



Sermon – 03/05/2023

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Verses Covered

Psalm 67:1 – 7

Genesis 12:2

Revelation 7:9 - 10

As you grab your seats, let's open our Bibles together. We're going to be in Psalm 67 this morning. Psalm 67. And if you're a guest with us today, welcome home. You've actually come at the perfect time because this morning we're pulling away from our series through the book of Genesis for a season in order to focus our hearts on the theme, Let the Nations be Glad. In the next six weeks, as we march our way towards Easter, we want to think about how the empty tomb fuels our mission around the world. A longing and a desire for people who don't yet know Jesus to come to know Him in a saving way. And as you begin to do that, I want you to notice that in the seat back in front of you, you're going to see a card just like this. And I'd like for you to go ahead and grab that now because later on during the message, I'm going to ask you to fill that out. And I want you to start praying about what to write on it now. We're going to ask each one of you to ask the Lord to put someone on your heart who doesn't yet know Jesus that you can write their name down and be praying for them daily during this Easter season. That they might come to know Jesus. And what will happen is after the message is done and we had the response song and we make our way to the table to grab the Lord's Supper elements, there's going to be red baskets there and we just want you to take these cards and drop them in as part of that. And one of the things I've noticed is as a Christian, two of the hardest things to live out on a consistent basis are prayer and evangelism. And why is that? I think when it comes to prayer, we so often get focused on living our lives in our own strength. And when it comes to evangelism, we often get too focused on living our lives zeroed in on our own situation without a view to what God is doing all around us. And so when you fuse those together, that struggle to pray and that struggle to evangelism, the struggle gets real when we talk about praying for evangelism, praying for missions, praying for God's heart for the nations. But when we come to Psalm 67 this morning, it's going to give us a model example of what it looks like to pray for the nations. Some scholars call Psalm 67 the Lord's prayer of the Old Testament. It's this amazing model for us of how it is that we can pray for God's heart for the lost. And so, let's take it up and read it now as the Spirit prepares to work in our midst. Psalm 67 says this.

¹May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us, *Selah* ²that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations. ³Let the people praise

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

Will you pray with me?

Father, we're coming to Your word hungry. Hungry to see You moving in our lives, hungry to see You moving in the world around us. And we're asking here in this moment, God, that You would use this time before Your word to transform the way we pray. That You would transform our hearts to come into line with Your passion for the nations around us. And we ask these things in Christ's name. Amen.

Have you ever heard of the phrase, Imposter Syndrome? You ever wonder where that came from? It came from a woman born back in 1938 named, Pauline Clance. She was the youngest of six kids growing up in rural Appalachia. And she seemed as if the world wasn't going to go well for her. She struggled through life. And at every stage in the journey, she found herself exceeding her own expectations. Accomplishing things she and others never assumed she could. And maybe you can relate to this. When she was going through grade school, she'd go and take a test and she'd come home and tell her mom, "I totally failed that." And then she would get the grade and it would be an A+. Is there anybody in your family that has that kind of scenario that comes up? I know friends exactly like that. And then she wanted to go to college. Nobody else in her family had ever gone to college. And the guidance counselor at high school told her, "Man, if you make it to college, at best you might be lucky if you can make C's." And she's doubted herself all the way through to completing a Ph.D. And every step along the journey, she felt this internal challenge that she saw in herself and then for years saw in others before the name was put on it, Imposter Syndrome. Where we feel like we're fakes. That if somebody really knew what was happening inside, they'd see us for the fraud, for the phony, for the fake that we actually are. And so, we live this life pretending as if we're something that we're not so that we might not be found out for the imposter we actually are. Is that you this morning? Well, I think there's one place in particular that Christians can feel an acute sense of Imposter Syndrome. And it's when we talk about the subject of missions and evangelism. It reminds me of an old quote from the British pastor, Charles Spurgeon. I want you to see it on the screen here. Here's what he says.

Every Christian here is either a missionary or an imposter. Recollect that. You either try to spread abroad the kingdom of Christ, or else you do not love Him at all. It cannot be that there is a high appreciation of Jesus and a totally silent tongue about Him. No. That man who says, "I believe in Jesus," but does not think enough of Jesus ever to tell another about Him, by mouth, or pen, or tract, is an imposter.

