

Introduction:

As part of our “Culture of Grace” series, where we cover habits and practices we prioritize here at GracePoint Church, we want to consider how engaging in foreign missions is a means of grace. Do you know that taking part in God’s plan to spread His glory to all peoples is a channel in which God has design for His grace to flow into our lives? God uses our participation in His purposes to shower us with His grace. As you may have already experienced, with the Sriprai’s involvement in our worship gathering, we receive grace when we hear about how God is working throughout the world to make a people for Himself from every nation, tongue, tribe, and language. God also uses our own engagement in missions as a means of grace, as we connect more closely with what the gospel means for us in that engagement. I am sure Sam and Megan can attest to this. This is why we want the culture at GracePoint to include supporting those who are taking the gospel to all peoples, sending some to go, and going ourselves when the Lord calls us to go. This morning, we will look at Psalm 67 together to have it provide the ultimate motivation for engaging in foreign missions. When you look at the structure of this psalm, it appears to form a chiasm, which essentially means it is structured in such a way that the main point is found in the middle with the verses going in and coming out of it connecting to that main point while mirroring each other. In the most simple breakdown of this Psalm, verses 1-2 ask for God’s blessing with the purpose of seeing the nations know God and His salvation, verses 3-5 pray for the nations to find saving grace and worship God, and verses 6-7 return to the prayer of blessing with the purpose of the nations knowing and worshipping God. In Psalm 67, the nations are all peoples outside the covenant people of God. This would be those outside of Israel at its composition, and now those outside of the new covenant people bound to Christ. With it making requests that are intended to be sung, it calls our hearts to long for and request the glory of God to spread throughout the earth until God is worshipped by all peoples. There are many ways to encourage our hearts towards foreign missions, but none should be greater than the passion of seeing all peoples be glad in Him and worship His holy name. To have this Psalm challenge our hearts, I want to consider two truths it teaches us through its requests and questions in light of those truths. The first truth is found in the bookends of this psalm in verses 1-2 and 6-7, teaching us how,

The Purpose of God’s Grace is for All Peoples to Know Him

Any time the scriptures give words for us to pray or sing, I believe we should pay close attention and desire to connect as closely to them as possible because the Spirit of God authored them. Look at verses 1-2, “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.” The first two lines echo the Aaronic benediction in Numbers 6:24-26 using three of the six verbs found in that blessing (Nissim Amzallag, “Psalm 67 and the Cosmopolite Musical Worship of YHWH,” BBR 25 (2015): 174). The requests of these lines build on each other to form one overarching request. They ask for grace, blessing, and the face of God to shine on us. Consider each request with me. First, the psalmist requests for God to be gracious to us. Every heart that has been redeemed understands that grace and mercy are at the foundation of any relationship with God because of our sin. Every request we make should begin with a petition for God’s grace, acknowledging our dependence on it. Grace is what leads to the second request of blessing, or His favor working towards us. This is a desire for more than simply receiving physical things like good health, financial provision, and family. These things are part of God’s favor working us at times, but this request has an eye towards all the blessings that come from God’s favor being upon His people. Blessings of peace in the midst of trials. Love from God pouring into our hearts. Comfort in our difficulties. Joy in our mourning. I believe these kinds of blessing are primarily in view because of the final request for God’s face to shine upon us, which is a metaphor for the presence of God to be with us.

