

**For the Love of God**  
The Ultimate Disconnect  
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## **THE ULTIMATE DISCONNECT**

### **Psalm 67**

February 5, 2006. It was my second Sunday preaching in this church. I was just filling in at that point. And I preached a sermon on this psalm entitled "The Ultimate Disconnect." The reason I preached this psalm is because it, quite possibly more than any other chapter in the Bible, has shaped my understanding of my life and my family and God's purpose for all of our lives in the world. I'll never forget where I was sitting the first time I heard this psalm taught, and the way God used it to turn my life in a totally different trajectory. I really can't over-emphasize the impact this psalm has had on my life. So when I was looking at the different psalms we've read together as a church over the last week, I knew I wanted to preach Psalm 67.

The beauty, that I really didn't realize until this last week, is how this psalm coincides with Psalm 66 before it and Psalm 68 after it. As many of you know, we're in week 3 of our immersion in the Psalms as a faith family, and over a period of six weeks, every Sunday we're looking at different psalms in different worship gatherings—oftentimes with different preachers. So last week I preached Psalm 51 at 9:00, Pastor Jim preached Psalm 52 at 11:00, and Pastor Matt preached Psalm 57 at 6:00. And if you haven't had a chance to do so, I would encourage you to go back and to listen to the sermons that you didn't hear. I've had numerous people from different worship gatherings say, "Oh, I wish everybody in the church could have heard that." It was really cool just to see how they all fit together...Psalm 51 (God's mercy that covers over our sin) in the morning, Psalm 57 (God's mercy that comforts us in suffering) in the evening, and right in the middle, Psalm 52 (which focuses on the faithful, steadfast love of God). So let me encourage you to potentially go back and listen to those different psalms.

This week happens to be the week when Jim and Matt are both out of town, so I've got all three worship gatherings with three different psalms. But this is a good week for it. So in the 9:00 gathering, I had the joy of preaching through Psalm 66; now we're about to dive into Psalm 67; then, Lord willing, we'll explore Psalm 68 tonight at 6:00. And what I'm so excited about is not just how these psalms fit together with each other (which they do), but also with how they all three coincide with what we just prayed for. It is no accident that we would be in Psalm 66, 67, and 68 on the day when we commission about 30 missionaries from our faith family to go to the nations with the gospel.

We're going to look at Psalm 67 now, and then, if you want to come back at 6:00, we'll dive into Psalm 68. Of course, you're free to go online tomorrow and explore Psalm 66. Alright, here we go ... Psalm 67 ... let's read it together and then let's pray for God to teach us and transform us through it.

*May God be gracious to us and bless us  
and make his face to shine upon us, Selah  
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. Selah  
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! (Psalm 67)*

## **One Truth ...**

This psalm is simple. It contains one primary, over-arching truth. And it's a truth that is absolutely critical to understanding Christianity ... and to understanding the purpose of your life in this world. Here's the truth: God blesses his people for the sake of his praise among all peoples.

Let's unpack that together. God blesses his people. "*May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us ...*" (verse 1). There's a pause after that in the text. It says "*Selah*," which is basically a musical term that signifies some kind of pause, as if to say, "Okay, don't move on too quickly in the song yet ... just let that soak in." This is a petition based upon a high priestly blessing in Numbers 6:24-26. People would go to the priest, and the priest would bless them, saying (paraphrased) "May God be gracious to you and bless you and make his face to shine upon you . . ." Think about what this means in your life and in my life.

"May God be gracious to you . . ." May God show you, a sinner who has rebelled against him, unmerited love and undeserved compassion. May he not only not give you what you deserve (judgment), but may he give you what you don't deserve (mercy). "May God bless you . . ." Not curse you, which is what you and I are all due in our sin. No, may he bless you with kindness and love. "May God make his face to shine upon you . . ." How do you like that? May the light of God's face shine on you. May the smile of the God of creation be upon you.

Now some wonder, "Is this talking about spiritual blessing or physical/material blessing?" And it seems in the text that the answer is *yes*. Certainly this signifies spiritual blessing—the gift of God's grace, the light of God's face—but when you get down to verse 6 the psalmist says, "*The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, shall bless us . . .*" This increase on the earth clues us in to how the psalmist is clearly referring here to God's blessing on the land, most likely at harvest time.

