

Good morning.

Good morning.

Our reading this morning is Psalm 67.

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

Let the peoples praise you, O God.

Let all the peoples praise you.

Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity
and guide the nations upon earth.

Let the peoples praise you, O God.

Let all the peoples praise you.

The earth has yielded its increase.

God our God shall bless us.

God shall bless us.

Let all the ends of the earth fear him.

Some of you have been...

complimenting the sermons the last couple weeks because we've gotten out early.

I don't know how to feel about that.

And all I got to say is I just preach what's in front of me.

So, you know, we've got a short psalm.

Usually it's a short sermon, and that's fine.

It's the summer.

It's great.

We've got a picnic, and it's going to be wonderful.

So I don't make any promises today, though.

That's why I say it, because this is a short psalm, but I don't make any promises.

There's a lot less laughter now.

There's some nervous chuckling.

They're like, what's he gonna do?

We're gonna be here forever.

All right, enough about me.

Let's pray and we'll talk about God.

He's better than I am anyways.

Heavenly Father, you're...

You're glorious, you're majestic in all of your ways.

Lord, as we look at your ways again, would you help us to see clearly and to know rightly and to love you deeply.

We pray all this in Jesus' name, amen.

I realized that video games weren't real when I hit about 18.

Some of you are like, that took way too long.

But I don't mean that I thought that when I was playing video games that I was controlling real people or that little monsters were actually obeying my every command.

I mean that one day it dawned on me that the feeling of success and the sense of accomplishment that I was getting from these video games was actually meaningless.

All I had succeeded at was jumping through some hoops that somebody else had made for me to jump through.

All that I had accomplished was rearranging

some zeros and ones on the binary code on my saved file, that there really wasn't, I really hadn't accomplished anything, my life really hadn't advanced because I beat this game 105%.

I found it to be meaningless, right, as I got older and experienced a reality that was bigger, greater, and more concrete than the video game world.

Well, I think Psalm 67 is doing something similar for us today.

Psalm 67 is reminding us that there's a reality that is bigger, greater, and more concrete than what we can see, touch, or that we hear about in the news.

More importantly, though, the psalm is inviting us to not only hear about and recognize this reality, but to come and live in this reality, to align ourselves with God's will and God's ultimate purpose, not only for you,

but God's ultimate purpose for the world.

I mean, we're talking about big, ultimate, cosmic stuff that we often check out of because we're like, what does that have to do with me?

I would argue today that has everything to do with you.

So let's go, and oops, my phone wasn't set.

A little anticlimactic there.

But we're gonna go, and we're gonna see that the joy that we find in praising God is made complete when we join God's mission to bring others into the same thing, or to bring others into praising God this morning.

All right, pray for me so that I can get words out very clearly.

The psalm starts out by talking about God's blessing to his people, Israel.

Look at verse one.

He says, So if you're familiar with the Pentateuch or the first five books of the Bible at all, you'll notice that the psalm begins and ends with the blessing from the Lord that should have been familiar to the people of Israel.

It's the blessing,

or at least a paraphrase of the blessing that Aaron, the first high priest, was given to give to the people.

We see that in Numbers 6, 22 to 27.

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel.

You shall say to them, The Lord bless you and keep you.

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

The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel and I will bless them.

So the people would have heard this blessing at the beginning of the Psalm, and they would have heard this blessing every day.

Every time they went into the tabernacle and temple, this blessing would have been given to them at big events, the feasts, this blessing would have been given and pronounced over them.

They would have been very familiar with this blessing.

And it was one of the ways, if you notice the last line, so shall they put my name upon the people of Israel.

It's one of the ways that God identified with Israel and set them apart as his people.

And this would have obviously been a source of great comfort and joy for the people as they receive assurance from God that he was not against them, but rather he was for them.

He looked on them with a smile and a bright shining face and not a displeased frown.

So the psalmist even puts a pause, a *selah*, after the pronouncement of this blessing so that we don't run past it.

He's like, this is great.

This is what everyone wants.

This is the deepest longing of everyone's heart to have God's face shining upon them and to know that and to experience that.

