

Psalm 67 - Joy for the Nations

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Preacher: Ron

[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

If you have the Bible with you, would you open it to Psalm 16? It is the psalm that we read already earlier in the worship service for our call to worship, but I'd like to read through it again.

You can follow with me. As I read. 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.

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.

[1 : 12] God, shall bless us. Let all the ends of the earth fear him. Bow with me as we pray before we enter into a study of this portion of God's word.

Father, would you bless us now with the outpouring of your spirit, that we might understand your word, not just the words on the page, not just mental concepts.

We need to know your word down deep in our souls, and only your spirit can take us there. So come and meet us and plant your truth in the depths of our hearts and cause it to grow and bear much fruit.

So take the weakness of my words, that when all is said and done, we will know that through the working of your Holy Spirit, we will have heard from you.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Man, a pretty exciting day to see all these kids come up here and express their faith for the first time.

[2 : 28] I was a kid once, I think. It's been a while. But unfortunately, in my case, it was later in life when I came to faith, and because of that, I had to go through a lot of hard things, a lot of hard relationships and so forth, and a lot of just foolish things, until I came to the end of myself.

And my heart was open to come to faith. And so for all of you kids, my prayer for you is really that you'll never have to do that, is that you will never know a day, and never lack of cherishing the fact that your Heavenly Father has embraced you as His own.

And so as we, you know, as we witness this, I think it's a good opportunity for us, you know, for all the rest of us who have made our professions of faith, to go back and look at, really, what is, what does it mean for the rest of us to express faith?

What does it mean for us, really, to be Christians? And so I would like to use and look at this Psalm 67, you know, that we have read earlier, because I think this Psalm really points us to one of the critical aspects of what it means to be in Christ.

It points us to the core, in a sense, of what it means to be in relationship with God, and to enjoy fellowship with Him. And so let's dig in to this Psalm.

[4 : 21] And really, the first, I want us just to examine the Psalm itself, and then we will look at some of the implications of that. I love this Psalm.

It's, you know, it's a very simply structured Psalm, which makes it pretty easy for us to understand. And the structure is called a chiasm. And this is a common literary tool in Hebrew writing, not just in poetry, but also in prose.

But I pull this up for all you engineers. Because part of the beauty of the Psalms is in its structure. You know, it's not just the words, the flowery words, which Psalms is full of that, but the structure really points us to, and you'll see, I'm going to put a slide up here to show you, if we were going to structure this Psalm, this is what it would look like.

In a chiasm, what you have is here in this Psalm, the first two verses are basically parallel and say the same thing, but in a little different way as the last two verses.

[5 : 40] And then you have verse 3 and verse 5 also parallel, but they are saying that they're exactly the same, which leads us to verse 4.

And so all the structure acts like kind of a funnel pointing us to the core of what the Psalm says. And so, again, you engineers, you will rejoice in the symmetry of this Psalm.

Everything's balanced. But what it points us to, again, is verse 4. So let's start at verse 4 and work our way back out.

So verse 4, what's the core? What's the meaning of this? It's joy for the nations. God's intent and his purpose is that the nations, all the nations, would rejoice and know his joy.

This Psalm really reflects, you know, it's a very strong missionary theme. And I love this because a lot of times we think you have to go to the New Testament to find missionary stuff in the Bible.

[7 : 00] But oh no, it's all through it. And this Psalm is such a great example. But even here, it points to the very heart of God.

Because even way back in Genesis 12, when he first gives, God makes his first covenant with Abraham, at the heart of that covenant, he says, and I will bless those who bless you and him who dishonors you.

I will curse it. And you all, the families of the earth will be blessed. All the families of the earth. God is saying, not just you, but you, through you, my intent, my focus, is to see blessing come to every family on the earth.

And so this is his work that he's doing in Abraham. And so his promise that he's making with this one family is global from the very beginning.

And so why would the nations be so joyful? Well, in that verse 4, I love the words that he says there because God judges the earth, the peoples, with equity.