So, if somebody was to look at your life this morning, if they were to watch your patterns, your rhythms, your behaviors, would they be looking at someone who's a missionary or an imposter? Someone who's intentionally living a life on mission or someone who is faking it in the process. You see, my hope for our congregation over the course of these next six weeks is that God would use this time when we focus on the theme, Let the Nations be Glad, to transform our hearts away from the imposter who's faking it to the missionary who's living it out right here in the Brazos Valley. And we're going to do that this morning by looking at Psalm 67 and the way it calls us to

pray for the nations. You see, we don't know much about this Psalm. There's no details about who wrote it or when. But we can tell that it is a song that the people of Israel sung in response to the annual harvest. So, it seems as if this psalmist was a farmer. Maybe he was an Aggie dating back to about class of 950 B.C. as Old Old Army, if you're keeping track. And in the reaction to receiving the blessings of God, they return it to praise. And even though we don't know much about the situation of the song, there's no mistake about its message. And here's what we're going to notice this morning is that Psalm 67 is a call to pray with a missionary heart. It's going to stir us to this morning as it shows us three ways that we are called to pray for the nations. And I want you to see the first one back in verses 1 and 2 where we see it modeling for us to pray about God's heart for the nations. So, the psalmist begins here where every prayer should start. Not with a focus on himself or his circumstances, but a focus on God. And if we want to pray about God's heart for the nations, the psalmist is showing us several ways that this should look like. We should first pray about the plan of God for the nations. That's what we see in verse 1. May God be gracious to us and bless us and make His face to shine upon us. Selah. And so the psalmist here is picking up on familiar language. It's what Raegen read in our call to worship. It's what I'll read in the benediction. It comes from Numbers 6, the blessing of Aaron. It was a way the Israelites would greet and bid farewell to one another. That God's blessing, His favor, His face might shine upon them. It is a prayer, it is a blessing that centers both on His plan and His presence. You see there when it says, may God be gracious to us and bless us, that's God's plan. When it speaks about His face shining upon us, that's His presence. And the psalmist begins with a focus on God asking for Him to make His plan real in our hearts. You see, the reason this connects to missions is the reality that God is at the center of our mission. It's not our own personal fulfillment. It's not even the fact that we live in a world that is lost all around us. Those things are critical but the essential center of our heart for missions is the glory of God. That we want to see it made much of; that blessing to extend to the world around us.

Which brings us to the second way that he shows us how to pray about God's heart. In verse 2 you'll see that we should pray about the purpose of God for the nations. There's a plot twist in the text here. Look at verse 2. It says,

²that your way may be known on earth,

Now look back right before verse 2. You see this short word, *selah*, right between verses 1 and 2. And that *selah*, when it appears, it signals a musical interlude in the song often for emphasis. For those of you like me who grew up on hymns, it's like you do the key change before the last verse and it makes it more spiritual. It's like one of those moments, he's putting this exclamation point right here. Why? Because this blessing that Israel thought was primarily focused on him, he now transforms it to focus it on God's purposes for the world. That we might be blessed in order to be a blessing to others. As he says there, that your way may be known on the earth. And so this blessing of Aaron that is in Numbers 6 is linking up with the blessing that God gives to Abraham in Genesis 12. Don't you remember that? Look at the screen. Genesis 12:2 and the calling of Abraham.

²And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

So one of the reasons we started with this passage, it bridges between our study of Abraham and Genesis and our study, let the nations be glad about missions. That God is going to fulfil this promise He first made to Abraham. And so what's happening here is that the psalmist takes this repeated benediction for the people of God and he turns it into a missionary prayer. He prays for God's purposes to be accomplished in the earth. That His way might be known. Which sets the stage for the end of verse 2 when we see a third dimension of how we need to pray about God's heart.

What we find there is we should also pray about the power of God for missions. Notice at the end of verse 2 it says,

[your saving power among all nations.](#)

So the psalmist doesn't just pray that we would experience God's purpose, but that we would embrace His power. I mean, just think about what Psalm 67 is declaring. We follow a God who is so great, who is so mighty to save that His saving power isn't just limited to one country in the middle east in the nation of Israel. Instead, His saving power can go out to the ends of the earth. And when we take the Gospel forward in our mission, whether right here to our neighbors or around us to the nations, we go with that saving power. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the power of God unto salvation. So that should give you hope. When you find yourself praying for your lost family member or friend or neighbor or coworker or roommate or classmate who don't yet know Jesus, there is a power that is great enough to save. It's this saving power that the psalmist celebrates here. So the question we need to ask ourselves this morning, when is the last time you prayed that God would give you His heart for the lost? When's the last time you prayed that God would give you His desire for the nations? Have you ever prayed that? Have you prayed that since the start of this year? I want to give you 15 seconds right now to just pray that in the quietness of your heart. Just bow your heads with me and ask God right now to give you His heart for the lost. That's the desire of our heart, God. Would You provide it for each one of us? In Christ's name. Amen.