So there's a picture here of physical/material blessing. But notice that after this first verse – "*May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us*," there's a pause, but not a period. It's not, "*May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us*," then close the sentence and move on to something else. No, the thought is incomplete. So yes, pause, but then keep going. The most important word in the psalm is the first word of verse 2: "that." Apparently there's a purpose God has behind his blessing.

God blesses his people so *that* something else might happen. And what is that something else?

*"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" (Psalm 67:1-2, emphasis added).*

God blesses his people for the sake of his praise among all peoples . . . *that* all the earth might know the way of God . . . *that* God's saving power might be made known among all the nations. And then the psalmist goes on to erupt, *"Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!"* (verse 3). And just in case you don't get the point in verse 3, he says the exact same thing in verse 5 - *"Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise You!"* God blesses his people for the sake of his praise among all peoples. And that word "peoples" refers to tribes and clans and ethnic groups in the world.

Scholars today have identified at least 11,000 (some say over 16,000) different ethnic groups in the world. Those are groups of people that share common language and cultural characteristics. Now here in the original language of the OT, the psalmist uses three different Hebrew words for peoples and nations in this passage, as if to say, "God aims to be praised by all." From the north to the south, from the east to the west, from the rich to the poor, from the young to the old, from the urban to the rural, in every tribe, in every language, among every ethnic group to the ends of the earth...may they all praise You. That's why the psalmist prays for the blessing of God. He knows that God blesses his people for a purpose, and that purpose is his praise among all peoples. This is evident all over Scripture. Turn back with me to Genesis 12:

*Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And 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. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."* (Genesis 12:1-3)

This is the design of God—God blesses Abram and his people to be a conduit of God's blessing to all peoples. The idea of "bringing you into land" are echoed in Psalm 67, as is the idea of blessing all peoples. We don't have time to turn to all of these passages, but you might just write some of them down.

Genesis 26:4—Isaac. *"I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed..."* Genesis 28:14—Jacob. *"Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed."*

With the patriarchs God was doling out extravagant promises. He wanted his blessing known to all peoples on earth. So the stage was set. God's global, self-exalting purpose was started. We see this throughout the Old Testament. Exodus 14:4: *"And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD."*

God delivers his people out of Egypt where they were slaves. Then he brings them to the edge of the Red Sea, where they've got this body of water in front of them and an Egyptian army about to overtake them behind them. That's not good military strategy. You don't run

into a dead end if an army's about to overtake you. So why did God lead his people to the edge of the Red Sea, where they've got this body of water and Egyptians about to overtake them? He did it, Exodus 14:4 says, so that he would gain glory for Himself among the Egyptians. He would split that sea in half. He'd send his people through on dry land. They'd look in their rear-view mirrors and see the water come crashing down on the Egyptians. He says, "The Egyptians will know that I am the Lord." He blessed his people for his glory and his praise among all the peoples. He's making himself known.

Deuteronomy 4:5-8:

*See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today?*

God gives his people his words, his commandments, his law. Why would God give his people his commandments? Deuteronomy 4:5-8 says that he gave them his commandments so that when they followed his commandments, they would show the goodness and the wisdom of God to the nations around them. God gave them his law for the sake of his praise among the nations around them.

Joshua 5 and 6. This is what we're looking forward to as we walk with the people of God through the wilderness in Numbers right now in our daily Bible reading. Well, there's coming a day, Joshua 5-6, when they'll finally get to the Promised Land. Joshua's going to lead the people to the Promised Land. The first major city in the Promised Land is Jericho, a city with massive walls all the way around it. We've talked about it. Now they had five military options available to them on that day. They could go over the walls, they could go under the walls, they could try to break through the walls, they could try to send a decoy in like a Trojan Horse type of strategy, or they could starve the people inside the walls and make them come out.

In Joshua 5:13, Joshua is off by himself wondering, "What's the battle plan? How am I going to lead this army in?" He's thinking of his options. God comes down to him and says, "Here are the battle plans." Joshua's thinking, "Alright. Over, under, through, send a decoy in, starve them out?" God says, "I want you to get your trumpet players, pull out some sheet music, and play some songs. You're going to play some songs for a few days, and then one day—here's the kicker—you're going to shout really loud, and the walls will just fall down and you'll take the city." That's weird. If you're Joshua, you're wanting a second opinion at this point. You're going back to an army that's been training for an entire generation for war, and they're ready and you're going to go back to them and say, "We're turning it over to the music guys today." No offense to the music guys, but we're turning it over to the trumpeters. Why did God design this battle plan for the first major city in the Promised Land? He did it because of what he did throughout Scripture. God is orchestrating the events of his people so that, in the end, only he will get the glory for what happens.