[8 : 23] In other words, he is just. God is just. And again, I love this. When we think of the beauty of God, we think of reasons why we rejoice in God.

Justice is not one of those things that immediately jumps out at us because sometimes it scares us. But I want you to imagine. I want you to think of a world, what our world would be like if it was just. Let's try to imagine a just world. In a just world, people no longer experience and have to suffer under injustice.

In a just world, people are no longer oppressed. In a just world, the powerful no longer exploit the weak and the helpless.

In a just world, all men, women, and children are treated with dignity.

[9 : 40] Dignity as of those that those deserve who are created in the very image of God. A just world is a world where there's no more abuse for the vulnerable.

There's no more brutality on the innocent. There's no more racism. There's no more exploitation. Our society will be a society of dignity and a place of peace.

And everything will be as it was meant to be. And that's the promise that comes with God. He is a just king.

He rules with justice. And if that's the case, no wonder the nations rejoice and sing for gladness because this is the world that he is moving to create.

This is why the world rejoices. They rejoice in a king who reigns over all things gloriously and beautifully and justly.

[10 : 59] So that is the source. The nations rejoice and are glad in all that God is because they see now that he is beautiful. And so then we move out a little bit.

Now we look at verse 3 and verse 5. And then he simply says, let all the peoples praise you. Oh God, let all the peoples praise you. And it through their joy, the people of the world, all of the nations are brought to worship.

And this is important to note, joy for the world comes through worship. You know, I'm not talking about just a church service.

I'm not talking about like what we do here on Sunday morning though I hope that's what takes place here on Sunday morning. But it's worship. Worship is something that's not just things, you know, practices that we do, but it refers to something deep in our hearts, something that actually gives us our greatest sense of joy.

Worship is integral to what we love. What I enjoy the most. What I think is the most beautiful.

[12:25] What I think is the most attractive. What consumes me. You know, if, in all this, what I worship then will shape my life in all that I do.

If I love golf, then I'm going to play golf a lot. Golf is going to consume my time.

Golf is going to consume my money because I've got to have the right equipment in order to play. I'm going to talk to you a lot about golf and my whole mentality, my sense of well-being is going to rest on how well I play golf, which is scary, to say the least.

I'm going to spend my time on the course, you know, and it's, I find my greatest joy, my greatest satisfaction, and my interest in golf, and so it becomes all consuming.

And there are some of us out here like that. For you it might not be golf. Maybe it's music.

[13:40] Maybe it's your friends. Maybe it's your kids, your grandkids. Maybe it's your job. I don't know what it would be.

But the problem with all of these things, these things, is that as we find so much, we devote ourselves to them so much, and we get consumed by them so much, they have no power to satisfy the deep hunger down in our souls, down in our hearts.

They do not have the power to bring the satisfaction for which we are hungry, especially golf. They just leave us empty. And there's only one who can help us to find and can satisfy that hunger for deep joy, and that one is the king who rules justly, who is beautiful beyond all others.

And so when the world comes to the place where he is the one that they worship, of course, they find the joy that they have longed for all their lives.

[15:06] And the heart finally sings in tune with the very source of life itself. And so worship is integral here. But now we move out to the first two verses again and then the last two verses.

In here we see where it all begins. Now how do they find this ultimate source of joy? How are they led to this place of worship and where they see that this king is the most desirable and their affections are captured by it?

Well, it's that God himself takes the initiative and pours out his blessings upon us. It's like he intentionally wins over our affections.

He wins our hearts by the goodness that he pours out on all of us. But what does that goodness look like? You know, it's not just in material benefits which we see a glimpse of in verses 6 and 7. But in verses 1 and 2, he's talking about blessings on a whole different level. The blessings he's talking about here begin with, look where he says, may God bless us, be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us.

[16:29] That, kind of with the purpose of making known on, making your way to be known on earth and your saving power among all nations.