But then in the very next verse of the Psalm, we're reminded that it was never God's intention that this blessing that was pronounced upon Israel through all of their ceremonies, right?

That this blessing should just stay within Israel.

Look at verse two.

that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations.

So Israel's blessing that they received from the Lord was so that God's name would be pronounced and known on the earth among all nations.

Remember last week, we looked at Genesis 12 very briefly, but when God called Abraham out from the nations, so God called Abraham out from among the nations and promised to bless him,

He did so so that all of the families of the earth would be blessed.

In other words, God's plan to bless the nations was to bless one nation and then through them to bless the rest.

And even today, that fundamental today, as we gather as the church, the institution through which God is working in the world now, that fundamental structure or that fundamental plan hasn't changed.

1 Peter tells us in 1 Peter 2.9,

but you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, so that or that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

You know, Peter's saying all of the elements that made up being God's people or all the elements of being God's people,

that were begun in the nation of Israel are fulfilled in the church.

And we have been shown grace and we've been made God's people so that we may, you and me, people that are sitting in this room right now, may proclaim his excellencies.

So if you're a believer here today, you've been blessed by God and shown mercy so that you may tell others about how great God is.

And if you're not doing that, you're living in a video game land, right?

You're not living in light of that biggest, greatest, most concrete reality for your life.

There's something better and more meaningful that you've been called to than just scratching out a living or distracting yourself with whatever new amusement you can find.

And I'm saying that to myself this morning.

I'm not just preaching at you.

I'm saying that to myself.

Because sometimes scratching out a living is hard, and it takes up a lot of my attention and energy.

And sometimes I just want to distract myself, and there's a lot of cool things out there to distract myself with, right?

There's this guy, Jay Campbell White, I didn't know anything about him until I read about him recently.

He was a missionary with the YMCA for a little while overseas, came back and was the president of a college and then became a pastor.

He said this, most men are not satisfied with the permanent output of their lives.

Nothing can wholly satisfy the life of Christ within his followers except the adoption of Christ's purpose toward the world he came to redeem.

Fame, pleasure, and riches are but husks and ashes in contrast with the boundless and abiding joy of working with God for the fulfillment of his eternal plans.

The men who are putting everything into Christ's undertaking are getting out of life its sweetest and most priceless rewards.

He's not saying it's easy.

As someone who's in the ministry and vocational ministry, it's not easy, right?

Working with the church and for God's purposes is almost never easy, but it is joyful, right?

And it's some of life's sweetest and most priceless rewards.

What you were made to do, and if your hope and faith is in Jesus, what you were remade to do is to know God and then proclaim his excellencies to other people.

which is why God calls the nations to praise him.

We'll take a look at this in a second.

Look at verses three to five.

Let the peoples praise you, O God.

Let all the peoples praise you.

Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon the earth.

Selah.

Let the peoples praise you, O God.

Let all the peoples praise you.

Listen, God isn't after...

Cold, begrudging homage given by unhappy servants.

God doesn't want that.

He's not interested in that.

God is in the business of producing people that praise him from an overflow of joy and gladness.

And not just an overflow, but he's producing a people that the praise that they give him is actually an enhancement of and an expression of that joy and gladness.

What do I mean by that?

It's actually something very simple that we all know to be true.

It's hard to put words to, but we all deep down do it almost every day, and we know it to be true.

Jim Hamilton puts it this way.

We long to be impressed with jaw-dropping feats of greatness that flow from unique ability and peerless power.

This is why so many around the world are intoxicated by the prowess of elite athletes.

It is why we love to see the majesties of creation, the ocean, the Grand Canyon, Niagara Falls, and the starry heavens.

We love these incredible glories because there is a yearning in us for the one who alone could create them.

Praise completes our enjoyment, and there is nothing that we were made to enjoy more than God.

When God calls us to praise him, this is important.

I've said it a couple of times as we've preached through the Psalms, but when God calls us to praise him, he doesn't do it because he needs our praise and he does it for us because praise completes the enjoyment and enhances the enjoyment.

C.S.

Lewis talks about why God doesn't need our praise this way.