The text moves on here and we see a second way to pray about missions in the passage. Beginning in verse 3 we need to notice how we're called also to pray about the heart of the nations. So first we pray about God's heart. Now he's showing us how we need to pray for their hearts. And as we see this playing out, what we're going to find is that if we're going to live a life on mission, it must begin with prayer. We pray for those who don't yet know Jesus so that we might live a life on mission to share with those that don't yet know Jesus. And there's a couple of ways we see the psalmist showing us how to pray. So you'll notice in verses 3 and 5 he repeats the same phrase showing us a model to pray for the nations to have a new song in their hearts. So notice what it says in verse 3:

³[Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!](#)

And then it repeats that down in verse 5.

⁵[Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!](#)

There's two times here the psalmist makes one prayer. And what is it? That those who are wandering from God might one day worship God. So the way I've heard one pastor put it is missions exist because worship doesn't. That worship is both the fuel and the fulfilment of our mission. It's both the glue and the goal. Our desire is to bring people to know Jesus so that God might be worshiped. That's why it says there, let all the peoples praises. You probably remember that just a few days ago on March 2nd it was Texas Independence day. And in our family, we always enjoy a good celebration around that. But the first text I woke up to that morning was from a friend of mine celebrating the fact that it was Texas Independence day. And what caught my attention is he's originally from Africa. And yet he's celebrating Texas Independence day. You see, his family had to flee persecution as a Christian family in Africa and fled to the states decades ago. Through that process he's had a conversion, a change. He's become a citizen of the United States. And what happened is when he changed his allegiance, it changed his anthem. You see what I'm saying. It changed what he celebrated. It changed what was significant to him. And so this man that was born in Africa, that might not have even known that Texas existed, I stood next to him at Kyle Field as he's belting out,

Texas, our Texas! All hail the mighty State!

Why would he do that? It's because when something changes within us, it changes what comes out of us. And if that's true of the transformation of an earthly citizenship, how much more so is that true of a heavenly one? That a new life brings about new lyrics. That a new allegiance brings about a new anthem. That a new salvation brings about a new song. And the psalmist is saying to us, when we pray for the nations, we should be praying for that to be true of them. That God would put a new song on their hearts. That's one of the reasons why there is no greater joy in the Christian life than to be standing next to someone in worship who, by earthly means you would have never expected to come to faith in Jesus. Do you know what I'm talking about? That person you prayed for, that person that seemed far from God. And all of a sudden the Gospel gets a hold of their heart. They see their sin. They turn away from their guilt. They know there's no hope of heaven apart from Jesus. So they put their trust in Him. And the one who was once running from God is now standing before Him with arms wide open celebrating Him in song. Maybe you've felt that this morning. Maybe you looked down the row and you would have said, if I had said to you, "They're going to be standing next to you 10 years from now with that raise to Jesus, you wouldn't have believed it." But God showed up and did what you couldn't do for them. He put a new song in their heart. That's the fuel for our mission. We want to see that happen. Not just with those that are gathered in the room, not just with those in our community, but across the world. Let all the peoples praise Him, the psalmist says.

But there's another way he shows us to pray for the nations. Right there in verse 4 he also says that we should pray for the nations that have a new perspective on their hearts. So, look back at what it says.

⁴Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon the earth. *Selah*

There's our friend, the *Selah*, again and another point of emphasis. And what is it emphasizing? It's showing us that the nations who come to know God have their perspective entirely transformed. They begin to see him in a new way. And what is that way? It shows us there that