You read Joshua 6—this is exactly what happens. They do what God said, the walls come down, and they take the city of Jericho. Let me tell you what you don't see in Joshua 6. You don't see all the people of God going up to the trumpet players and telling them what

an incredible job they did that day. "Ralph, I've never heard you play that well. Harry, you hit the high C. That was awesome. We went running in." No, the people are saying, "Only God could have done this." He's blessing his people in extravagant ways for the spread of his glory among all the peoples.

Daniel 3:28-29:

*Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God. Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins, for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way."*

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are about to be thrown into a fiery furnace. Why? Why would God let three Hebrew boys who were standing up in worship of him be thrown into a fiery furnace? If that's all the story that we know, we miss the point until we get to the end, Daniel 4:28-29. Because when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego spend some time in a fiery furnace and then come out the other side without a drop of sweat on their brow, the king declares—a pagan king declares, "The God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego is worthy of praise because he's able to save his people." Extravagant blessing for extravagant glory.

Daniel 6:26-27 (Darius):

*"I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end. He delivers and rescues; he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, he who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions."*

Daniel gets thrown into a lion's den for worshipping God. How does that make you feel? You have a quiet time; you might be in a den of lions. Why? Why would God do this? Well, the answer is not clear until the story ends. Daniel was thrown into the lion's den, and he spends a night with some hungry lions who don't eat him. He comes out the next morning and some other guys get thrown in. Why? Daniel 6:25-26 tells us that a pagan king declares that the God of Daniel deserves the worship of people all throughout this land because he's able to save his people. He's blessing his people for the sake of his praise among all the peoples.

Why does God bless in unusual, powerful, indescribable ways? So his ways and his salvation will be known in all the earth. Why was Solomon so wise? First Kings 10:1-9:

*Now when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to test him with hard questions. She came to Jerusalem with a very great retinue, with camels bearing spices and very much gold and precious stones. And when she came to Solomon, she told him all that was on her mind. And Solomon answered all her questions; there was nothing hidden from the king that he could not explain to her. And when the queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, the food of his table, the seating of his officials, and the attendance of*

*his servants, their clothing, his cupbearers, and his burnt offerings that he offered at the house of the LORD, there was no more breath in her.*

*And she said to the king, "The report was true that I heard in my own land of your words and of your wisdom, but I did not believe the reports until I came and my own eyes had seen it. And behold, the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity surpass the report that I heard. Happy are your men! Happy are your servants, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom! Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel! Because the LORD loved Israel forever, he has made you king, that you may execute justice and righteousness."*

Psalms 23:

*The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*

"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. . . . He leads me beside still waters; he leads me in paths of righteousness . . ." Why? "For his name's sake." Why does God guide you? Why does God lead you? He leads you for the sake of his name.

Psalms 25:11: *For your name's sake, O LORD, pardon my guilt, for it is great.*

Isaiah 43:1-7:

*But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you. Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you, I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life. Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you. I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."*

Isaiah 48:9-11: *Hear this, O house of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel, and who came from the waters of Judah, who swear by the name of the LORD and confess the God of Israel, but not in truth or right.*

Ezekiel 36:22-23:

*"Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my*

*holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes."*

God is recounting what he's done among his people in the past and what he's doing among his people in the present. God says to his people, "When I work among you, it's not for your sake. It's for my name's sake among the nations." He's blessing his people for the sake of his praise among all peoples.

The Old Testament is clear that the purpose behind blessing God's people is for his glory among all peoples. Therefore we're not surprised to see the same thing when get to the New Testament. Jesus comes, God in flesh, preaches redemption, purchases redemption, and then says, "*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations . . .*" (Matthew 28:19). Or consider Mark 16:15, "*Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.*" Similarly, Luke 24:47-49 teaches us that Jesus died on a cross to that repentance and forgiveness of sins would be preached to all the nations. Then Luke picks that story up in Acts 1:8 when he writes, "*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and the end of the earth.*" That's exactly what we see happening in the rest of the New Testament. It's also in the letters of Paul . . .

