

Eleventh Sunday after Trinity

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Date: 20 August 2023

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[0 : 0 0] We continue on in our summer series in the second book of the Psalms, and we find ourselves in Psalm 67. But before we get into the Psalm, let me just tell you another part of Scripture.

Talk about it briefly. There's this incredible story in the Gospel of Mark, of Jesus delivering a man who was ravaged by unclean spirits. If you were with us months ago, we were from the beginning of the church plant.

We went through Mark, and we got through it, I think, earlier this year. To be honest, I don't remember when we finished Mark, but maybe about a year ago, or at the turn of 2022 to 2023.

But you'd remember this story. Jesus, he meets this man, the Gerasene demoniac. And this man is ravaged by unclean spirits.

He is a troubled, troubled man. He was abandoned to the fringes of his land, and he was left completely alone. He was a violent man, and he wouldn't be held down.

[1 : 0 8] He would break the bonds that held him in place. There was a lot of fear around this fellow. He was completely chaotic. He was screaming and naked, and he would cut himself.

It was a terrible, very, very scary scene. And Jesus heals him. He heals him in an incredible way by just speaking, and he is made well.

And all the things that excluded this man from his society were turned around. And the Gospel writer tells us that he was clothed at peace and in his right mind. It's a remarkable story.

So his life went from being a curse to a blessing, from chaotic to a life of order. But what is interesting about this man is that, I mean, he wanted to go with Jesus and be one of his disciples, and he begged Jesus that he would come with him.

But Jesus actually commands him to stay and to go into his town and testify about the blessings to those around him. In a sense, Jesus commands him to share his blessing with others.

[2 : 1 2] Later on in the narrative, this town, which had previously been very hostile to Jesus, came to welcome him with gladness. And what isn't said in the narrative, but what is implied is that this man, who was completely blessed by God, listened to Jesus, went into the town, shared his blessing, and it resulted in the town coming, in a sense, to welcome Jesus with gladness.

And this man turned out to be, at least in the Gospel of Mark, the first evangelist in the New Testament. And our psalm today is yet another psalm of praise.

It's actually fitted in this short little group of psalms from Psalm 65 to 68. They're psalms that would be sung during the harvest.

But this psalm in particular gives us a blueprint, a vision of what it means to live out the Christian faith under the triune God, which is a life on mission, which is a life of blessing in order to bless.

So a life on mission, what does it mean? It means simply not only enjoying the blessings of God, like this man who was healed, this Gerizim demoniac, but then turning around and blessing others with the blessing that you have received.

[3 : 37] So we'll look at it in three sections, Psalm 67. We'll look at it first. We'll ask the question, what does this tell us about the Christian life and how it means to live on mission, to be evangelists, to share our blessing.

And we'll look at it in three sections. In verse 1, we'll see that the Christian life is to be enjoyed and to be enjoyed publicly. The second, verses 2 to 5, we'll see the Christian life is to be a blessing to those around us.

And we'll unpack that. Verse 6 to 7, the third point, we'll see how the Christian life culminates into eternal blessing.

Not just temporal blessing, not blessing for the moment or just this life, but for all eternity. So let's jump right into it.

Verse 1, if you have a Bible, follow along with me. Verse 1 says this, May God be gracious to us and bless us and make His face to shine upon us.

[4 : 40] So these opening words, this opening verse echoes the Aaronic blessing. The Aaronic blessing, we can find it in number 6, verses 24 to 26.

But really it was the blessing that God gave Aaron, who was the high priest, and his sons and all the priests that would come after him. And it would be a blessing upon them, but not just on them, but on all of Israel.

That really to hear this Aaronic blessing is to know God, to be welcomed into his family, and then to be a blessing to those around you.

Here's the actual Aaronic blessing from Numbers chapter 6. And hear the similarities with the opening verse in our psalm. The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace. Coincidence that Psalm 67 verse 1 sounds just like the Aaronic blessing?

[5 : 42] I would say to you no. That David, the psalmist rather, he has this in view. This priestly blessing in view. And this is the foundation of what it means to know God and to live under His good and kindly rule.

To be a part of the covenant community. The blessing entails provision, protection, mercy, and belonging. So in short, it means to be blessed.

To be blessed by God means to be held secure in the midst of danger. It means to know peace in the midst of chaos. It is to know mercy when judgment is owed.

And it is for the estranged to have a place. Think about all of those things that I just mentioned. The negative bits.

The danger. The chaos. The judgment. The estrangement. Think of how that Gerizim demoniac, that was his experience.

[6 : 45] How he experienced all of these things. And when Jesus came in and healed him and delivered him and how he was blessed, he was, remember, clothed at peace and in his right mind.

