

Psalm 67

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning, church. Hope you all have had a good Fourth of July weekend, a good extended time of rest.! My name is Chandler Durden, for those of y'all who do not know me.

I've been a member at Christ Family Church for about six years or so at this point, and I am extremely excited to have the opportunity to preach God's Word to you all. But before I begin, I want to ask for a little extra grace with me this morning.

This is my first sermon that I've ever preached, and I also found out four hours ago that this is my first sermon that I've ever preached. And so, anyways, Nathan woke up this morning not feeling super well, as TJ alluded to, so definitely keep him in your thoughts and prayers that he'll make a full and swift recovery.

But my family and I have also been at my parents' house this weekend, pet-sitting their dogs, and so I did not have access to my full wardrobe. So, if you have any expectations of the types of shoes preachers would wear this morning, well, I really apologize, because I'm currently wearing on clouds.

But due to the time constraints also, I was not able to prepare the normal length of a sermon, so Nathan asked if I could share a little bit about the work that my wife and I are planning to do in Japan long-term as missionaries.

[1 : 22] So, we'll spend some time kind of scattered throughout that message talking about that a little bit. But without further ado, I want to draw your attention this morning to Psalm 67. So, if you would, take your copy of God's Word and turn there with me.

Psalm 67.

And we will begin our reading with the heading right above verse 1, which is actually included in the original manuscripts, so we'll begin there. Our text reads, Let's pray together.

Father in heaven, we thank you for this opportunity to meet together as a church, to hear from your Word, to sing your Word, to pray your Word, to see your Word.

We are thankful, God, that you have saved us and called us to yourself, and that just as our justification surely happens, so our sanctification and glorification will surely happen.

[3 : 20] We thank you for that. We thank you for just this time. And we pray that by your Spirit, that you would work among your people, that we would see and savor the glory of Christ.

And we pray this in Christ's name. Amen. So, I want to draw your attention to two truths that we see in this text, and we'll spend the majority of our time looking at the first truth.

And I'll make a few brief points about the second truth. So, truth number one, God's chief end for creating and sustaining the nations, is that he might be glorified, and that they might be satisfied.

And then truth number two, God blesses us so that we might bless the nations. I want to make a case that truth number one is the primary emphasis of this psalm, and that truth number two is a secondary emphasis, and is written to serve truth number one.

In other words, Psalm 67's main emphasis is God's chief desire to globally glorify his name by blessing the nations. And Psalm 67 makes clear that God accomplishes this end by blessing us.

[4:32] God blesses us so that we might bless the nations. And just to be clear, I'm not saying that God does not love us or is simply using us. I'm just saying that he loves the nations, and that our joy in him actually increases when it expands into the lives of others.

And therefore, God actually has our highest good in mind when he commands us to seek the good of others. Now, with the remainder of our time, I want to examine these two truths in more details and show you how central they are to Psalm 67's message, and ultimately how central they are to the entire Bible.

So let's spend some time meditating on this first glorious truth, which is the main theme of this psalm. God's chief end for creating and sustaining the nations is that he might be glorified and they might be satisfied.

The number of times this truth is repeated throughout this psalm is more than enough evidence to argue that this is Psalm 67's main theme. But I'm convinced that the structure of this psalm itself leads us to this conclusion as well.

I believe this psalm is structured chiastically, which is a common form of parallelism used in both Old and New Testaments. A chiasm is where a sequence of ideas is presented and then repeated in reverse order.

[5:51] This results in the second half of the psalm mirroring the first half so that the ideas are reflected back in the passage. So to give an example of what this would look like, if there were three ideas in a passage structured chiastically, you would have idea A stated, then idea B stated, then idea C, and then these ideas in the second half would be repeated using different words or with a slightly different emphasis.

So the structure of the passage would look like idea A followed by B, then C, and then C, B, A. Now, there are two main reasons why I believe this psalm is structured chiastically.

First, it seems that just like a chiasm, the ideas introduced in the psalm's first half are repeated in the psalm's second half, but in reverse order. Look at verses 1 and 2 with me. Verses 1 and 2 introduce the first idea, idea A, which is God blessing his people so that the nations might know and fear him.

And this idea is clearly repeated in verses 6 and 7, except now in the form of a promise rather than a prayer. In the beginning of the psalm, it was, may God bless us, and now at the end of the psalm, it's God shall bless us.