In Galatians 1:15-16, Paul says that he was called by God's grace and that God revealed Christ to him "*in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles.*" In Romans 15:20 Paul says, "*I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named . . .*" Finally, consider 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, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"*

Or consider 2 Pet. 3:9: *The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.*

So just as God's purpose in the beginning was to bless people so that all peoples would glorify him, so in the end in Revelation his purpose is fulfilled. This is the final, ultimate, all-consuming, glorious, guaranteed, global purpose God. God blesses his people for the sake of his praise among all peoples. That's the truth, and it's found cover to cover in Scripture. God blesses his people for the sake of his praise among all peoples.

## **One Danger ...**

And that one truth leads to the next point—one danger. There's a danger we all need to be aware of. It's a danger that applies to anyone and everyone who has received the blessing of God, the grace of God—anyone whom God has smiled upon, most notably by bringing salvation to them. It's a danger for every person who has experienced spiritual blessing

from God, and all the more so for every person who has also experienced material blessing from God (which would be all of us in this room).

We live in the top percent of the wealthiest people on the planet. We are some of the wealthiest people to ever walk the face of the earth. I'm not saying this to make us feel guilty; I'm saying this to help us realize the grace that has been given us. We are of all people, in this room, are most blessed. But here's the danger. We are prone to disconnect God's blessing in our lives from God's purpose for our lives.

Our hearts resonate with the idea of grace, and for good reason. We relish sermons, songs, and books that exalt grace, but it is oftentimes a grace centered around *us*. And while the wonder of grace is worthy of our attention, if it is disconnected from its purpose, the sad result is a self-centered focus rather than focusing on Christ. This misses the purpose of God. If you ask the average Christian sitting in the pew, "What is the message of Christ?" the answer will be "God loves me." But that's not Christianity. Not that it's not true . . . but it's incomplete. The object in that kind of thinking is *me*. When I make plans for my life and career, I think about what is best for me. I choose the house to live in, the car to drive, the clothes to wear, and the way to live that's best for me. This version of Christianity prevails in our day, but it is incomplete.

The message of Christianity is, "God loves me so that ...". *He* is the end goal in all this. Remember Ezekiel 36:22-23: God loves us for the sake of his name among the nations. Maybe you're thinking, "Does God have an ulterior motive in blessing us?" Yes! Who is so arrogant as to think that they are the center of God's universe? You and I are not God! God lives to exalt himself. If that rubs you wrong, then ask yourself, "Who else would you have him exalt?"

Don't misunderstand me, I'm not saying God doesn't love deeply—he does! God possesses an unusual, extreme, and intimate passion for his people. This is the beauty of the gospel! God glorifies himself by making his salvation known to us! God glorifies himself by saving you and me by the sacrifice of his Son on a cross. He glorifies himself by showering us with his grace...and that grace has a goal...and that goal is his glory. And what made Psalm 67 such a life-altering text in my life is, for the first time, I realized that the blessing of God does not center on me. Instead, the blessing of God is intended to spread through me. God has given me the gospel for a reason, and that reason is so that all peoples might know the gospel. God has given me wealth (material blessing) in this world for a purpose, and that purpose is *not* so that I can be more comfortable, *not* so that I can have more luxuries, and *not* so that I can coast out my Christian life until I get to heaven. No, that's *not* biblical Christianity. God has given me wealth in this world for the spread of his worship in this world. All of his blessings ultimately center on him, not on me. Do you see how huge this is?

The reason I'm calling this a danger is because that's exactly what it is. We are prone to disconnect God's blessing in our lives from God's purpose for our lives, and we are all in danger of doing it. There are over 6,000 of these ethnic groups in the world, comprising about 2 billion people, who have never even heard of the saving power of God. It's not that they have heard the good news of God's grace in Christ and rejected it. It's that they haven't even heard it. They haven't heard it. How is that possible?

Is not the primary reason they haven't heard the gospel because we who have the gospel have disconnected God's grace from God's purpose? Because we who have the gospel are sitting back with the gospel in the confines of comfortable churches, where we're content to spend the majority of the time and money God has graciously given us on ourselves, all the while never realizing that God gave it to us for a greater purpose than this. Never



considering that God may be leading many, if not most, of us in a land of gospel saturation to go to the peoples of the earth for the praise of his name. That seems so far-fetched to us. We wouldn't even consider it ... until we realize that it's the very purpose of our salvation. He has saved us for the sake of his praise among all the peoples ... and there's peoples, nations, ethnic groups who haven't even heard.

So what do we do? We let this text transform our lives. We let this text put our lives on an entirely new trajectory, and it does this in three ways.