As Tremper Longman III notes, “When God hides his face, he withdraws his presence (Ps. 44:23–24). When his face shines towards the psalmist, it signals his warm presence, imparting life and everything associated with life (Pss 31:16; 119:135)” (Tremper Longman III, *Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary*, 256). Do you see the progression of this verse? The blessing of God is rooted in the grace of God that extends ultimately to the presence of God. The overarching desire is for God to shower His people with the goodness of His presence. Verse 2, then provides a purpose clause. The purpose is for the whole earth to know the ways of God and the nations to know His saving power. Knowing the way of God doesn’t mean having an intellectual knowledge of God only, but knowing His character, promises, and actions by experiencing them. In the structure of the poetry, knowing God’s ways is directly connected to His saving power. The Hebrew term translated “saving power” alludes to God’s deliverance of His people, from Noah in the ark, to Lot’s from Sodom’s destruction, to the Israelites from Pharaoh’s oppression, ultimately pointing to God’s power to deliver His people from sin and death. God’s saving power has always been intended to extend to all peoples and His grace, blessing, and presence towards His people are designed to be the way all peoples come to know Him. Look at the mirror of these requests in verses 6-7, “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!” These final four lines repeat the theme of the first four, expressing confidence that God’s blessing will come, “God shall bless us,” speaking as though it has already happened, “The earth has yielded its increase.” The beginning of verse 6 causes some to believe this may have been sung at harvest time. Notice the final request, “let all the ends of the earth fear him!” The blessings are not the end desire, it is that “all the ends of the earth” would fear the Lord. Fearing the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and it produces true and lasting worship of our God. The ultimate desire of the psalmist is for all peoples to know and worship the Lord. Church, this should be the fuel for all mission’s work. Certainly, we desire to save people from the wrath of God towards sin and for them to know the love of God found in Christ. But the undergirding desire in each of our hearts should always be to long for God to be glorified by all His creation. After all, this will be the final result of God’s saving purposes when all things are made new and we are finally face to face with Him, having His presence delight us for all eternity. Family, does your heart burn with a desire for our God to be known and worshipped by all peoples? Do you pray for His grace with an eye towards seeing it cause others to praise him? Because the purpose of God’s grace is for all peoples to know Him, our prayer should be like the psalmist, “Give us grace so the nations will know you.” If that isn’t a prayer of your heart, consider the second truth is found in verse 3-5, teaching us how,

The Joy of God’s People Should be the Salvation and Worship of All Peoples

Verses 3-5 form an *inclusio* where the middle line is sandwiched between two identical refrains. Look at those refrains in verses 3 and 5, “Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! ... Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!” Hebrew poetry is built on what is called parallelism, where the second line looks back on the first. In doing this, it either completes the thought, comments on it, restates it, expands it, or intensifies it. The parallelism makes the expressed desire unmistakable. The psalmist uses the plural in the first line of each verse, with an emphatic “all” in the second line. Praise by all the peoples of the earth is desired, and the recipient of this praise is God. The term he used for God is “Elohiym,” which is a name for God proclaimed all throughout Genesis from the first declaration of creation in Genesis 1:1. Church, praise is the ultimate purpose of all of humanity and it should bring us joy when more people praise our God. Look at verse 4, “Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth.” This praise isn’t simply a verbal expression but a deep seeded joy in the heart of the nations. The psalmist longs for the nations to have hearts which are fully satisfied with God. Hearts that are swept up in joy and gladness. Hearts that worship Him in Spirit and truth. The reason for their glad hearted worship is found in the second and third lines of verse 4. It is because God judges all peoples impartiality with complete and perfect fairness and guides all the nations upon the earth.

The idea of God's guidance also connects to God's care for Israel in the Exodus, just like His saving power, as Mark Futato notes, "The verb *nakhah* is used for God's "leading" of his people in and after the Exodus (e.g., 77:20 [21]; 78:14, 53; Exod 13:21; 15:13)" (Mark D. Futato, "The Book of Psalms," in Cornerstone Biblical Commentary, Vol 7: The Book of Psalms, The Book of Proverbs, 223). Further, this is the same term used in Psalm 23:3, where David says, "He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake." The desire of the psalmist isn't simply that all peoples will praise God, but they will enjoy all of His saving benefits, which includes Him ruling over everything in perfect justice and leading them as He has led David and the people of Israel. The ultimate goal is for all peoples to become God's people and His praise to fill the whole earth. A goal that has been realized in Christ and will one day be fully realized in the culmination of our redemption. As James Hamilton says, "When Jesus returns that purpose will be realized. The light of his presence will shine everywhere, replacing the sun as the source of radiance in all creation, and all will be glad in him, praise him, and enjoy his all-saturating goodness" (James M. Hamilton Jr., Psalms, 594). Family, if this is the state of all of eternity, should it not be our goal now? Shouldn't our hearts long, just like the psalmists, for all peoples to know and worship Him. Because the joy of God's people should be the salvation and worship of all peoples, we should pray like the psalmists, let all peoples come to know and delight in you. My prayer is this will be the heartbeat of our church and fuel our engagement in foreign missions. Which brings up a couple of questions we need to ask. First,

How Will All Peoples Know God?

