sins but let a tail stick out so that at our lowest and most depressing moments,

we can pull the old sin up again to plague ourselves and others. (Show when God forgives)



As the new year begins, bury your sins of the past! Bury them so deep that you can never pull them up again. Because of God's great mercy and love, the prophet Isaiah said, "I, even I, am he blots out your transgression, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more." (Isaiah 43:25) Since God remembers our sins no more, we are not to dwell on past sins. Accept the blessing. Remember your sins no more, and let God be gracious to you. (Show Maj Chiakee Yang)

III. "The Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace."



My father, Maj Chiakee Yang stated that Hmong has a say, "Want to be wealthy and not to be poor, want to live and don't want to die – *Xaav muaj tsi xaav pluag, xaav caj tsi xaav tuag.*" Most people will say that they want to be wealthy and live forever. It will lead us to take pride in ourselves. If we fail to get what we want, we become filled with greed, lust, and temptation to lead us astray. When we go wrong, we commit more sins. If God were to count all our mistakes and failures, He has every reason to frown upon us in anger. Yet we know that he never frowns upon us but smiles upon us continually because, in Christ Jesus, our sins are forgiven. (Show Peace)



Since the world cannot give us Peace of mind, God gives us his Peace. Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." (John 14:27) This Peace is rooted in the knowledge that in Christ, God and sinners are reconciled, that God loves us, forgives us richly, cares for us daily, guides us, protects us, helps us, that all is well no matter what external appearances might be. (Show quiet lake – peaceful)



A great artist was asked to paint a picture symbolizing Christian's Peace in Christ, our God. They were amazed when he uncovered his painting. They expect a portrait of a quiet lake or a flower-covered meadow. His image had none of these. Instead, he painted a picture, "Peace in the Midst of the Storm." (Show Jack Meadow painting)



There was a turbulent sea, foreboding black clouds, waves furiously beating against the shore's rugged rocks. A tree stood on the shore, leaning outward because of the wind's constant pressure, a few limbs broken. But in the joint of two branches, above the spray of the waves, he had painted a nest in which were two small pigeons, and the mother dove calmly covering them with her wings. That's not a bad picture of Christian Peace. Storms may blow from every direction, dark clouds hover over us, decay and ruin surround us, yet we are saved in Christ.

(Show video "Peace in the Midst of the Storm" by Jack E. Dawson).





Explanation of the pictures: The hidden images in this painting help us see that just as the little bird (1) found a hiding place in the cleft of the rock, we have a refuge in Jesus Christ (2), our Rock. His cross (3) was a sacrifice for our sins, and his empty tomb (4) promised our resurrection. Yet, we are not promised a life without storms. We know that there is always the presence of evil (5) in the world, represented by the beastly image. Through the cross, we can overcome "because the one who

is in you is greater than the one who is in the world." 1 John 4:4 Only in Christ can we have "Peace in the Midst of the Storm." <http://www.jackdawson.com/categories.php?category=Seek-%26-Find-Prints/Peace-in-the-Midst-of-the-Storm> (Show Jesus blessing)



Grace is one of the glorious attributes of God. He forgives our sins instead of punishment. Christ has won for us instead of what we deserved; we have a life instead of death and salvation instead of damnation. God's grace reminds us that we deserve only evil through our sins, but that due to God's love in Christ, God gives us only good. As the new year begins, may the Lord bless you. God says: "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace." Amen.

Children Message

Blessing



Theme: **The Gift of Blessing**
 Object: **A Magic Wan and a Bible**
 Scripture: **Numbers 6:24-26** "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace." (ESV).

Good morning children! If I wave this **wan** on you, do you feel that you have been blessed? (*Let them answer*). The answer should be no because the wan cannot bless you. Did you know that God blesses you? (*Let them answer*). How does he bless you? (*Let them answer*). He loves you and cares for you daily.

The Bibles teach us that when we bless others, we need to use his word. We are human, and we cannot bless people, but through his word, "**Show them the Bible.**" God is the one who does the blessing. The Bible said, "The LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron and his sons, "This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them: "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace." "So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them." (Numbers 6:22-27, ESV).

One of the ways that we can bless others is by helping others. Take out the trash, opening the door for the teacher, helping your friend through comforting words when they are sick. God bless us by sending His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, and Savior to the world to save us. We thank God for blessing us with the gift of calling us to faith so that we may have eternal life.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, thank you for your gift of blessing us so that we may bless others. In Jesus' name, Amen!