It's what the blessing of God looks like for the covenant people. So to be blessed by God is to have, in a sense, all of our life's pursuits and our deep down desires fulfilled in the most complete and perfect way and to have all of our fears cast out.

Throughout the Bible and especially in the Psalms, this is expressed in enjoyment of God. To have joy in God, but to enjoy him. That he is the object of our affection.

He is the object of our greatest desire. He is everything we could hope for. We are to enjoy him. I commend to you Psalm 119 as an example of this.

It is long, so I won't read it. But what I will read is Psalm 103. A few verses from Psalm 103. And see how King David is enjoying God. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me.

[7 : 54] Bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good, so that your youth is renewed like the eagles.

My goodness! It's a man who's enjoying the Lord. The Christian life is one of beauty, and truth, and goodness, and enjoyment. And how can one truly understand that if it is not enjoyed?

In fact, if Christianity is a grind, and a weight around your neck, if it feels a bit like just a huge drag, then I would say, rather than joy, then I would say that you either discover the faith afresh, or you discover the faith for the first time.

And by the way, this is a bit of a disclaimer. This doesn't mean that you're a Christian, you experience joy for the rest of your life without sadness, without valleys, without depressions.

It doesn't mean that we are enthralled with joyful glee every waking minute of your life. There is a real struggle in the Christian life. And there is a back and forth with trusting the Lord, or trusting ourselves, or in the world, or being tempted to abandon Him.

[9 : 23] And there's also very real struggles that we go through with the breakdown of our bodies, or relationships. And the Bible makes a lot of room for expressing depression, and non-joyful times.

Now, there's a lot to be said about that. I'll just pause it there. It's not the morning to deep dive into that. By the way, I just say, if you are in a prolonged season of feeling like there's a shadow over your life, I would love to talk to you.

We can pray. It doesn't mean that somehow you lost your faith. But let's get back to the text. So, Christian life is to be a joy-filled, enjoyed life, where we know and enjoy God forever.

But the second part of the first point is this. To enjoy the Christian life is to enjoy it publicly. In short, our faith is not to be a closeted faith. Let me ask you this question.

Is joy in general to be regulated to the private? I mean, if you find something that brings you life and joy, you're excited about something, do you not share it with others?

[10 : 45] Is it, I mean, that's an almost unhealthy thing to not share your joy. I'll share two examples. The first one is silly. When Christine and I were dating, we went to this cafe in downtown Ottawa.

They had kind of like a chef's special. I ordered the turkey gorgonzola sandwich. It was on a panini. And I ate it. And it was very delicious.

And I think I was trying to be a bit goofy and funny. But I went over. I gave the kitchen staff a bunch of high fives. I think I embarrassed Christine. But the joy, again, stupid example.

But the joy was not joy unless I could share it. And be happy about it. The other example, it's a lot more serious. Man, I'll get teary-eyed.

But when Nora was born, my first daughter, my firstborn, man, the joy was just like, I couldn't contain it. There was tears and excitement. I think I phoned everybody that I could think of.

[11 : 47] Texted people. I had to share my joy. I was a dad. I had a daughter. It was a very exciting moment. Joy ought not to be contained.

It's a very public thing. And if this faith is a faith where the chief experience is to know God and be known by Him, despite the fact that we are sinners, actually in spite of the fact that we are sinners, that God has made a way for us to come to Him as we are and to know Him because of what Christ has done on the cross, there is a joy that has to be shared.

It must be shared. See, if you find joy in something, you ought to share it. You have to share it. And if it feels almost, like I mentioned, it feels almost unhealthy not to share it, then this is not a mere fantasy, but a reality that we experience.

So we enjoy God and not an idea of God or a philosophy of God, but a real God who is true, that is rooted in fact.

Historical realities that had happened. Christ actually died on a physical cross at a specific time in human history. We do not testify to a fairy tale or hallucination or falsity.

[13 : 08] We know God's gracious blessing and closeness because Christ took upon Himself our sin and wretchedness in a real way, in a real place, on a real cross.

And this call is to share that with others by enjoying the Lord in a very public way. But the question is, how do we do that? How do we enjoy the Lord in a public way?

How is our faith to be enjoyed publicly? Well, turn with me to verses 2-5. And this is our second point, how the Christian life is to be a blessing to those around us.

Look with me. Actually, I'll read verse 1, but focus on verses 2-5. 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.

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.

[14 : 09] Let the peoples praise You, O God. Let all the peoples praise You. This text tells us that our love and enjoyment of knowing and living for the Lord ought to manifest itself in two ways.

And we'll move somewhat quickly through this. First, that God's ways may be known on all the earth. We see this in verse 2, the first part of verse 2. And in short, this means that we are to teach and to advocate for and to promote and live out a vision of the human life that God has laid out in Holy Scripture.