Our passages shows us the grace of God, and His favor towards us, will help His saving power be known among all peoples. As the world around us sees the presence of God among His people, it will help them to see God's salvation. But it comes through more than just seeing His favor on His people. The apostle Paul showed us this in the passage we looked at last Sunday in 1 Corinthians 15. Listen to what he said again in 1 Corinthians 15:10-11, "By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed." The grace of God made Paul what He was. It led him to sacrifice for the sake of spread the gospel, working harder than any of the other apostles to preach the truth of Christ so many would believe. Family, the grace of God should lead us to strive to proclaim the gospel to all peoples because God's design is to have the gospel spread through our proclamation of it. As Paul says in Romans 10:14-15, "How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!'" God's design in helping all peoples come to know Him is by sending His people to proclaim the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ for them to hear and believe. No one can know God without knowing the Son, Jesus Christ. And we come to know the Son as we trust in His death on the cross for our sins and His resurrection for our justification. According to God's plan, that truth is to be declared, heard, and believed for all peoples to know God. This is why Paul made it his ambition to preach the gospel to those who have never heard. Listen to what he says fueled that ambition in Romans 15:20-21, "I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation, but as it is written, 'Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand.'" What drove the apostle Paul to work harder than any of the apostles in sharing the gospel to the ends of the earth was the grace of God working through him, his understanding of God's plan to send His people to declare the gospel, and his conviction that those who have never been told of Christ would see and understand the gospel as promised by God in Isaiah 52:15. Family, does your heart burn with passion to see all peoples know our God? Jesus says in John 4:35, "Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest." And in Luke 10:2, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

God has prepared a people to hear and believe, and He gives His grace to us in order to send us into the harvest to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. There is one more question to consider,

What about Those Who aren't Called to Go to the Mission Field?

After sharing his ambition to go, Paul reveals an understanding that not everyone is called to do exactly what he was doing, but he does believe they have a part to play. Look with me at Romans 15:23-28. Paul starts by sharing how he has longed to see the church in Rome and plans to come to them in verse 23. Then, in verse 24, he says "I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while." After sharing in verses 25-27 about his need to pick up a contribution for the saints in Jerusalem from Macedonia and Achaia before he comes to them, he says in verse 28, "When therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will leave for Spain by way of you." Paul expects this church to support him in his mission to Spain. He knows his ability to journey there will come by way of this church. Those who aren't called to go onto the mission field are called to support those who go. Many of us may know of the missionary William Carey, but I wonder if you have heard of his friends work in his mission. There is a powerful story of something that took place before he left for his mission to India, desiring to take the gospel to those who had not heard. He and his friends had gathered together and he said to them, "I will go down into the pit, if you will hold the rope." They would hold the rope for Carey by praying, raising funds and preaching about missions across the British Isles. We could say Carey's mission was successful in part because his friend played their parts in taking the gospel to all peoples by holding the rope. Family, if you aren't called to go to the mission field, you are called to hold the rope for those who go through prayers, encouragement, and financial support. Let's be a church committed to going and sending, so all peoples will come to know our God and His salvation.

Conclusion:

As the worship team is coming to lead us in a time of reflection and response, I want to encourage you to think deeply about what part you are called to play in helping all peoples be glad and sing for joy in the salvation of our God. Maybe God is calling you to go, and you need to surrender your life to Him and trust Him to use you in that way. I am sure Sam and Megan would love to share some ways to move towards that calling. I would also love to get you connected to our missions' team to help you walk down that road. Maybe God is calling you to stay here but strengthen your rope holding. Is He calling you to have a greater desire for His glory to spread around the world? Is He calling you to pray more for those on the field? Is He calling you to join our missions' team to support the efforts of our missionaries? Is He calling you to sacrifice more and give to those on the field? Family, if you are following Jesus Christ, He is not calling you to sit on your hands and do nothing for the cause of foreign missions. Press into His grace this morning and let's see what He plans to do in and through GracePoint Church to "make His way known on earth, His saving power among all nations." Would you pray with me?