

Why Should God Bless Us

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[0 : 00] Let's pray together. Lord God, as we come to your word, we ask that you will reveal marvelous things from it, that we might be instructed in how we can live, how we can think, the things we need to do to live in ways that please you.

Amen. Because we seek to do that because of Jesus who has died for us. And in his name we pray. Amen. I want to start by giving you a bit of literary culture.

Little boy kneels at the foot of the bed, droops on little hands, little gold head. Hush, hush, whisper who dares.

Christopher Robin is saying his prayers. God bless mummy. I know that's right. Wasn't it fun in the bath tonight? The cold so cold and the hot so hot.

Oh, God bless daddy. I quite forgot. If I open my fingers a little bit more, I can see nanny's dressing gown on the door. It's a beautiful blue, but it has no hood.

[1 : 18] Oh, God bless nanny and make her good. Mine has a hood and I lie in bed and pull the hood right over my head. And I shut my eyes and I curl up small and nobody knows I'm there at all.

Oh, thank you, God, for a lovely day. And what was the other I had to say? I said, bless daddy. So what can it be? Oh, now I remember it. God bless me.

Little boy kneels at the foot of the bed, droops on the little hands, little gold head. Hush, hush. Whisper who dares.

Christopher Robin is saying his prayers. Now you may recognize that bit of poetry.

You may recognize that pattern of prayer. It's one which bless this person, that person is a bit of a formula.

[2 : 19] But what does it mean to ask for God's blessing? And why does God bless us? Why should God bless us?

To what end? You see, we're very used to asking God for things. Big important things like health and security and jobs and helping exams and life partners and enough money and guidance and friends and wisdom to know what's really important and true and safety and all these other things. And we even ask him for things with less long-term importance, like fine weather for a special occasion or that we'd get a park or that the bus would come before we get too wet.

And these things are all right and good, of course. Philippians 4.6 tells us that we're not to be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

So often, though, our prayers are about our convenience and our comfort. They are us-centered and not God-centered.

[3 : 43] This psalm that we had read to us a little bit earlier, which is really a song, is a beautifully constructed prayer, not just for blessing, but for a blessing with a reason that's far greater than mere comfort and convenience.

So I invite you to turn to Psalm 67, which is on page 574 of the Pew Bibles.

And in the first verse of this psalm, the psalmist is asking for three things. May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine on us.

The first request, may God be gracious to us. It's not just saying, may God be nice to us, but may God give us grace.

It's recognizing the need for grace. Grace, of course, means a gift that we don't deserve. And the psalmist is asking for something that he knows he doesn't deserve.

[5 : 02] Now, as we look at our own lives through the lenses of Scripture, the thing that we recognize that we need and don't deserve, we have no right to expect is freedom from sin.

Because naturally, as we are without God, there is simply nothing we can do about the problem of sin.

It's there in all of our lives. It has us in its grasp. And it's only God that can do anything about it. But we thank God that he is gracious.

And that he has provided a solution to the problem of sin. And that solution to the sin problem comes in Christ.

You see, Jesus died to set us free from the power of sin and the eternal consequences of our sin. He offers us that freedom as a gift of grace.

[6 : 13] So God is gracious to us. And without grace, we are completely lost. Grace is our most important and urgent need.

Whether we recognize it or not, we have been offered grace. And we are unwise if we do not accept it.

But he doesn't just ask for grace. May God be gracious to us and bless us, says the psalmist. And this is saying, may God do good to us.

That's the essence of what blessing means. And one of the things that the Bible is very clear about is that God is good.

And that he desires good things for his people. But often our tendency, when we look at our lives, is to recognize what we don't have rather than what we do have.

[7 : 20] What I mean is that God has blessed every one of us here in ways that are quite astounding if we consider them carefully.

Even as we consider the privilege we have of living in this country. You see, we have amazing material blessings. We have a stable government.

We have a health system that looks after us. We have a welfare system. We have an education system that actually educates. We have freedoms.

We have safety. And yet, when you think about it, the things we whinge about are those very things. Because they're not quite at the standard we want. We need to remember to thank God for what we have.

