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**Assignment 1, Sermon**

Preaching the Psalms

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March 31, 2023

## Psalm 67

*“<sup>1</sup> May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, <sup>2</sup> that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations. <sup>3</sup> Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! <sup>4</sup> Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth. <sup>5</sup> Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! <sup>6</sup> The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, shall bless us. <sup>7</sup> God shall bless us; let all the ends of the earth fear him!”*

### Introduction

Throughout the Bible, God encourages followers of Him to operate in a pattern of fullness and fulfillment. Receiving and giving. It is impossible to give, if we have not also received. On the flipside, we are not meant to only receive. God has created us to give to others an overflow out of what we have received.

Think about a car or any means of transportation. A car is only useful if you use it to go from one location to another. *I suppose my kids could use it as a play space but it would be an expensive play space that would only be entertaining for a little while.* For the car to be useful, it must be used.

But, the car must stop to be refueled otherwise it will run out of gas and not function as it is intended. *Our family was on a road trip one time on the highway when suddenly we realized that the van was almost out of gas. We thought we were going to be stuck on the highway. Thankfully, we made it in time to a gas station to fill up.* Have any of you almost run out of gas?

In the same way a car is meant to refuel, run, refuel, run, refuel, run. So too, we are created to operate in a cadence of receive, give, receive, give, receive and give. This can also be known as, fullness (*palms up*), fulfillment (*palms down*).

In the same way that a car is only useful when it runs, so too God has created us to be useful and productive; but we can only operate in a useful, beneficial way when we receive from God.

Psalm 67 is a fullness, fulfillment Psalm.

This is Psalm that I would encourage everyone to memorize. Memorize one verse a day. (Two of the verses are the same so that makes it easier.)

Psalm 67 is a chapter full of blessing. 3x the word “blessing” is used. We want to be a people of blessing so that we can bless the Lord and bless others.

The whole chapter is prayer and we want to be a church of prayer.

Psalm 67 is a chapter of reaching nations. Three times it mentions reaching “nations”. Four times it mentions reaching ends of the earth. Five times it mentions reaching ends of the earth. We are a church “of all nations, reaching nations.”

### **Verse 1**

Psalm 67 starts off with fullness and receiving. It is a prayer. *“May God be gracious to us and bless us, make his face shine upon us.”*

The prayer begins with God. God is the source of all that we need. James writes, *“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.”* (James 1:17) Without God, our works will be fruitless; but with God, we can bear much fruit. (John 15:5)

In this receiving prayer, three things are asked for. These three things are three that we can ask for as well.

### **Gracious to us**

First thing that is asked for is grace. God is a God of grace. Throughout Scripture God is gracious over and over again. “*God is gracious and compassionate. Slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.*” (Exodus 34:6; Ps. 86:16, 145:8). God’s grace ensures that we do not get what we deserve. Everything in the Christian life begins with the grace of God.

Three weeks ago, I woke up from a dream where my heart was pounding. I was a witness to the passion narrative. I saw Jesus taken away for trial. I saw people say, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” I saw Jesus get whipped. I saw Jesus carry down the cross. He looked tired and someone else carried the cross. Then it came time to nail the spikes into Jesus’ hands. The guy who was about to nail his hands STOPPED and then he looked at me. My heart started to POUND. The guy looked and command me to nail his hands into the cross. I did not want to. I said, “NO! NO!” It was at that moment that I woke up from the dream. Then I sensed God say to me, “Stephen, you participated in nailing Jesus to the cross.” Isaiah says, “He was pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities.” (Isaiah 53:5) I sensed God say, “I received the nails in my arms because I love you. I forgive you.”

God’s blood can cover a multitude of sins. Even though we deserve pain, hardships, death, God has grace available to each of us. John writes, “*If you confess your sins, he is faithful and just to forgive sin and cleanse from unrighteousness.*” (1 John 1:9)

## **Bless us**

The next thing we can ask God is for blessing. First we can pray for God to be gracious (not getting what we deserve) and then we can pray for God's blessing (getting what we do not deserve). In praying for grace first, we recognize that we do not deserve blessing. We receive the blessing. We don't earn the blessing. We accept the blessing. We don't get blessed because we have earned it. We ask for the blessing, not earn it. God is gracious. No matter what you have done, God can still bless you. No matter how many times you have sinned, God's gracious and he can still bless you. We have actually earned death. Romans 3:23 says, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus."

Jesus took the curse on the cross so that we can be blessed! (Galatians 3:13) Everyone of the sins that I have committed, I participated in nailing Jesus to the cross. But God is gracious and has removed the curses. God's grace gives us an opportunity to ask God for the blessing. It is not bad to ask God for the blessing. It is the exact opposite. It is good to ask God for the blessing.

