

THE LORD MAKE HIS FACE SHINE ON YOU



Sermon on the Sunday of Trinity Numbers 6,
22-27

22 *The LORD said to Moses, 23 “Tell Aaron and his sons, ‘This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them: 24 “ ‘ “The LORD bless you and keep you; 25 the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; 26 the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.” ’ 27 “So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.”*

One of the first things we humans do when we are born into this world is to make eye contact with other people. According to the regulations of the baby manuals, this eye contact is an important part in the development of a newborn child. The relationship between parents and child must grow. And eye contact is one of the fundamental parts of this growth. Eye contact is also the first step to a healthy relationship. And if this is not the case, the child may lack an important foundation for its development in later life. Baby manuals describe how to improve the surroundings of a newly born child, so as to improve this relationship and so as to foster this eye contact. And so they say: One should protect the child from overstimulation such as loud music, television and chaotic movement. In this way, the child can perceive the parents in a natural way, make eye contact and later have a healthy relationship with its parents. Something like this shapes us for life. Eye contact remains important not only for toddlers, but for our entire life. Because eye contact is also part of a good relationship for us adults. When we talk to a person, we look for eye contact as well. This enables us to see how people relate to me and to my words. What he or she thinks or feels about me, we can often know not by words, but by eye contact. And when a person hates us, it is of course particularly bad and hurtful to see that same hatred in the eyes. Above all, when a person is very close to us and the relationship is disturbed, it is precisely the look that can offend us in the deepest soul.

So it is among us humans. But can it be that our relationship with God is also about eye contact? We can see this in the example of the people of Israel. The people of Israel were in their baby shoes when God saved them from Egypt. And just like children, they kept on yelling their heads off and didn't know at all what was good for them. In addition, they were constantly distracted by other things, sometimes mistaking God for a golden calf and sometimes believing that God had left them entirely. That's why God came up with something very special for them. He ordered Moses and Aaron to bless the people with the following Words:

The LORD bless you and keep you; 25 the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; 26 the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.”

In the middle of the arduous journey through the desert, God gives His people, his very own countenance! The countenance belongs to the personality of God. The Israelites were therefore allowed to know that God's would be with them all the time. When God gives His countenance to us, His face is not just a memory, like a photo of a long-dead relative. But God is actively involved through his countenance. He radiates his kindness and love so that our whole life has a purpose. He also protects us and does not let even a hair fall from our heads without his express permission. This

blessing that God gives us through his face is particularly important because we humans have lost sight of God. During the desert migration, the Israelites repeatedly believed that God had left them and led them on a senseless path. And this feeling of being abandoned by God is still with us to this day. Even if God has a close eye on us, we humans cannot see God. We also cannot and do not want to recognize the living God. And because that is the case, we humans are just like a toddler who cannot have a healthy relationship with his parents because he cannot find eye contact with the parents. In the meantime we have kept away from God for so long and so naturally that we not only do not want to recognize Him, but also cannot recognize Him at all. And if we cannot recognize God, then something fundamental is missing in our lives. We also cannot recognize ourselves! We cannot know why we are here and where we should go. When I suddenly turn off the light on a dark night, it's so dark around me that I can't even see my own hand in front of me. Then I can't even recognize myself! Quite apart from the other things that are still in the room. And what is it like to be blind from birth? Then you don't even know how to imagine the world at all. That's how it is with all of us humans! We are born blind to God. We cannot even see ourselves as we really are. And we also have no idea about God. We have turned our back on the living God. And we pretend that He doesn't even exist. The sad thing is that we humans ultimately believe in nothing more than the few kilograms of meat that we are. We have to drag this body halfway through life ... and then everything is over. We then hand the meat over to a funeral parlour so that it can be put under the earth or into a can without much fuss or ado. This is the human life without God. Others believe that there is a God, however cannot imagine that God is kind to them. For such people, God is far away. Not only is He far away, He is also dangerous. At any time, he could rage from the sky and kill his children. It seems to be purely coincidental if he blesses or punishes.

Something like that cannot leave us ice cold. If I hear that a child is constantly screaming in the neighbors house because the child do not get enough food or is not being cared for, I will ask at some point or inquire whether it is not a case for the youth welfare office. But what do we do when people grow up like orphans because they don't know God? We can't stand by and watch that so many people don't know God's friendly face and therefore cannot have a relationship with him. However, even if we can't see God, His face remains focused on us. God directs his entire countenance and all his love towards us. Just like the parents of a newborn child. Even if it seems that God is very far away from us, this is only the case for us humans. And if we can't understand God, it doesn't mean that God can't understand us. We cannot see God. But he can see us. He knows about our many uncertainties. He knows about our doubt. He knows our deepest concerns. But not so that He then sits in his high sky and laughs at how stupid and unreasonable we are. No, this high, sublime God, who is so far away from us, has turned towards us in spite of our many mistakes. God cares about us and our lives in this world. And He makes His Face to shine upon us!

God wants us to see his face. He wants that because He wants a relationship with us humans. The blessing was therefore an integral part of the daily routine of the Israeli people. When the people wandered through the desert, it was vital for them not to lose sight of God. Especially when there was danger or they were lost, it was important to know about God's presence. Our text says twice that God makes his face shine. Maybe you can understand that in a practical way. When a mother holds her small child smiling in her arms, her whole face lights up to the small child. The mother's radiant eyes attract the child. The child can immediately notice that these eyes are facing me. They love me, they belong to me and they only want the best for me. It is the same with us humans. God's eyes shine towards me. His eyes know me, and don't just judge me. Above all, they say that I am not just a piece of meat, but that I am valuable! The most valuable treasure. That is perhaps the deepest wish of all of us humans to be loved that way. And we can pass this love on to many people who do not know God. How can you put such love in words? When I come back to the parents with their newborn child. What do such mothers and fathers say to their children... .Kuuchilou... kiiiluuull... yes, just gibberish... But the child understands every word! And God's blessing? Isn't that also something that cannot be put into words at all? And yet we understand that he loves us! And is not the blessing of God above all else written in the language of love. Oh, how we humans need this love! Even when people have lost eye contact with God. There are so many terrible things in our world. There is so

much menace in our lives too. And then God's blessing just comes to us and pours out his love !. God's blessing ... It just has to happen! And that happens too! God doesn't just talk to us. He comes to us! He does that through Jesus! And Jesus is not just a past hero we worship. He lives and he loves you! He is close to you through the Holy Spirit! God is so close to you! And makes his face shine to you. God bless you and us! Amen