[7:14] We also see the purpose of this blessing reflected on at the end of the psalm. In the beginning of the psalm, the blessing is, so that your way might be known on the earth, your saving power among all nations.

And at the end of the psalm, after the psalmist promises that God will bless us, once again, this truth has an intended purpose, which is why the psalmist's last words are, let all the ends of the earth fear him.

The psalm's next idea, idea B, is introduced in verse 3. And this idea is clearly repeated, quite literally, since verse 5 simply restates verse 3 word for word.

Now, notice this whole time I haven't said anything about verse 4. And it's because this verse is not paired with any other verses. And I think verse 4's inclusion in our text is the second reason why I think there's a chiasm structure in Psalm 67.

More often than not, chiasms include a verse directly in the middle of the passage. And this verse is the passage's central message. It seems clear that verse 4 is indeed functioning as this psalm's central message.

[8 : 23] Because if you were to see this psalm written in its original language, you would see that the sentence in verse 4 contains twice the number of Hebrew words found in every other verse. with the sheer number of Hebrew words emphasizing the importance of this verse.

Also, the content of verse 4 is unique to the rest of the psalm. This verse alone highlights the reason as to why the nations should praise God. Verse 4 says, let the nations be glad and sing for joy for, or because, you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth.

In other words, the nations should delight themselves in God because he is worthy of being delighted in. The living and triune God of the universe is good.

He has fixed a day on which he will judge the world and righteousness, and one day he will set aright all of the wrongs of wicked humanity. The living and triune God of the universe is kind.

He blesses us despite the abundant evidence that we're guilty as charged. And he blesses us by cursing his son. He answers the psalmist's prayer in verse 1 to shine his face upon us by turning his back on his son.

[9 : 44] Now, earlier, I made the claim that this first truth, namely, God's chief end for creating the nations is for his glory and for their joy, that this truth is Psalm 67's main theme.

But you may be wondering, well, what about verse 4? Why isn't the main theme that God is fully worthy of our praise? Since verse 4, which contains the psalm's central message, says that God judges the peoples with equity and guides the nations upon earth.

Or you might think that the main theme has to do with the nations and their joy. Verse 4 says, let the nations be glad and sing for joy. But I think that verses 3 and 5 guard against these interpretations.

Verses 3 and 5 emphasize God's God-centeredness and his passionate zeal to spread his glory to the ends of the earth. We can go to verses 3 and 5 to help us understand what the psalmist means when he says in verse 4, let the nations be glad and sing for joy.

What does it mean for the nations to be glad and sing for joy? Verses 3 and 5, let the peoples praise you. That's what it means.

[10 : 55] It means to praise God. Who are the nations to be glad in? Who are they to sing to? Verses 3 and 5, let the peoples praise you, O God.

And then lastly, you may be wondering, well, what exactly did the psalmist mean when he used the word nations or the word peoples? Did he really understand God's global purposes since he was living under the old covenant and therefore he hasn't heard the great commission delivered in the new covenant?

And I think that's a fair question considering how ethnocentric the Jewish nation was. So let's start with the word peoples. This word and its original language is often used to refer to the people of Israel, but it also is used to refer to the people of other nations.

Consider Deuteronomy 13, 7, where God commands the Israelites, if your brother, the son of your mother, or the son of your daughter, or the wife you embrace, or your friend who is as your own soul entices you secretly, saying, let us go after gods and serve other gods, which neither you nor your fathers have known, some of the gods of the peoples who are around you, whether near you or far off from you, from the one end of the earth to the other, you shall not yield to him or listen to him.

And then as for the Hebrew word that's translated as nations in our psalm, this is a fair translation. It could be translated as peoples, but what's interesting is that the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Bible, or Hebrew Old Testament, translates this Hebrew word into the Greek word ethnos, which is the same Greek word that Christ uses in the Great Commission when he says, go therefore and make disciples of all ethnos, of all nations.

[12:46] So I hope that these Hebrew words and the structure of the psalm has convinced you that God's aim to reach people from every tribe and every tongue and every language and nation is not some side goal of God's.

This is actually central to his plan. Brothers and sisters, this is why we exist, to praise him and to be used by him to bring others into this glorious feast of joy, which Christ has purchased for us and for the nations.