This calls us back to a blessing that was given to Aaron back in Numbers chapter 6, which reads, 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. Do you see what the heart of that blessing is?

It's not stuff. It's God. It's not the gifts. It's the giver.

And so in a Jewish mind, when they thought of blessing, when they thought of getting good things from God and God being gracious to them, they weren't thinking necessarily of just about all the stuff that he might provide.

[17:39] And when they start asking for this and that and that that he gives them, they want God himself to turn his face towards them. They want him near. They want him to be present with them.

Because they know that if they get him, they've got everything. That there's nothing better.

There's nothing more gracious. There's nothing more that they could get. And so this is what they want. The greatest gift was God himself.

You know, I remember when I was a teenager, you know, I may have mentioned this before, that, you know, with my dad, my dad was kind of distant from me in a lot of ways.

And I remember a lot of those teenage years, I was an angry teenager. And I was angry primarily at my dad. But when I look back on those days, there was one thing I wanted.

[18:43] My dad gave me a lot. He paid for all of my college. He provided so much for us and for me. I really was lacking nothing.

But I remember down inside, there was only one thing I wanted. I wanted him. Because what satisfies us is not things.

It's someone. I'm made for relationship. I'm not just made for stuff. I'm made for relationship. relationship.

And God gives us relationship. And he pours it out in such abundance that the God of all creation would now come and call us friend.

Even better, he calls us son or daughter. brother. He calls us beloved. And he does it graciously.

[20 : 04] No, we don't deserve it. But he pours it out on us. And so this blessing is given to his people with a purpose.

he gives it to his people, to Israel, so that that the world would know, that the nations would come to know his joy and worship him as beautiful, and through that, that they would know finally the depth of joy that they were created to know.

That's why he pours out his blessing. I mean, this is what we mean when we say experiencing and expressing grace.

This is why this is kind of our great motto here at Southwood, because this is the flow of what God intends for us.

He pours out his rich abundance upon us with a purpose so that as we experience the lavish abundance of knowing Christ and being in Christ and being forgiven by Christ, that that abundance is more than what can be contained in us.

[21 : 43] And it's got to flow. And so that's what he intends. Coming to Christ brings to us this deep satisfaction and joy which we have craved, sets our hearts to worship in joy, and that joy has got to go somewhere.

Joy is not full until it is expressed. when Marshall wins the national championship next year, I am going to be excited.

And you will hear about it if. love. But when something, when we rejoice over something, it has to go from us because it's not full until we're able to share it.

And so this is the plan. This is the way God designs us. So what he's called us to, he pours out the abundance of his, the wealth of his grace, lavishes it upon us, fills our hearts with joy to the point where it just overflows on anybody and everybody close and even on some far away.

But it goes from us. It cannot be contained. So, what are the implications?

[23 : 26] Well, I think there are several. first is grace is never given just for you.

It's never given just for you. When God pours out his grace and we experience that glorious blessing, knowing him, it's never just for us, it's intended from the very beginning to go from us outward to others.

because he pours so much into our hearts that our hearts cannot contain it. And I think some of us live with this misconception that when we come to Christ, we come to Christ because we need his grace because our life is a wreck and we need Jesus to come and work in us to make us whole and to give us life again.

I mean, that's the way I came. Early on back at the university, I mean, my life was a wreck in so many ways.

And so when I finally began to understand the gospel, I remember the prayer that I prayed and I said, Jesus, you know more about my life than I do. Come and help me.

[24 : 50] And so in so many ways, he did bring sanity and order in life again to me. But, as soon as that happened though, I started sharing what had happened and what I experienced because it was incredible.

I felt I was walking this far off the ground. I was so elated about what I received in Christ. I started talking to everybody who would listen to me about Jesus. And some who didn't listen to me.

In fact, I earned the title of being a Jesus freak. I know my haircut didn't help much. But it wasn't work.

It was just something that I had to do. it just came out. I'm not that way much anymore. Yeah, my hair's more sane now.