Jesus wants to bless us. Jesus wants us to ask for the blessing. It is not a sin to ask God to be prosperous and successful. In the beginning, God blessed man (Gen. 1). Then, God blesses Abraham (Gen. 12 & 15). God charged Joshua to be "prosperous and successful." (Josh. 1:9) Psalm 1 says, "may you be prosperous in whatever we do." Jesus blesses His disciples (Matt. 5:1-12). Paul walked in the blessing of God when he

says, "I know that when I come to you, I come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ." (Romans 15:29) In Revelation, God blesses the churches (Rev. 1:3).

### **Face shine upon us**

The final thing that we are taught to ask God for in this passage is the greatest blessing of all "may his face shine upon you." The greatest blessing of all is the manifest presence of God. Psalm 16 says, "in the his presence there is fullness of joy." We all want this. More than any gifts that God may give, the greatest gift is the manifest presence of Jesus.

A few weeks ago, I got a letter from my daughter Hannah. It read, "I love you daddy. You are the silliest dad I ever had. My favorite present is you."

I can give my girl lots of things. Toys. Bikes. Pink dresses. Princesses. But the greatest present is MY PRESENCE.

What we really long for when it comes to God is the presence. Not the present. More than seeking God's hand, we seek God's face. God certainly does give presents. But more than that, God wants to give his presence! What we long for is the presence of God. Moses talked with God face to face. Jacob wrestled with God and talked with God. We can talk with God face to face.

My kids love it when my face is turned toward them. My kids do not like it when I am distracted by my phone. My son is 3 years old and already riding a bike. He must be the shortest kid ever to ride a bike. When he is on his bike doing a trick, but I miss it because I am looking at my phone, they get mad. They say, "YOU MISSED IT DADDY. YOU MISSED MY TRICK." We all long for the face of God.

As we live our lives, we want to RECEIVE. We want to pray and ask God for grace, blessing and the presence of God. This is fullness. This is receiving.

Before looking at verse 2, notice the pronoun used here. "Us" Often we prayer prayers of "I, me, my..." God wants our "US" to get big. God wants to expand our "US" prayers.

**Transition** [The Christian life does not end there. We don't receive and thats it. The Christian life continues. If all we were to do is receive, we might as well go to heaven.] The Psalm does not end there. Verse one ends in a comma. Not a period. It keeps going. Verse 2 says, "*That your ways may be known on earth. Your salvation among all nations.*"

We have received the forgiveness of God. We receiving the blessing of God. We receive the face of God. Why? So that you salvation may be blessed among ALL NATIONS. Yes.

We ask God's blessing on us individually, as a family unit, as a nation. Why? So that the nations would be reached. We can sing the song, "God bless America." But we do not sing that song for us alone. We ask God's blessing on America so that God may bless ALL NATIONS. We ask for God's blessing on our family, but we also pray God's blessing on all peoples.

In Genesis 12, God blessed Abraham so that through Abraham all nations would be blessed. Tell someone next to you, "Through you all the nations would be blessed."

This is why Jesus blessed his disciples so that they could reach all nations. Jesus was gracious, blessed and face shined upon his disciples so that the disciples would reach the nations. Jesus taught on blessing (Matt. 5)... why? So that they would

go to all nations (Matt. 28). Jesus blessed them with the Holy Spirit (fullness) so that they would be witnesses to all nations (fulfillment) in Acts 1:8. In Revelation 7, God makes it clear that there will be people of “Every tongue tribe and language” before the throne of God. God wants to bless us so that everyone will know God.

**Verse 3 and verse 5** [as the prayer continues, the result of fullness and fulfillment prayer is praise and adoration to God.]

*“Let the peoples praise you, O God. Let all the peoples praise you.”* It is a joy to PRAISE THE LORD. This is what God wants. God wants us to remove the garment of despair and give us a garment of praise. The phrase is repeated in the Psalm 4xs. The exact phrase is repeated twice. Once in verse 3 and once in verse 5. This repetition demonstrates and emphasizes the importance of this. God’s desire is for all to praise Him. We were created for worship. We are headed for eternal worship. The first phrase is for various people and ethnic groups praise God. Then it is repeated here with one word added (ALL) to emphasize the desire. God longs for all ages, ethnic background, gender to praise Him.

#### **Verse 4**

*“Let the nations be GLAD.”* God wants us to be glad. Christian life does not need to be doom, gloom. We can be glad. We are called to be so glad that we *“Sing for joy.”* God wants us to have joy. The nations need JOY. They certainly need water, housing. They need JESUS. They need JOY. As we said earlier, “In God’s presence, there is fullness of Joy, at his right hand are pleasures evermore” (Psalm 16). This is why we are called to receive from God grace, blessing and manifest presence (v. 1) so that there may be JOY.