And the rest of scripture also makes abundantly clear that this is God's chief end for creating you and for creating me. Consider the book of Psalms. David begins the entire book by speaking of a decree that Yahweh proclaims to his anointed one, which we know in its immediate context is referring to David, but it finds its ultimate fulfillment in Christ.

The decree is found in Psalm 2:7, which reads, quote, You are my son, today I have begotten you. Ask of me and I will make the nations your heritage and the ends of the earth your possession.

So, we see Christ receiving the nations as his inheritance and reigning over them as king. The book of Psalms also ends in a similar way. The heartbeat of Psalm 150 is that everyone and everything in all creation is to praise the Lord.

[14:15] The chapter begins by saying in verse 1, Praise God in his sanctuary. Praise him in his mighty heavens. The psalmist is calling on both earthly worshippers and heavenly worshippers.

Then, as the psalmist's last words, he cries out, let everything that has breath praise the Lord. And then, consider the Bible as a whole here as well. So, in the beginning of the Bible, on day 6 of creation, after God looked at everything he made and saw that it was good, he said in Genesis 1:26, Let us make man in our image and after our likeness.

Then, a few verses later, God commands Adam and Eve and says to them, Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over everything that moves on the earth.

Adam and Eve were made in the likeness of God and were therefore meant to be a picture or an image or an expression on earth of the triune God, of his character and of his sovereignty over all things.

They were commissioned to create more image bearers and to fill the earth. They were expelled from the garden and exiled from God's presence and now, they and their offspring would be but a faint reflection of God's glory.

[15:37] But praise be to God, church family, because what the first Adam failed to accomplish, the last Adam fulfilled perfectly. Jesus Christ, who is the image of God and the exact imprint of his nature, he perfectly reflected God's character and rule.

He obeyed the law in full. He loved his friends by dying for them. He ruled the nations first by becoming their servant and now, he reigns his head over his body, the church, and commissions them to go therefore and make disciples of all nations.

And then, also, the very end of the Bible makes clear God's chief end to glorify himself through the nations as well. So, you've got the beginning and the end of scripture and then things all throughout making it super, super clear that his chief end is to glorify himself to the nations.

So, we know how the story ends. In Revelation 21, the new heavens and the new earth are filled with the most joyful people from every tribe, people, nation, and language.

And the whole earth is filled with God's glory because the last Adam was a faithful servant who did all that God commanded him to do. Because of his obedience, his bride's glorification is sure.

[16:51] And one day, she will perfectly reflect the brightness of the Father's glory. Okay, so now we move on much more briefly to our second truth.

God blesses us so that we will bless the nations. Look at verse 1 with me. 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. This same foundational truth is not limited to Psalm 67, but in fact was spoken to Abraham when God brought him out of the land of Ur.

In Genesis 12, 2, God says to Abraham, I will make you a great nation and I will bless you and make your name great and so you shall be a blessing and I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you.

this purpose that God has to bless Israel, to bless Abraham, to bless us, is not his ultimate purpose.

[17 : 56] His ultimate purpose is to bless the whole world and he uses people from certain parts of the world who are already blessed by him to go to other parts of the world who are presently cursed by him to go and preach the gospel to them so that they might fall under the blessing of God.

So that the brightness of God's face might shine in the darkest places of the whole world. And this same truth is repeated yet again at the end of our psalm in verse 7.

Verse 7 says, God shall bless us, let all the ends of the earth fear him. After stating that God will bless Israel, the psalmist is propelled to cry out, let all the ends of the earth fear him.

Which I'm convinced is actually geared toward Israel. I don't think this command is directed for the nations, but I believe it's ultimately about Israel being a beacon, chosen to spread the knowledge of God beyond her borders.

And so, it's passages of scripture like Psalm 67 that have gripped my family and I to move to Japan, a country with less than 0.5% professing Christians.

[19 : 08] It's passages like Revelation 7-9 that greatly encourage me, but also humble me, since God has already promised that all the nations will stand before his throne to worship him.

Dear brothers and sisters, God does not need us to accomplish his purposes, but he uses us. And what a treasure it is to be used by God. What a delight it is to be used by him to accomplish his work, though in his omnipotence he does not need us in any way whatsoever.