It means we are to be about protecting the orphan and the widow. It means we are to stand up for the rights of the alien. It means we are to stand against organizations and laws that promote a culture of death.

And it means strengthening families, starting with our own. Not engaging in mass consumerism, that is really a form of gluttony. Telling the truth even if it costs us money and opportunities and friends, fighting against sloth.

And these are just a few. I mean, the list could go on and on and on. But in a sense, this is what it means to teach the nations the Lord's ways. It means that we are both for and against things that express the Lord's justice.

[15 : 34] And we see, again, this reference in the second part of verse 4. For you judge the peoples with equity. You guide the nations upon the earth.

Christianity has been doing this throughout the centuries. I know it's kind of in fashion to hate on Christendom, both in the church and outside the church.

And Christendom had its issues. But Christianity, Christendom, the adoption by and large of Christianity throughout entire cultures has resulted in many blessings.

Also, there's been issues, but many, many blessings. So, you know, an example of how it didn't work out so well is the justification of man-stealing during the transatlantic slave trade.

Terrible thing. Justifying it through Scripture in a not great way. But out of all of the cultures, Christian or not, that practiced slavery, it was Christianity in the late 18th century and in the early 19th century that put an end to the slave trade at great cost, financial cost, to themselves.

[16 : 49] There was no economic benefit to stopping the slave trade. There's examples throughout history of this. Again, Christians aren't perfect.

They're human beings. But by and large, when Christians take very seriously the Scriptures and seek to teach the nations God's ways, good things happen.

Because God has a view, a vision, of what human flourishing ought to look like. Another great example, a bad example, and then a good example, is a bad example first of how Christians here in Canada forbade the speaking of indigenous languages as Christianity was introduced to First Nations.

Not great. But Christianity, on the flip side, especially in the past century and into this century, incredibly instrumental in reviving indigenous languages as they sought to translate the Bible into mother tongues.

An example of this, I worked for the Canadian Bible Society a number of years ago and as I started with them, they were just finishing up a 30-year project of translating the New Testament into the language of the Inuit people in the north.

[18 : 10] Incredible. 30-year project. I'm sure some people started that project and probably passed away before they saw it completed. But for them, it was a beautiful, wonderful thing.

You see, Christianity, teaching God's ways to the nations, ought to redeem and heighten the good parts of a culture's culture, a nation's culture.

But also, look to erase or do away with irredeemable, incongruent parts of a culture that is antithetical to the vision of the Christian life.

That's very controversial. It might be a bit of a hot take. But is it not better to live in a world where widows don't burn themselves on the pyres of their husbands? I would say yes.

Christianity, teaching God's ways, sought to do that and in a sense, it eliminated a part of a culture that was practiced for centuries and centuries and centuries.

[19 : 17] I'll end it there. If you have issues with what I've said, I'd be happy to talk about it. I have pretty broad shoulders and I can handle criticism. But when we are called to teach the nations the Lord's ways, blessing comes.

Blessing comes. The second, and connected to the first, is that God's saving power would be known among the nations. We see that also in verse 2.

And it ought not to be separated from teaching the nations the ways of the Lord, but for the sake of explaining, I've broken it up. But really, we ought not to look at them as two separate things.

In short, we are to be evangelists. We are to testify and bear witness to the hope we have in Christ Jesus. To share with those around us that the freedom won by Christ on the cross can be their freedom as well.

To share the gospel truth. But this can be frightening because, by and large, we can lack courage. And we like the comfort, and comfort's not necessarily a bad thing, but we like the comfort that we live in and we don't want to shake the boat and we don't want to put our necks out.

[20 : 36] We lack courage. It's frightening, but it can also, in a sense, be frightening not because we lack courage, but because we trust in a false gospel.

We trust in other things that we put our hope in. When I say false gospel, I mean something that promises what the true gospel promises but can never possibly deliver on.

Everyone hopes in something. Nobody truly is an atheist. They say there's no atheists in foxholes. Everybody puts a hope in something and to put a hope in something is a very religious act.

Everyone trusts in some sort of good news. Even here, we can trust in good news and we are every single week church attenders. We struggle with this, myself included.

But here's the thing, there is no multiple gospels, there's only one gospel and there's only one salvation because there can only be one true savior.

[21 : 46] He is the good shepherd who will leave the 99 to pursue the one and consider how remarkable that is. That God has sought you out in this corner of the world.

As you are, not saying dust yourself off, clean yourself up, but as you are, He has pursued you and that He has been moved by love and compassion and He seeks and saves the lost.

He desires to be the good shepherd and welcomes in those that were far off into His fold. We see this in verse 4, the third kind of bit in verse 4, that He guides the nations upon the earth.

