

First Baptist Church Merritt Island
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Blessed to Bless the Nations
Psalm 67

This morning, we are taking a break from our study of Mark so we can study a passage that focuses on the global mission of Jesus. So, turn with me in your bibles to Psalm 67.

As I was preparing for this sermon, I had a vague memory of something one of my kids did quite a few years ago. I remembered one of my children asking me for some money. I couldn't remember what they wanted, but I remembered it being a little suspicious. It was driving me nuts because I could not recall most of the details of the story. But I did remember a very important part, it turned out that my child wasn't asking for money to be greedy or selfish, even though it initially looked that way. They were asking for money because one of their classmates at school came from a family that was struggling financially and my child wanted to buy them a new coat to wear during the winter.

I remembered the distinct feeling that there was all the difference in the world between a child who asks for money from their father so they can hoard it for themselves and a child who asks for money from their dad so that they can bless other people. It filled my heart with joy to think one of my kids would have that kind of heart.

But I still couldn't remember which kid it was. So, I called Emily and ran the story by her. Of course, she remembered exactly which child it was. It wasn't Logan or Mia or Andi Kay. It was Opie from the Andy Griffith Show. Man, you know you're getting old when you can't distinguish the details of your life from one of your favorite television shows.

But even though I was way off on whose child it was, the basic premise still holds true. There is all the difference in the world between a child who asks to be blessed by their father so they can hoard it for themselves and a child who asks to be blessed by their father so that they can use their blessing to bless other people.

And that's what we see in our text for this morning. Today, we are focusing on the mission of Jesus among the nations. And I want to show you from the Bible that God the Father's desire for His people is to bless them so that they can be a blessing to the nations.

Psalm 67:1-2 May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, Selah 2 that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations.

Let's make a couple observations about this Psalm.

Observation 1: This Psalm begins with a prayer of blessing.

Look back at verse 1:

1 May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, Selah

The word "selah" is from the original language of the Old Testament and we don't know exactly what it means. Many scholars think it served as a musical term that signifies a rest, or a pause, in the music. It's possible that the intent was to build a moment into the song where the worshipers could pause and reflect on what they had just sung.

So, let's pause and reflect on this prayer at the beginning of the song.

There are three request the Psalmist makes:

- Grace
- Blessing
- for God's face to shine upon His people

And those really aren't three distinct requests. They are closely connected to each other.

The first request is for grace. Grace is the unmerited, unearned favor of God. It's God choosing to do good to us in spite of the fact that we have sinned against Him. The request for blessing is just an extension of asking for grace.

Blessing is when God shows divine favor to people, to do good to them and give them good things. This is the same word that God used when He promised to bless Abraham in Genesis 12. He promised to give good gifts to Abraham, like a child and land and many descendants. So, one way you can think of blessing is as God's divine favor that gives good gifts to His people.

When he says, "make your face shine to shine upon us," that's a reference to God's inclination to do good to His people and take care of them. It's sort of like saying His face lights up when He looks at us.

Think about when you go to an elementary musical performance. Most of the kids aren't destined for Broadway, so no matter how well they perform, it's unrealistic to think the quality of the production is going to be world-class. But, if you watch the parents who are watching their kids, you'd never be able to tell that they aren't at a world-class musical. They light up when their kids take the stage. They look at them with love. They care about them and want them to be well. They favor their kids.

And that's the prayer of this Psalm. God, be gracious to us in spite of our sin. Bless us, do good to us and give us good gifts, even though we don't deserve them. And make it so those blessings and good gifts come from a heart of love and care. Make it so that your face lights up when you look at us. That's what the Psalmist is praying for God to do. It's like Opie asking Andy to give Him some money. It's not wrong. It's actually good. It's something God wants us to do.

That brings us to the next observation.

Observation 2: This prayer originates with God.

That would be true simply because this Psalm is inspired by the Holy Spirit as part of God's word. But this prayer is also a quote from another part of the Bible: Numbers 6.

Numbers 6:24–26

24 The LORD bless you and keep you; 25 the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; 26 the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

This is a blessing that was given to Aaron, the high priest in Israel. That's why it's known as the Aaronic Blessing. It was supposed to be passed down through the generations and spoken over the people of God. And do you know who gave this prayer of blessing to Aaron? God did. God told Moses this prayer of blessing and said, "Give it to Aaron and his descendants to speak over my people."