So our family is being sent by Christ Family Church through reaching and teaching international ministries to move to Yokohama, Japan, which is a city just one hour south of Tokyo. And in this city we will be a part of a healthy local church while we will learn the language and culture for the first few years.

And then once we learn the language and culture, we will be sent by that church to go to somewhere around Tokyo where there's a great need for the gospel. We're not too sure yet where that will be.

but our aim, our hope, is to see the Japanese people go from death to life, just like we have gone from death to life, and then to go from infancy to adulthood in Christ.

[20 : 26] So we want to be a part of that whole process to see a people who have never heard, hear the gospel, repent and believe in the gospel, have saving faith, have the joy that we have, and then go from, you know, being a newborn Christian to being raised up to the full stature of the measure of Christ.

That's our plan. And the primary religions in Japan are Shintoism and Buddhism, though functionally many people in this country are atheists.

It's kind of like similar to America where a lot of people profess to be Christians, but, and they go to church on Sundays, but in real actuality, they don't have true saving faith. It's kind of similar to that.

Japan also has one of the highest suicide rates in the world, and many people suffer from chronic depression there. And so our hope is that the joy of the gospel message and the joy of our hearts as a family will pour into their hearts and that they will experience the joy that we have in Christ.

So I hope that you will join me in committing to praying for the Japanese people, that their hearts would be softened to the gospel, and that the Lord would provide both spiritually and financially for our family as we prepare to go to the field in early 2026, Lord willing.

[21 : 46] So now I'm going back to our text, some brief points of application. It may not be, and probably is not, God's will for most of you in this room, or possibly any of you in this room, to pack up your bags, hop on a plane, and spend your lives preaching the gospel to an unreached people group.

And I'm fully aware of that. So you may be thinking, what's my role in this? How am I going to bless the nations when I live here? Well, I want to first off say, don't be discouraged.

Your obedience here will have a ripple effect on the nations. Be a faithful church member here. Be an unashamed proclaimer of the truth here, and you have no idea how capable God is of using your faithfulness here to impact there.

I remember one time listening to a Q&A; session at a missionary conference called CrossCon, and one of the panel members there was a pastor in India. He is somewhat well-known in the missions world.

His name is Harshit Singh, and one of the questions he was asked during the Q&A; was essentially, what is the one way that someone who is not a missionary can have an impact on the nations?

[23 : 02] And his immediate answer without hesitation was, be a faithful church member where you're at. That's the number one way. And so I don't want you to think that your obedience in Dahlonega or Gainesville or wherever you live here will have no effect on the nations.

In fact, I want you to remember that your obedience here within God's mysterious providence and probably within ways that you won't even maybe see in this side of glory will have a ripple effect on the nations.

And trust that the Lord is working in that way. Have that mindset geared toward reaching not just people in Dahlonega but reaching the ends of the earth though you may not be there.

And then second of all, there are goers and there are senders. There are those who go down into the well and there are those who hold the rope for those who go down. God has ordained that goers cannot go unless senders send.

Disciple, support, serve, and pray for the goers. Don't forget those who are being sent out from us to be missionaries. Don't let go of the rope.

[24 : 14] Consider the words of the 19th century missionary to China, Hudson Taylor. He says, quote, The hand alone cannot save dying humanity.

The hand alone cannot deliver man. The body must cooperate with the hand if the hand is to rescue the perishing. Beloved, you whose duty it is to remain at home are equally sharers with those who go into the mission fields in this work.

Yours the responsibility, yours equally to share in the reward when Christ is glorified and his kingdom is everywhere made known. It's a very important fact for us all to bear in mind that as we have already been reminded, the command of the Great Commission was not given to a limited class.

It was given to the whole church. And we all have our share in the responsibility. End quote. So, brothers and sisters, my hope for you this morning is that your heart would be swept up with God's God-centeredness and his passion for his glory.

I hope that your heart would be set aflame for God's purposes to make his name known among every culture and language and nation of the world. I hope that your soul is deeply troubled over the 5.3 billion people who are currently in an unreached people group and therefore will have a 99% chance of never meeting a Christian their entire life.

[25 : 40] Little to no chance of ever hearing a gospel message because of that. And therefore, eternal separation without Christ because of that. Church, may we, or may the lamb that was slain receive the reward of his suffering for he is worthy.

Thank you.