## **Realize Who God Is ...**

### **He is the Gracious Savior.**

First, we realize who God is. See it in this text. God is the Gracious Savior. Oh, we have good news to tell the nations! We don't go to the peoples of the world with a message of condemnation; we go with a message of celebration. God loves you! He's gracious! He's merciful! He has sent his Son to save you from your sin! We say to peoples living in spiritual darkness, "The light of God shines upon you!" Turn from yourselves, trust in him, and be saved...forever!

### **He is the Righteous Judge.**

Realize who God is—he is gracious and loving, and he desires the salvation of the peoples! And at the same time, realize that he is the Righteous Judge. Verse 4 says, "*He judges the peoples with equity.*" Now this is sobering news for all who don't trust in Christ, but it's news we must make known, right? I mean, put yourself in their shoes. Put yourself in the shoes of the Turks, whom we've been praying for this last month. Almost all of them in Turkey are unreached with the gospel. What if you were them? What if I were them? And what if this gospel is true? What if God is indeed the Judge of all people everywhere, and what if, in our sin, you and I stood condemned before God? Wouldn't we want somebody to come and tell us how we can be saved? Wouldn't we want somebody to leave behind the comforts of Birmingham, take the risks of moving their family to Turkey in order to learn our language so they could share this gospel with us? Wouldn't we want somebody to do whatever it takes to tell us how the Judge of all the earth has made the way for us to be saved from his judgment in eternity? Yes, we'd want everybody, not just a select few in the church, but everybody coming after us and moving to us or making major sacrifices for us.

### **He is the Sovereign King.**

But in order to feel this, in order to get this, in order to make this connection, we've got to realize who God is. He's the gracious Savior, he's the righteous Judge, and he is the Sovereign King. He "*guides the nations upon earth*" (4). He's the King over all. Oh, church, this is why we fast and pray fervently; this is why we give sacrificially; this is why we go willingly...because Jesus is King of the nations and he doesn't just deserve the praise of 5,000 people groups. He deserves the praise of all 11,000 people groups on the planet. "*Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!*" (v.3, v.5).

Do we believe this? Do we realize this? *God* is the gracious Savior of the peoples, the righteous Judge of the peoples, and the sovereign King over the peoples. Realize who God is!

## Realize Why God Blesses ...

### **He aims to be known among all peoples.**

Second, we need to realize why God blesses. Now we've already said that God blesses his people for the sake of his praise among all peoples, but think about what that means more specifically in this text. On one hand, it means that he aims to be known among all peoples. "*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 salvation known among all nations*" (Psalm 67:1-2). In order for the peoples to praise God, they obviously must know God. And when they know him for who he is, they will praise him for what he is worth. So God aims to be known among all peoples, but that's not all, as if intellectual knowledge of who God is is what God is after.

### **He aims to be enjoyed by all peoples.**

There's more in this psalm, for he aims to be enjoyed by all peoples. That's the beauty of verse 4 – "*Let the nations be glad and sing for joy...*"

If I could just pause for a moment and acknowledge the way God has used John Piper, at first indirectly and then more directly, to open my eyes to the beauty of this psalm, and this truth in particular. His book, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, is one of the most influential books I have ever read outside of the Bible. In it he makes the statement, "The goal of missions is the gladness of the peoples in the greatness of God." So we don't just want the peoples of the world to know who God is . . . we want them to enjoy who God is. And this psalm is not alone in expressing that.

Psalm 69:32: *When the humble see God they are glad; you who see God, let your hearts revive.* Psalm 70:4: *May all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you! May those who love your salvation say evermore, "God is great!"* Psalm 97:1: *The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice; let the many coastlands be glad!*

I love that—"let the coastlands be glad." This is what happens, isn't it, when the grace and the blessing and the light of God's face shines upon someone? The peoples rejoice! They're glad in the greatness of God. God blesses his people so that he might be enjoyed by all peoples. Just a side note here: You may be tempted as we see this truth in Scripture to start thinking, "Okay, if God blesses me for the sake of his praise among all the peoples, then does that mean God is just using me? Maybe I'm just a pawn and he really doesn't love me at all?"

The answer to that is a definite *no*. Well, it's a yes in the sense that God is using you for his purpose, but no in the sense that his purpose for you is good. His purpose for you is evidence of his love for you. This is where we get it backward. We think that if God loves us, then that means he must center on us. And so it's all about us. But what if God's love for us is most fully realized in sharing it with others? What if our joy in God will increase not when we hoard God's blessings for ourselves, but when we spread God's blessings among others?