And just think about that for a minute. God tells His people to ask Him for this kind of blessing. What does that tell us about God? Imagine you went to someone and said, "Hey, ask me for a hundred dollars." Why would you say something like that? Well, there are a couple of possibilities. Maybe you're mean and cruel and like getting people's hopes up just so you can tell them "No." Or maybe you plan on giving them that gift and part of your plan is that you'll give it when they ask.

And that's why God gave this prayer of blessing to His people. He had a plan to bless His people. He wants to be gracious. He wants to give good gifts. He wants to show favor. That's who He is. So, that's why He has His people ask Him for it. He wants to bless people.

And that brings us to our third observation.

Observation #3: This prayer is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus.

John 3:16 - For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

In His great love, God graciously gave the greatest gift of blessing this world has ever known. He gave us His Son, Jesus. And, through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, God opened a way to blessing that is beyond comparison. He gives us eternal life in heaven and abundant life on earth when we trust in Jesus. A life that is filled with every blessing God has ever promised.

Romans 8:31–32 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

Just stop and think about that for a moment. God desires to bless people in Jesus in a way that He will not withhold anything from them if it's good for them. He wants to give us good things in this life and good things for eternity.

And don't let this be a generic idea. Let it be personal. God desires to bless you. He wants to do good for you and do good to you. If you are trusting in Jesus, He has made His face shine upon you. His face lights up when He looks at you in Jesus. You are forgiven. You are loved. You are pleasing to your heavenly Father. You can enter the presence of God and ask Him for blessing, for good things. You can ask Him for anything, and He will not withhold it from you unless, in His perfect wisdom, He knows it's not best for you. The only reason I don't have a 1960s Ford Bronco is because God knows it would be good for me...yet. But, seriously, the heart of the Father is to pour out blessings on His children. He wants us to ask and receive. And He never withholds anything except that He knows it would not be for their good.

What amazing news! But our text for this morning isn't just about God's desire to bless us in Jesus. Look back at Psalm 67.

1 May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, Selah 2 that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations.

This psalm isn't just revealing that God desires to bless His people or that He desires for His people to ask for blessing. It's giving us a reason He wants to bless us. Notice the first word of verse 2: that. The word "that" is showing us a reason for something. God desires to bless His people SO THAT something will happen through that blessing.

What does God want to happen? He wants to make His way and His saving power known among all the nations. That's what this psalm is revealing to us. And that brings us to our Big Idea for this morning.

Big Idea: God desires to bless His people in Jesus so that He can bless the nations through us in Jesus.

God wants to bless you in Jesus so that He can use your life to bless the nations. That's the main point of this Psalm. It's not just about the individual psalmist or the nation of Israel. It's about God's desire for the nations and the people groups of this world.

Read the rest of this Psalm and see how that's the point.

3 Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! 4 Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth. Selah 5 Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! 6 The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, shall bless us. 7 God shall bless us; let all the ends of the earth fear him!

God desires to be praised by all the peoples – people from every language, every tribe, every nation, every ethnic group. God desires to make the nations glad and full of joy. God desires people to know that He is the Judge who judges people from every nation with equity, or on the same level – namely, how they respond to Jesus. He wants to make His way of salvation known through the gospel of Jesus.

That's the heart of God in blessing His people. He blesses us to be a blessing to the nations so that they would know about Jesus and praise Him for His grace. That's the one, big work God is doing in the world today. And it's a work that He will accomplish.

In Revelation 7, God gave John a vision of the end of time. Listen to the scene around God's throne from John's vision:

Revelation 7:9–10 After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

The prayer of Psalm 67 is fulfilled around the throne of God by Revelation 7. The nations will be glad and praise the Lord for His saving grace in Jesus.

God is working in Nicaragua and Cambodia and Malawi and Mongolia and Iran and Saudi Arabi and Japan and France and every tribe and tongue and nation. And, He has blessed you so that your blessings could be used to bless the people of the nations.

And my prayer for all of us today is that God would do a work in our hearts that would cause us to say "Yes, Lord. Yes. I want my life to be part of that. I want to be a conduit for blessing to the nations, not a container that selfishly hoards your gifts to me in Jesus."

So, what do you do next? How do you start living to take what God has blessed you with and use it to bless the nations? Let me give you three ways to be a blessing to the nations.