they see Him as a judge and they see Him as a shepherd. And that word judge there is more accurately translated to rule. So they see Him as a ruler, a king who cares, and a shepherd who guides. Those who used to look at this God of the world or either reject Him or dismiss His existence or get frustrated with the fact that He was going to judge them or that He was trying to run their life now look at that in rejoicing. Their perspective has been changed. That new life has led to a new perspective. That should fuel us in our mission. That we're praying for God to open blind eyes and embrace that new perspective on life. That's one of the reasons why right now I want to ask you to take this card. I told at the start I wanted to challenge you to be praying about someone's name to write down. And as you think about this part of the passage, that we're praying for a new song in their hearts, a new perspective in their lives. Who's the Lord leading you to write down? I just want to ask you right now to take a step to do that. I'm going to do it right up here at the pulpit. And as I mentioned, after we write these names down, during the response song I want you to come down and drop them in these baskets at all the tables around here. And while you're writing this down, I want you to notice a picture up on the screen. Maybe you saw it a few weeks ago when we did a baptism. We baptized an awesome girl named Elliana Vinal whose mom Crystal, when we did this exercise writing down a name to pray for somebody, wrote her name down a couple of Christmases ago. And she took a picture of that card before she turned it in. Maybe you'll want to do the same thing today so you can be reminded to pray for it. And so it wasn't lost on this loving mom that when her daughter came to meet Jesus in a saving way, she still had that card. And it reminded her of the way that God is faithful to answer our prayers for those who don't yet know Jesus. And we're going to ask Him to do it again. We're going to ask Him to meet us with these prayers for the people that we have written down. And why is that? Well, I want you to see on the screen the way that Psalm 67 finds its fulfillment later on in the Bible in Revelation, chapter 7. When John is talking about what is to come. He gives us this picture that is the fulfillment of what we find in the psalmist prayer for the nations right here. Revelation 7 beginning in verse 9 says it like this.

⁹After 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 of God and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and unto the Lamb!"

Can you hear the new song on their lips? Can you sense the new perspective in their hearts? What the psalmist prayed for, what it's showing us to pray for, there is a promise that one day will become a reality. When the psalmist says, let all the peoples praise You, Revelation 7 is God saying, "How do you like Me now, church?" Here it is. All that we have been longing for has now found its fulfillment. And that's one of the reasons why at the end of the service today, we're going to bring up the mission trip teams going this Spring Break to Ireland and to the Czech Republic to pray over them and to commission them for the work that they're going to do. Because we know that the nations need Jesus. So take our trip to Ireland for example. We've got over a dozen college students heading there. And they're going over Spring Break, over St. Patrick's day, not to go there to celebrate but to share. To let people know about Jesus. And the reason we're sending them to Ireland is we're helping to plant a church there that's launching on Easter. Ireland is the most unchurched, least reached, English speaking country in the world. Less than 2% of the population knows Jesus. 98 out of every 100 of them are going to a Christ-less eternity. And God is inviting our church, God is inviting you and me to wake up to that reality. That the

nations need Jesus. That our neighbors need Jesus. And the way that should fuel and shape our lives is to pull us to a relentless prayer that God would give them a new song and a new perspective. And if you find the Lord stirring in your heart a desire to go on one of those trips, I just want you to know this Summer we're going to be taking a group that's open to the full church back to Ireland. You can connect with Shane Mikeska, our missions pastor, or somebody from our missions team to talk about next steps in that reality. Because when we do that, it's setting the stage for the last dimension of prayer we need to see in this passage down in verses 6 and 7.

So we prayed about God's heart for the nations. We prayed for the hearts of the nations. Now third, we need to pray for our heart for the nations. And notice how this begins in verses 6 and 7. The psalmist shifts his focus first from upward towards God and then outward towards the nations, and now inward towards us. And there's two ways he's challenging us to pray for our own hearts in this time. He first tells us to pray for our hearts to rethink God's provision for missions. To rethink God's provision for missions. We see that in verse 6. It says:

⁶The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, shall bless us.

So I want you to notice something you might have overlooked. Everywhere else in this passage it is a prayer to God that is future focused. But at the start of verse 6, notice what happens. It's in the past tense. It says, the earth has yielded its increase. In other words, the psalmist is looking back on what God has just provided through the annual harvest and he is seeing his provision in the past as a foundation for his trust in his provision in the future. That God's gift of these material blessings then is going to lay a foundation for his spiritual blessings in the future. That's what at the heart of these things. He's lifting up this prayer at the end of verse 6. God, our God, shall bless us. He's praying in a different way than we might expect. He's challenging the people of God to use their material blessings for spiritual purposes. So, we've got an amazing ministry in our church. It's called Widow's Hope. And every month, we get together with the widows in our congregation. And one of the main offerings we do each year is our deacons host a Widow's Valentine's Day Banquet. And so that just took place last month and we served a fantastic meal and all our widows were seated. And the dishes were about to be served. And they received their salads and started putting dressing on it. And they also took a cup that was sitting right next to it. And many of them noticed that this cup happened to have some seeds in it. And they assumed that these seeds were meant as a little topping to sprinkle on top of the salad. They were not, in fact, meant for that. Instead, they were intended to be used as an object lesson for our incredible speaker to make a point to them. And so, before a garden started growing in their gut for too long, Tim Skaggs had to get up there and say, "Hey! Stop! Wait! We need those things." Just think about the picture there. Taking something intended for spiritual purposes and unknowingly and unintentionally using it for personal purposes. That's no knock on the widows. They might love seeds on their salads and more power to them. The point I'm trying to make is how often, in a very different way, do we do the exact same thing? We take the material blessings that God has given us and rather than turn them upward towards Him or outward towards the nations, we turn them inward towards us. To give a little more seasoning in our life. A little more flavor. A little more comfort. A little more convenience. And so the psalmist is writing here and he's recognizing the harvest has come in. It's that annual paycheck for him and the farmers around him. And when you get that expected paycheck or that unexpected bonus or that unanticipated gift, is your first instinct, "Yes, I can use this to make my life a little easier, a little more comfortable, a little more convenient." Or is our wiring like what we see here. That we're going to rethink God's provision