[8 : 18] We can strive to make them better and fairer and more just, etc. But let us not forget to thank. You remember I talked about Philippians 4, verse 6, where it encourages us in every situation by prayer and petition to make our requests known to God.

But that is also qualified by saying, with thanks, with thanksgiving. You see, living in Australia is just one example of the many blessings we have.

As a church, we have many blessings. In our communities, in our homes, our very lives are incredible blessings. The list could go on.

So next time we're tempted to whinge about something, or to complain, or to say that it's not right, let's remember to thank God for the blessings that form the basis for that whinge.

And blessing is more than just getting the goodies, more than just material things. Very often involves things that we don't see, and we might not have sought.

[9 : 47] In Ephesians 1, verse 3, Paul says, praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

That's incredible. We, as Christian people, if you are somebody who follows the Lord Jesus, you have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Wow. And Jesus says that some of the things that we don't look for, we don't enjoy, are actually blessings.

You remember, as we looked through Matthew's gospel, we came to chapter 5, where the Beatitudes are full of things that are surprising. Blessed are you when men persecute you, says Jesus.

There is blessing when we are mourning. When we recognise our sinfulness, there is blessing there.

[10 : 59] God gives us blessing, even in things that we don't like. So let's recognise blessing. But blessing is not the end goal.

You see, our culture teaches us that when all our desires, and our needs, of course, that when our desires are filled, then we will be happy and fulfilled.

Everything will be okay. We'll be all good. But that's a lie, actually. Because God has bigger and better purposes for us than just that.

Things, goodies, don't bring true fulfilment. The psalmist keeps asking, may God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us.

Asking for God to watch over us with favour. for God to be with us in effect. This is talking about God watching over us and taking delight in us.

[12 : 18] And the picture is like a parent with a toddler that's learning to walk. And the parent hovers over the child in the likely event that he or she will fall flat on their face.

But there's delight and pride and love. That's how God watches over us. And like the parent in the illustration, God knows what's best for us as well.

But these next verses, after the request, come to the central point of the psalm. God's blessing, you see, is not just for us.

It's for God. The psalmist gives us some of the reasons for blessing.

In verse 2, so that your ways, that's God's ways, may be known on earth and your salvation among all nations. One of the chief reasons that God blesses us is that so that his ways and his salvation might be made known.

[13 : 35] You see, the focus is on God and his purposes, not on us and our purposes. But in what way does fulfilling our needs and desires benefit God?

You see, the blessings, both material and spiritual, that are there for us are so that we can use them and display them in such a way that people will know the reality of salvation and can look at God's ways lived out in the lives of his people.

And we can see how that might work. For example, the blessing of the families that God has placed us in. That blessing can be utilized to promote God's ways and God's salvation.

Make that known. That might be by including others into your family and letting them see and experience what it's like.

It could be by passing on our faith to future generations. There's all sorts of ways that even just that one blessing can be used to make God's ways and salvation known.

[15 : 03] You see, as we live in the reality of the forgiveness, the blessing and the presence of God as the psalmist has prayed and as we give voice to that in our everyday lives, others will see his ways in us and be impressed by him.

One of the ways that a number of people are thinking of this is by the concept of living faith out loud. That is, making your faith be obvious, not hidden.

not just a private thing, but something that God wants to display through you. And that might be something as simple as when you go to a restaurant, rather than them seeing you, you know, bowing your head and mumbling something into your food, you can make it plain.

And some people ask the waiter, look, we're going to thank God for our food now, and we're going to pray to him. Is there anything that we can pray for you about?

that usually makes the waiter a little surprised. But they know what you're doing. And they know that you are acknowledging the one true God.

[16 : 26] God. So, I can live my life in a way that's directed towards me, or I can live my life in a way that's directed towards God and shows him off.

God. The second reason for blessing, that's given in verses 3 and 4, it follows on from the first reason, because he goes on to say, may the peoples praise you, God.

May all the peoples praise you. May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples with equity and guide the nations of the earth. Making God's salvation known is not just so that we can get more numbers in heaven.

Some people think of it as if there's a cosmic scoreboard in heaven where the converts are marked up and God's winning or something like that.