I know few greater joys than leading people to joy in Jesus. Does that make sense? Greater than all the comforts of this world is the satisfaction of seeing more and more men and women glad in God. This is worth living for! God has designed our hearts to be glad in giving, not in hoarding. Yet you and I in this culture find ourselves swimming in an ocean of deceit. We're surrounded by lies that say, "Get, get, and get, and you'll be happy." But it's not true. God loves you. And in his love, God says, "Give your life away, that you ... and others ... might be glad in me."

**He aims to be feared by all peoples.**

God aims to be enjoyed by all peoples, and he aims to be feared by all peoples. Verse 7 says, "*God shall bless us; let all the ends of the earth fear him.*" Piper writes, "God is jealous to be known and enjoyed and feared. He is displeased when people are ignorant of him or bored around him or unduly casual in his presence." This is why he blesses. So church, realize who God is and realize why God blesses.

**Realize What This Means ...**

So what does this mean for your life? This psalm is not just for information, as in "Oh, that was a nice sermon." No, that's what I mean when I say this psalm turned the trajectory of my life. This psalm, this truth, changes everything. Think about what this psalm means.

**This prayer must be constant on our lips.**

This psalm means that this prayer must be constant on our lips. This is a prayer that we must pray for our lives and our families and this church. Every night when I'm tucking my kids into bed, this is the prayer I'm praying over them. I'm laying little Isaiah down in his bed, and he's looking up at me with his big blue eyes, and I'm saying, "May God be gracious to you and bless you and make his face to shine upon you, that his ways may be known on earth, and his saving power among all nations." This is what I pray for my kids, for my family, for my life—O God, grant me grace, blessing, favor, and use me, use my family, use my kids for your name's sake among the nations. I pray this for this church, I pray this for you, and I pray this for these missionaries that we're sending out. I pray this for the missionaries we *have* sent out. I pray this for the church plants we've sent out and for other churches here in Birmingham. Oh, may this prayer be constant on our lips.

**This purpose must captivate our lives.**

This psalm is not just about a prayer on our lips. Realize what this psalm means: This purpose must captivate our lives. Church at Brook Hills, the time is short, and the need is urgent. We do not have time play games with grace. We do not have time sit back and soak in grace that centers on us. God has given us so much in terms of the gospel, and in terms of our lives and our resources. He has given us everything we have as his people for one purpose: to make his glory known among all peoples. So let's connect God's blessing in our lives with God's purpose for our lives.

Follow this, this is so huge, because it works both ways. When this purpose captivates our lives—drives our lives—then the blessing of God will follow in our lives. God wants to be praised, known, enjoyed, and feared among the nations, and he will bless those who are aligned with what he wants. This is why Jesus not only gives us a Great Commission, but he gives it with a promise to go with us, and to give us everything we need to accomplish it (Matthew 28:18-20).

Do we want to experience the fullness of everything God offers? Then let's give ourselves to the purpose that God has ordained! Let's pray and give and go ... and as we do ... let's expect the blessing of God to follow the purpose of God. One more time, Piper says, "If God blesses his people for the sake of the nations; then God is most likely to bless us when we are planning and longing and praying to bless the nations. If God wants his goods to get to the nations, then he will fill the truck that's driving toward the nations. He will bless the church that's pouring itself out for unreached peoples of the world. And this blessing is not payment for a service rendered; it's power and joy for a mission to accomplish. When we

move toward the unreached peoples, we are not earning God's blessings, we are leaping into the river of blessings that is already flowing to the nations."

Oh, I love that. The river of God's blessing is flowing to the nations, so let's jump in and enjoy! This purpose must captivate our lives. God's global purpose for his praise among the peoples can't be a sideshow in the church; it's the central mission of the church. We have all been commissioned together, blessed together, to do whatever it takes, to give our lives together to the spread of his praise among the peoples of the world. This is what it means to be the church.

**This promise must compel risk-taking, life-giving, death-defying confidence in our Lord.**

This purpose must captivate our lives, and, we'll close with this: this promise must compel risk-taking, life-giving, death-defying confidence in our Lord. So this psalm is a prayer and it's a purpose, but it's also a promise. See the beauty of where this psalm ends: "*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!*" (vv. 6-7)

God will bless us and he will bring all the ends of the earth to fear him. I want you to hear an illustration of how as this prayer is on our lips, and this purpose captivates our lives, we can be confident in this promise. I want to ask Jonathan B., our Global Disciple-Making Pastor, to join me up here. I have asked him to share a story that he recounted to me a few weeks ago, a story that goes back to something he shared many years ago at Brook Hills. I just want you to hear echoes of everything we've talked about in Psalm 67 in this story.