He says, the miserable idea that God should in any sense need or crave for our worship like a vain woman wanting compliments,

or a vain author presenting his new books to people who never met or heard him, is implicitly answered by the words, if I be hungry, I will not tell thee, Psalm 50, 12.

Even if such an absurd deity could be conceived, meaning even if there's a God who is craving praise and needs praise, even if that could be conceived of,

He would hardly come to us, the lowest of rational creatures, to gratify his appetites.

I don't want my dog to bark approval of my books.

He's saying there's angels, there's seraphim, like just read Revelation.

He can get praise from all other kinds of beings.

Why would he need praise from you, right, or me?

He doesn't need our praise.

Rather, he loves us by calling us to praise him, by calling us to praise him, right?

One of the ways that he loves us is by drawing us in to the Trinitarian fellowship that the father has, where they're all loving one another and praising one another.

And he draws us into that dance to praise him and enjoy him for forever.

So there's two ways that we see that the nations in particular, so this psalm was addressed to the nation of Israel and that God's blessing the nations through Israel here.

There's two ways that the nations in particular are drawn into praising God, and that's to praise him as the judge and as the guide of the nations.

Look at verse four again.

"Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, "for you judge the peoples with equity "and guide the nations upon the earth."

So the people are glad to praise God, right?

They're eager, glad to praise God, the Lord Yahweh, because he judges with perfect righteousness.

I mean, we've had enough years now.

I think we can declare this, or at least I feel comfortable declaring this, that establishing a global government or a United Nations has been a bust, right?

And it always will be.

As far as global politics goes, it's pretty much the rules of the playground out there where might makes right, and it's only God's sin-restraining hand on the world that things aren't worse than they are.

But what the Psalm tells us is that the downtrodden, the oppressed peoples can turn to the Lord who sees and judges righteously both in this life and the life to come.

The Lord says in Deuteronomy 32, 35, vengeance is mine, I will repay.

And in Acts we're told, Acts 17 in particular, the times of ignorance got overlooked.

But now he commands all peoples everywhere to repent because he has fixed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man, that's Jesus, whom he has appointed.

And of this, he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.

God is the righteous judge and friend of the peoples who have been wronged.

But all peoples need God, and the psalmist also calls God the guide of the nations.

This word guide here is the same word that Moses used in the book of Genesis to describe God leading Abraham's servant to find a wife for Isaac.

It's also the same word that Moses uses in Exodus to describe the pillar of fire that led the people by night and the pillar of smoke that led the people by day.

God will lead and guide the nations that look to him for wisdom and direction.

There's no better counsel, no path that will more surely lead to flourishing and happiness than the counsel of the God who made the universe, who made the world, and who made us, and knows how we ought to live together in harmony.

Now, it would be great, right?

I mean, this sounds great.

It would be great if our nation, if all nations respected the Lord as judge, and if all nations turned to him for leadership and counsel.

I mean, could you imagine what the world would be like if we all looked to the Lord, the maker of heavens and earth, for our guidance and feared him as our judge?

I mean, there'd be flourishing, there'd be harmony.

It would be wonderful.

It would be a wonderful experience.

but it sounds like a pipe dream, right?

It sounds like, yeah, that'll never happen.

We've been around long enough to know that that's not gonna happen.

But the end of the Psalm assures us that not only will it happen, but it's as good as done.

Look at verses six and seven.

The earth has yielded its increase.

God, our God, shall bless us.

God shall bless us.

Let the ends of the earth fear him.

Verse six is the only verse in the whole Psalm that's in the past tense.

It doesn't make a lot of sense, other than that it seems like the psalmist is communicating that this future that the psalm is calling for, this future that the psalmist is invoking, is as good as done.

The earth has yielded its increase.

The reason the psalmist has put it in the past tense, again, is to just communicate that it's as good as accomplished.

It's like when Jesus said on the cross, it is finished.

Yes, all of the necessary work for salvation of his people past, present, and future had been accomplished on the cross.

but some of his people had not been born yet, right?

Nor had they yet put their faith in his atoning work.

So the victory had been won, but there were still events that needed to be played out, right?

From the time of his death.