That's not the point at all. The point of inviting people into salvation is that there might be more worshippers of the one true God.

[17 : 49] He is the Lord of the universe. And we were created to praise him. We are inviting people to do what they were created for in effect.

We point people to Christ so that more people can praise the living God. And all people are to praise him.

Verse 5, May the peoples praise you, O God. May all the peoples praise you. We're not to be satisfied until all people praise God.

And that is in effect, in effect, mission. John Piper wrote a book and I will save you the trouble of reading that book because the line that sums up the message of that book is the line that says, mission exists because praise doesn't.

mission exists because praise doesn't. In fact, what he's saying is the goal of mission is to get people to praise God.

[19 : 01] And because there are people that still do not praise God, that's why mission is important. And some people might say, well, I live out my Christian faith here as best as I can and God will shine through me just like the psalm says.

But it's a local thing. No need to get carried away and start talking about world mission. And I work for a mission organization and I get that from Christian people a lot.

There are needs here in Australia. Why do we need to go to other places? There's lots of people that need to hear here. And the answer, of course, is there in verse 5.

God's purposes are too big for just Australia because all the peoples should praise God. And that's the way that God has revealed his purposes through all the Bible.

Right from Genesis, when he talked to Abraham and his stated purpose was that of his promises to Abraham was so that all the peoples of the earth might be blessed through him.

[20 : 22] And then when you go right through to Revelation, you have this picture of what heaven is going to be like where people from every nation are gathered around the throne of God, praising him.

God's people's praising him. All the peoples praising him.

God blessing his people and through them bringing blessing to all peoples. That's God's big plan. blessing. And we are privileged to be part of that.

And blessing is a reality. God blessing is ongoing. Verses six and seven keep on with that. The land yields its harvest.

God, our God blesses us. May God bless us still so that the ends of the earth will fear him. The psalmist finishes by recognizing the reality of God's blessing and looking forward, recognizing that we will still need God's blessing in the future.

[21 : 38] God's blessing is an ongoing need. It's not just something we do, we ask for, we get, and then that's it, we'll go on to the rest of life.

The request is not repeated because it's uncertain, but because we're continually in need of him in our lives all the time. So we need God's blessing as a continuous experience in our lives so that we can live as he wants us to and we can continue to declare the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light, as Peter puts it in his epistle.

And the second part of verse seven looks even further forward, when all the ends of the earth will fear him.

And they may not do so now, but one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord. And that will either be a terrible day, if you haven't ever acknowledged him before, or a fantastic day, when the one you have known as your Lord for years finally appears before you.

One set will be forced to their knees to admit something they have spent their life denying, and it will be a shameful and humiliating thing for them with eternal consequences.

[23 : 18] And the others of us will fall to our knees in worship as we acknowledge the surpassing greatness of the one who saved us. The first group will fear him because they finally recognize their judge, and the second group because they are seeing their saviour.

So we who are Christians today, we who are here are ones who God has blessed as we have seen in verse 1.

God has been gracious to us in Christ. God has blessed us, even us who are here at Holy Trinity Doncaster, with many good things.

And God has promised us his eternal and unwavering presence. blessings. And the question is, what do these blessings mean?

What difference will they make? Will the end result be that we are merely comfortable? We're going to be thinking a little bit more deeply in the days and weeks ahead about how we use the material things, material blessings that God has given to us as a church here at Holy Trinity.

[24 : 46] And as we decide how to use them, what we're going to do, let us not just be preoccupied with our own needs and desires, whether what is proposed fits with our comfortable notion of what Holy Trinity is supposed to be or look like, but rather let us be preoccupied with God's purposes,

God's even wider purposes.

And it's exciting to think that he might use even us in his wider purposes. And let us remember that it's God's priorities and God's glory that really count, not our own comfort.

Let's pray. Lord God, our Heavenly Father, we thank you that you have blessed us, that you have shown us grace in the Lord Jesus.

We thank you that you have blessed us in so many ways, both materially and spiritually. And we thank you that you are always with us.

and as we live in light of those facts, may we give all honor and glory and praise to you, because you are the only one who deserves and really is the true recipient of praise and glory.

[26 : 27] We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.