**Pastor Jonathan B.:** "You know, this disconnect that David's been talking about was present in my life, and God began to unpack that disconnect, beginning fifteen years ago. I was actually backpacking through Northern Vietnam. We were way up in the mountains and hills of Vietnam. We'd flown into the capital and taken an all-night train, then ridden in an all-day bus, then spent three or four days bouncing around in a jeep up in the mountains of Northern Vietnam. We came to this one village on the other side of a muddy river. We scrambled down and yelled across, trying to get somebody to hear us. Somebody came across in a dugout canoe and we teeter-tottered our way back across that river into this little village with thatched-roof huts on stilts. We were scurried into a home with sixty of our new best friends. All the kids were peeking their faces through the window and the doorway.

"We began to ask questions about what these people believed and tried to understand what they worshipped. We said, 'Do you believe in the Buddha?' which is common in that area. They said, 'No. We don't believe anything like that.' I said, 'What about spirits in the forest?' They said, 'No, nothing like that.' 'Well, what about your fathers and mothers when they die? Do you worship them?' They said, 'No, nothing like that.' So, out of desperation, I thought I'd be kind of smart, and said, 'Well, what makes your crops grow?' They said, 'The rain!' I said, 'Good answer. What makes the rains come?' 'We just hope.' 'Well, what makes the sun come?' 'We just hope.' And out of desperation, we asked, 'You don't believe anything about what happens to you after you die?' And back to the translator came the response, 'No, no one has come and told us about that yet.'

"That's a moment in my life when I realized that I had disconnected the blessings I had received from God from the purpose for which I had been blessed. I've shared that story now for fifteen years and every time I share that story, someone has come up afterwards afterwards and said, 'Jonathan, what happened to that village?' And I've had to say, 'I don't know.' We shared the gospel and we later found out that this was an unreached

people group with no known believers, previously unclassified. They didn't even know this people group existed. So that's all we knew. We didn't know what happened to that people group or that village until just recently. David always says God's got this whole thing rigged, and it's so true. Through a series of divinely ordained circumstances that we couldn't have brought about, I got an email from our original contact there in Vietnam.

"Let me read to you what they said about what happened next. They said,

'A believer stopped at that village sometime during the next year after you guys had been there. He was evidently on his way to the city to get medical treatment and he felt the Lord lead him to stop there. The good news was shared again and around twenty people believed and a church was born.' Praise God! They went on to say, 'I have no doubt that this was a result of the seeds that were planted and prayers that were raised and the pure grace and faithfulness of our God to bring the Mang to Himself. You see, the Mang are that people group in that village, and not only is there a church in that particular village, there are now a few hundred Mang believers spread across Northern Vietnam.'

"We don't always get to see how God pieces all of these things together. We just have to be obedient to do what God tells us to do. But here, in this picture and in this story, we have the privilege of seeing how God has pieced all of these things together. You see, God is working all things out for his name to be glorified by all peoples. We can trust in that. We can be confident. We can step forward in faith that God will accomplish this purpose. And one day, we will be joined by a great multitude from every language, tribe, and tongue, including the Mang and those that are yet to be reached. So let's spend our lives for that purpose."

**Pastor David:** Oh, church, God will exalt himself. He will bless his people for the sake of his praise among all peoples. He's doing it among brothers and sisters around world, so let's join them. God has chosen to involve us in his grand, global, glorious design, so let's not miss out. Let's not settle for lesser dreams in in this world and submit to lesser purposes for our lives. There is more to this life than having a nice job, a decent family, a comfortable life, and tacking church attendance onto the end of it. We were created for so much more.

We have been created, saved, and blessed by God for the praise of God among the peoples of the world. One day, the Sovereign King and Righteous Judge and Gracious Savior will return, and you want to talk about God causing his face to shine upon us, Revelation 22 says we "... will see his face ..." (v. 4). Oh, let's live for that day. Let's give toward that day. Let's die for that day...when we will join together with all the peoples and give our God the praise he is due...in enjoyment that you and I cannot even fathom at this moment.

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