Living Word
Lutheran Church
LCMS

"What does 'bless' mean?"

There are lots of words we use in church - and words we find in the Bible - that we use so often, it's just assumed that everyone knows what they mean. Words like "redeem" and "atone" and "righteousness" to name just a very few.

There's a spot on the confirmation students' "Sermon Notes" sheet where they can write down words they heard in the service that they don't understand. "Bless" was one of the recent words. The specific reference was to the benediction (there's another word!) that I speak over the congregation at the end of the service,

The benediction uses the same words God told Aaron to use in blessing the people in Number 6:24-26.

"The LORD bless you and keep you.
The LORD make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you
The LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace."

The Hebrew word that we translate as "bless" literally means "to give the ability for success." When God blesses us, He is giving us the good things He knows we need for a successful life. Three things are mentioned in the rest of the blessing:

1. His favor (His face 'shining' on/smiling over us),

2. His grace (giving good things we don't deserve), and

3. His peace (that comes from knowing we have been made right with Him by His grace - through Jesus' death.)

Those probably aren't the three things we would list as the top three keys to a successful life, but God is the One who knows what makes for a successful life.

That may be a bit detailed, so to keep it simple, just remember this: "When God 'blesses' us, that means He gives us good things." (Which we often call "blessings.")

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net