1. We bless the nations...as we PRAY

That's the most direct application of this Psalm. It's a prayer for blessing. The psalmist is asking God to do something among the nations. Ask God to bless you by increasing your ability and your willingness to invest your blessings into the nations. Ask Him to work in the people groups around the world.

1 Timothy 2:1-4 - First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Jesus has provided you the blessing of being able to pray. And the Father wants you to use that blessing for the nations. And I know that might seem daunting. It can feel overwhelming just trying to pray for the people I know, let alone praying for 8 billion people who live among 17,000 people groups. So, let me give you a couple practical tools for praying for the nations.

FBCMI Missionary Partners Prayer Cards

You should have received prayer cards from several of our missionary prayer partners that have prayer requests on them. We give out something like this every year so that you can have the faces and names of some of our missionaries, along with specific requests to pray for them. I encourage you to take those and put them someplace where you will regularly see them and be reminded to pray for them...in your Bible, by your bed, in your prayer closet, at your desk...You can pray for the nations by praying for these missionary partners. If you want to be part of a missionary care team, speak with pastor Richard or call our church office to get more information about that.

IMB Pray App

If you have a smartphone, you can download this app and it will give you daily prayer requests from our Southern Baptist missionaries around the world. I've had this for years and found it to be the best way for me to consistently pray for the nations.

JoshuaProject.net

This website is probably the most comprehensive resource for information about the unreached people groups in the world. It is filled with updates on how you can pray for the progress of the gospel.

Whatever way you choose, God is calling you to use the blessing of prayer to bless the nations for the sake of the gospel.

2. We bless the nations...as we GIVE

One of the blessings God gives us is financial blessing. And the Bible says that God blesses us with money so that we will use it to invest into the mission of Jesus.

2 Corinthians 9:10-12 - 10 He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. 12 For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God.

Paul is saying that God gives financial blessings to His people so that they will generously invest it into His kingdom work.

Not all of us will go as career missionaries to the nations, but we can be part of sending them and supporting their work. We can help send the Hodges to Malawi and the Bobbs to Cambodia. Through our partnership with the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, we can help send over 3500 missionaries to the mission field.

Last year, the Lord used the work of our Southern Baptist Missionaries to bring almost 180,000 new believers into God's family from the nations of the world. We were able to plant over 20,000 new churches to disciple those new believers.

And your giving is being used to support those mission partners. Ten percent of our annual budget is immediately given to missions, in addition to the local mission partners we celebrated last week. Even more, 33% of every dollar given over our annual budget goes to missions. That means the more we give, the greater our percentage of giving is to the mission of Christ. And, since you have been giving generously, over the last two years we have been able to give nearly \$80,000 more than we had budgeted to missions.

So, I want to challenge you to ask the Lord to increase your giving. Ask Him to show you ways you can invest more of your financial blessing into the mission of Jesus among the nations.

(Go ahead and make a plan for giving more and ask God to bless that plan by giving you what you need to fulfill it – see what He does)

We have been blessed in Christ to be a blessing and we bless the nations when we pray and give.

3. **We bless the nations...as we GO.**

Romans 10 tells us that the people of the nations will never know about the salvation of Jesus unless someone is sent and goes to them to tell them. Someone has to go to the nations that they would be blessed in Christ.

And there are two ways you can go. Some of you may be stirred to go on a short-term trip. In the next year, we will be sending teams to Malawi, Cambodia, Nicaragua, and Guatemala. We are also looking into Mongolia and other people groups. I believe we have around 100 people who are already scheduled to go on those trips. Will you pray about stepping into another cultural context in the near future?

We have cards printed that ask: Is God calling you? Filling out that card isn't a commitment to go on any of our trips. It's just a way of opening the door for you to have more information and become part of the conversations in the future. For many of you, God is stirring you to just take the next step of going by learning more and discovering the opportunities that exist for you to go on a short-term trip.

And some are being stirred to go as long-term missionaries...You might not know where. You might not know when. You might not know what it looks like, at all. But the Lord may be stirring your heart to find out more. If that's you, I want to ask you to speak with one of our pastors at the end of the service or throughout the week. We want to join you on the journey of discovering what that call might be.

God has blessed us in Christ to be a blessing to the nations in Christ. And we bless the nations as we pray, as we give, and as we go. And may the nations be glad and praise the Lord for His grace to us in Jesus.