This is a shepherding word, the guiding. It is a picture of a shepherd shepherding a flock. So, it is a scary thing to share our faith, especially if you haven't done it in a while.

And by the way, this isn't like a terrible Christians who haven't shared their faith. Like, it's hard. I recognize it. Not having courage is to do certain things that we're called to do.

[23 : 00] It can be a very discouraging thing. And again, I am with you. I mean, I'm up here, but I am with you in the midst of that. It's a struggle.

So, it is not a stick that I bring to hit you with, but an opportunity this fall. This fall, we're going to be doing a series called Christianity Explored.

There's a number of different, I guess, courses. There's something called Christianity Explored. It's the flagship. It's based on the Gospel of Mark.

There's another one called Hope Explored and Life Explored. Really, it is a vehicle that we can use in our church to invite our friends to hear the good news of Christ.

And it means that we don't have to know A through Z and have a perfectly put together pitch. It means that we can participate and help out and invite friends to something that could change their life.

[24 : 01] because it's changed our life. There'll be more information about that in the coming week or two, but I wanted to plug that and keep it on your radar.

It'll likely happen at the church midweek, but Christianity Explored, it's tried and true. It's not flashy. It gets into the Word of God and it really gives people an opportunity to experience the Lord for the first time or maybe to come back to the Lord after a season away.

So, the Christian life is to be enjoyed and enjoyed publicly and it's to be a blessing to those around us through first teaching the nations the Lord's ways and testifying to the Gospel.

And thirdly, that the Christian life will culminate in eternal blessing. Look with me in verses 6 and 7. The earth has yielded its increase. God, our God, shall bless us.

God shall bless us. Let all the ends of the earth fear Him. It's a beautiful kind of ending to a psalm of praise, but it has overtones these two verses of the end of the age, the culmination of all things, the eternal life that awaits those that are in Christ Jesus.

[25 : 26] The harvest of harvest when all things come to their climactic end. What we see in part now, but what we will eventually see in fullness.

It means that all the brokenness and evil, mistakes and injustices, loneliness and rampant pride come to an end. but it will also positively mean that we will know true and full and without reservation complete satisfaction, joy and closeness with the one true God.

When we fully behold the shining face of God Himself. And how on earth does this come to be? The triune God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, He extends and He extends and He extends some more.

That's what God does. He's constantly extending. He is a joyful God who, in a sense, I don't want to say He can't contain His joy, but He doesn't contain His joy.

He shares His joy. He blesses and shares His goodness and makes a way for us to know Him in a very deep and intimate way through Christ dying on the cross.

[26 : 45] He gives Himself in the person and work of Jesus Christ. He gives. The blessing is extended to us. He removes any barrier that previously existed.

He meets us where we're at. He teaches us His ways. He tells us about the good news and invites us in and gives us a Holy Spirit that awakens in our heart what was previously dead and He enlivens it.

He is constantly, constantly blessing and extending and loving and reaching out and inviting in. Jesus dies on the cross of His own free will for you and me.

While you and me worship false gods. While you and me trusted in false gospels. While you and me were obsessed and addicted to a secularism and a materialism and a self.

That's what God has done. God the Father He shares with us His very self by sending us His blessed Son.

[27 : 58] God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. God the Son, that blessing is known by some of us today. And some of us haven't yet enjoyed that blessing.

By the way, I'm not the one who figures that out. That's between you and the Lord. But if you hear this this morning and you are unsure if you have embraced Almighty God and what He has extended to you and blessed you with and offered you as an opportunity for enjoyment that will bleed into eternity.

and that is Him at work in your heart this morning beckoning you in. Friends, look at these short seven verses and see how many times joy and gladness and praise and thankfulness is expressed.

We are not being invited in to something that is boring or something that will trip us up or something that will cause our life to wilt but rather the opposite.

Friends, this is what awaits us in Christ Jesus our Lord. Let's pray. Father in Heaven, we thank You that You are the God that blesses and You bless us in order that we may be a blessing so in a sense we are blessed to bless so that we would reflect Your very character.

[29 : 22] Lord, for some of us including myself who lack courage help us to be courageous. Lord, for some of us who are afraid of walking in Your ways remind us that Your ways will lead to flourishing and all other ways will not.

Lord, for some of us who are yet to enjoy You because they have not truly put their faith and trust and hope in the almighty risen Savior Jesus Christ and Lord, may they do that this morning.

And Lord, as we go into this fall season we ask Your blessing on Christianity Explored Lord, that many people in our community friends, family, co-workers, neighbors would come to faith.

Lord, we ask that You would use us in a mighty way to extend Your blessing out and Lord, we lift up all of these things in the name of Your blessed Son. In His name we pray.

Amen.