Same thing here, right?

That blessed future of all people's praising God and flourishing is as good as done.

It will happen, but it still has to play out in history.

And just to be clear, what the psalmist is talking about here is not their crops growing really well, right?

The earth has yielded its increase.

He's not just referring to crops, but he's referring back to the future, right?

Back to Genesis and saying that the earth, back in the days when things were perfect and harmonious in the Garden of Eden, just like the earth yielded its produce then and its increase then, God will one day return us to that future.

Edenic garden, perfect garden where we live with him and there's no weeds.

There's no, you know, none of that stuff.

The earth isn't cursed anymore.

It will yield its produce like it did then.

He's looking forward to the day that what was broken in the garden will be restored.

When God's people from every tribe, tongue and nation will dwell with him again and praise him face to face, right?

Because the joy we find in praising God is made complete when we join God's mission to bring others in to do the same.

Listen, we talked about sharing the gospel.

Last summer, we looked at evangelism and sharing the gospel in particular and tried to give you some tools to help you do that.

And we share the gospel.

We're going to talk in a few weeks about why we would send others, why it's our responsibility to send others or to go ourselves to share the gospel.

But we do all those things as an overflow of our joy and gladness in God.

And I just want to ask you, maybe do a little self-reflection this morning, like, have you thought of evangelism that way?

Or do you view evangelism more as like, you know, I need to go tell this person, this person doesn't quite realize how terrible they are, and I need to go tell them how terrible they are and how much they need Jesus.

And I think a lot of us just kind of have that impression of evangelism, and I think that's one of the reasons we don't do it.

And we do need to tell people about their sin, and we do need to tell them about their terribleness.

But evangelism is primarily about telling people how great our God is.

It's about helping people fix their eyes on who he is.

I think a decent outline for sharing the gospel, I'm just throwing this out there.

This is me, not the Lord, speaking this morning.

A little outline, just start out.

God's really great.

I wouldn't use these words, by the way.

This is just a brief outline so you can fix it in your head.

God's really great.

I can't begin to tell you how great and wonderful I found God to be.

I first saw how great God was when I recognized how actually terrible and sinful I still am sometimes.

But one of the ways that God is great is that even though that I've offended him and I've sinned against him,

He loved and rescued me anyways by sending his son to take my place on that cross.

To take my punishment, the punishment for sin I deserve for my terribleness.

And he offers the same to you.

Would you like to hear more about it?

So starting out with how great God is and keeping God the center of the focus and not us and our terribleness, I think is the whole point of evangelism.

Pastor Drew is going to come talk to us in a few weeks about why missions exist.

Missions exist because worship does not.

That's the whole point.

There are people out there who do not see and do not recognize or do not acknowledge openly how great and wonderful God is.

And for their good and his glory, we need to go tell them and remind them and awaken what they know deep down in their hearts.

There's no magic formula, but we must remember evangelism is about the greatness of God, which is also the greatest motivator.

John Stott put it this way, which was convicting.

He says,

saying not just love for people that are going to hell, strong as that incentive is, especially when we contemplate the wrath of God, but rather burning and passionate zeal for the glory of Jesus Christ.

We should be jealous for the honor of his name, troubled when it remains unknown, hurt when it is ignored, indignant when it is blasphemed, and all the time anxious and determined that it shall be given the honor and glory which are due to it.

You were made to praise and glorify God in all that you do, and you were made to invite others to do it with you.

There's no greater joy.

There's no more solid reality to live in.

It's a joyful mission that cannot fail.

As the men come forward for this morning's communion, I almost said offering.

We already did that.

But as we come to gather around the table together, let me pray one more time.

Heavenly Father,

we do ask that you would make our joy complete.

Even as we fellowship around the communion table today, Lord, we ask that you would make our joy complete by giving us and working through us to bring others into this glorious fellowship that we have with you.

Lord, we want to see your name lifted high.

We want to see your name proclaimed.

And Lord, as we do that in one of the ways that you specifically gave to us for our good and for your glory, we pray that you would be honored and glorified in it as we partake together.

Pray all this in Jesus' name.

Amen.