in our lives and turn those material blessings back to Him for the mission that He's called us to? Did you know that's been at the heart of our church from the very beginning? 98 years ago our church began September 11th of 1925. And on the first Sunday when we gathered, 81 of us, in the Brazos County Courthouse in downtown Bryan, we took up an offering that day. But what made that day unique was the fact that that offering was not taken to fund the church. Instead, our congregation, from the very first Sunday, made an intentional decision to take that first offering, not for itself, but for global missions. They collected that money together and they turned it over to God and said, "Use it for Your mission around the world." And in the spirit of that very first Sunday, I want to give a challenge to us as a congregation during this next 6 weeks in the lead up to Easter. A major portion of our budget every year is set aside for the missions efforts of our church. And the challenge I want to put in front of us is that over the next 6 weeks, that our congregation would fully fund all the missions dimensions of our normal operating budget. So you'll notice up on the screen a little breakdown of what that looks like. There are two main components of our annual budget that funnel towards missions. The first is our missions budget. This is what we use to fund local and national and international missions right here in our city and around the world. And then that outreach activities line item is portions of different dimensions of our operating budget. It might be kids, it might be college, it might be students, it might be our Hispanic ministry that do outreach and missions things. Like our Sports Camp or our College Ministry's mission trip to campus or our students during Spring Break doing the Jerusalem Project right here. And what you'll notice is that when you combine those things together, \$640,000, 11% of our budget, is used to fund the mission. And what I want to challenge us to do is be unusually generous during these next 6 weeks. Giving to our normal operating budget so that we can fund that aspect of what God has called us to do here. To live out what the psalmist is showing us. To take material blessings for spiritual purposes. To live out the pattern of our church from the very first Sunday and embody that reality in our lives. Why? Because of what we see at the end of this passage in verse 7. The way that the psalmist also calls us to pray for our own hearts to reflect God's passion for missions. That's why he says there:

⁷God shall bless us; let all the ends of the earth fear him!

There's this sense in which the psalm finishes where it begins. With this language articulating the psalmists desire for the world around him to know Jesus. And what the psalmist recognizes is if that's going to be true and if he's going to be a part of it, then God has to do a work in his heart first. The same is true for you and me. That our prayer, our desire would be, "God, give me Your passion for Your peoples. Give me Your heart for the nations. Give me Your desire for the lost." This psalm is setting the stage for this next 6 weeks. We could spend all this time talking about how we need to be intentional in evangelism. That we need to be generous towards missions. That we need to share and to serve and to send so that we might reach our neighbors and the nations and the next generations. And we could go through all those things that focus on us and miss it entirely if that whole enterprise doesn't start with prayer, if it doesn't start with God, and if it doesn't start with our hearts.

That's why it's fitting this morning we will draw out time to a close in the message by the taking of the Lord's Supper. Because as we see in the text here, what we find in the Lord's Supper is if it's true that missions exist because worship doesn't, then the Lord's Supper is one of those ways to embody that worship we're to offer to God. Because every month when we take of this family meal and we break the bread and we drink of the cup, it's an act of worship towards God. And if

you know Jesus in a saving way, as a baptized believer, this is your supper with us. In just a moment, we'll make our ways to the tables to grab the elements. We'll bring those cards forwards. Even if you have already gotten your elements, please take your cards to those tables during the response time. And as we prepare our hearts, let's bow our head to the Lord in a moment of prayer.

Lord, we lift up each name on these cards. And even as I pray, Central family, if you have that card if you'll just hold it up right now so we can pray over it specifically. Lord, there are men and women written down on these cards that don't yet know You. And we're asking You, by the power of Your Spirit and by the gift of Your grace that You would bring them to a saving knowledge of Jesus. And that You would fuel our hearts for the lost. That You would fuel our commitment to the mission even now this morning. And we ask these things in Christ's name. Amen.