**Then in the middle of this Psalm, it is clear the reason why we as believers are to pray for FULLNESS and FULFILLMENT.**

*“For you judge the peoples with equity.”*

At some point, all of our hearts will stop beating. The author of Hebrews makes it clear that after death there will be judgment. (Hebrews 9:27) There will be a point for all people to stand before God. For those who have received the grace of God, they will receive eternal LIFE in heaven. Everyone else will be sent to eternal death in hell.

God wants everyone to know that there is grace before the judgment. God wants everyone to know that Jesus died on the cross and that there is grace.

### **Verse 6 & 7**

Verses 6 and 7 is close to repeating verses 1 and 2. Verses 6 and 7 are a bit different and one of the primary differences is that verse 6 ends in that it is futuristic. *“God our God WILL bless us.”* Verse 7 begins repeating the phrase one more time. *“God will bless us.”* This is emphatically demonstrating God’s desire and will to bless people. God wants to bless. God wants to fill us up. God wants us to receive the fullness.

Then Verse 7 ends with another futuristic phrase where everything is headed saying *“all the ends of the earth will fear him.”* One day, Jesus will return and *“Every knee will bow, every tongue will confess that JESUS IS LORD.”* (Rom. 14:11; Phil. 2:10-11).

### **Conclusion**

Church, we want to RECEIVE grace, ask for the blessing, see the face of God. We want the fullness of God SO THAT we may also live in the fulfillment of God. We

want to reach the nations. We pray for the nations. We give to reach the nations. We have international churches. We are sending out Jim and LuAnn Eaton to Spain.

One of my favorite movies of the past 5 years. *Harriet*. This movie is about Harriet Tubman. She was born in 1822. She was born a slave in Maryland. At age 27, she was whipped, beaten, treated unfairly. Her mother was taken from her. She had enough and ran away. She wanted to be free. She said, "I want to live in freedom or I want to die." She got out and went to Philadelphia. She got an honest wage. She enjoyed it! But was gripped by those who still were in slavery. Harriet did not know how to read but God miraculously helped her out of Maryland and she was free. She loved the freedom. She did not just stay free. She went back to save others. She didn't just enjoy her freedom, she went back. She became a conductor on underground railroad. She freed 70 slaves!

It was dangerous. They tried to convince her not. She went back and she was the only conductor on the underground railroad that could not read. Harriet was the most successful conductor in the underground railroad as she rescued more slaves and did not lose one to death. She says these words, "I ain't givin up rescuing slaves because it is far. Many of you don't know slavery first hand. You were born free. You've been free so long. You forget what it is like. You have gotten comfortable and important. You have beautiful homes, beautiful wives, but I remember! I am going to do what I got to do. Go wherever I gotta go. However I gotta do it. To free as many slaves as possible. Till this beast, this monster called slavery is sleign and DEAD. I will give every last drop of blood in my veins to free them." Harriet knew what it was like to be free. She also knew what it was like to be a slave.

We need to remember what it was like to be in darkness. Yes, we have stepped into the light. We can't get comfortable. Yes, God has freed us. Some of us as Christians have gotten used to freedom, grace, blessing and face of God. We have forgotten what it is like to be chained, dead... We need to go back and tell them of the good news of Jesus. Go back to tell others about the freedom. There are nations, people groups who have not even even HEARD the Good News of Jesus, let alone received salvation. We need to remember that there are people who have not yet been free.

We want to live in the blessing, why? So that we can bless others. We often measure blessings. We think about blessings with our house, clothes, family etc. "I am blessed - I have a good house. I have a good job." Ask yourself, what am I doing with the blessing? Ask yourself, how is blessings leading to reaching nations? How is blessings leading others to freedom? Start to measure your blessings with how many lives have been freed by Jesus. How much of your time, money is going to reaching nations?

Yes, receive God's grace, blessing, face SO THAT YOU CAN REACH THE NATIONS.

We want to receive the blessing not to hoard it. We receive it so that we can give it to others.

If you have never received the grace of God, pray this prayer with me. *"Thank you God for loving me so much that you sent your Son, Jesus Christ. I recognize that I am a sinner. I believe that Jesus died for my sins and defeated death through resurrection. I repent of sin and trust in Jesus as my Lord and Savior."*

We are going to sing *The Blessing*. Receive it. Receive the blessing of God so that you can give the blessing.

“Father, we want to receive all that you want to give us so that you can do all that you want through us.”

God be gracious with US. How big is your US? Is your prayer life all about me, my family? - lets have our prayer life about nations!