I haven't been referred to as a freak in quite a while. I'm not as belligerent or obnoxious in talking to people about the gospel. Yeah, I mean, I've matured.

[26 : 21] I'm not sure that's all there is. Have I lost the wonder of what it means to be in Christ?

Have I lost a sense of wonder that I am totally forgiven? Have I lost a sense of wonder that me in all of my brokenness Christ?

Am in Christ? That I am his beloved? That he has now made me the suitable dwelling for himself.

is that why I'm not so obnoxious anymore? Maybe I've I've lost a sense of wonder. I think it's so easy for me, for us, to come to the place where when we go to the Father to experience more of his grace, we're simply going because I want myself to be better. [27 : 58] And we never see the depth and the riches and the wealth of all that he has poured out on us in Christ. And so our own joy is stunted and it doesn't go very far.

so maybe what I need is not just to be more obedient. Maybe I need a fresh look at all that Jesus is for me.

you know, secondly, grace is never for just us, but also grace leads us to worship. When we experience that lavish grace that comes from Jesus alone, you know, his tender, loving, gracious heart towards us, our affections, our hearts are then captured by that grace and love. And when I am loved like that, then I am going to love him. when I see him as beautiful, when I see him as so desirable, then he is, I am going to become consumed by him.

[29 : 39] In my affections, my heart, everything is going to be directed towards him. This has everything to do also with how we go about doing missions, in our communities, or wherever it is, is that we're not out for conversions.

We're out to call people to worship, to fall in love with and be consumed by the beauty and the glory of Jesus.

You know, a couple weeks, actually, three weeks from tomorrow, I'm going to have my second granddaughter. And it's about time.

Because there's seven grandsons and one other little princess. And to have one other little granddaughter is going to be great with all those boys.

And she's not here yet, three weeks away, but she's beautiful. beautiful. I know she's beautiful. And you're going to hear more about her.

[31 : 03] But if I can be captivated by this little, very broken, as beautiful she is, yet very sinful little girl, how greatly is my heart going to be captivated when it sees and experiences the beautiful one.

And then turn to worship. And see, that's what missions is. It is us worshipping. And out of our worship, being consumed by this person who is so beautiful and glorious that we cannot help but talk about them.

But that's what we call the world to. Not just to convert, but to love. Third implication.

Grace leads to joy. for the nations. And this has big implications for me.

You know, worship is that gift that God gives us through which we can express our joy and our gladness in Him and all that He is.

[32 : 34] Joy, though, in our worship, joy is the ultimate expression of worship. We love what gives us joy.

And so, this is the response. This is what God's grace does for us. When we experience that freedom, we experience His lavish abundance poured out upon us.

It is joy. joy. But if joy is the essence of worship, and if that's what we're calling the world to do, then that is how they're going to hear about Jesus.

It's going to be from my joy. joy. You know, I've got a group of very close friends who are not believers.

And I so much would long for them to know Jesus, but again, it's not that I want them to become religious. I see emptiness.

[33 : 48] And I want them to taste the joy. I want them to taste what it's like to be forgiven and to be counted as righteous and to be given the hope of being the friend of God.

I want them to taste that. But how are they going to hear it? How are they going to taste it? They're going to taste it because of my joy overflowing to them.

That is how the nations will know. So what has to happen with me? it all starts here.

And it starts for me remembering what does his grace mean? What have I been given?

What has he done for me in Christ? Christ. And so as we come really and celebrate at the table together, this is what we're doing.

[35 : 16] We are remembering. As we come here to this table, we are remembering this gift of lavish grace that my sin was paid for in full.

In my sin that was so great, it required the death of the Son of God who paid it gladly.

And now I am washed clean and I am united to him. And so as we remember, this table is a table, yes, of somber reflection because we have to see the context of why it's here.

but this is a place of joy because here through the sacrifice I have been made the friend and the beloved of God himself.

And so as we eat and drink remember this lavishness of grace and let it fill your hearts with joy again so that the nations will rejoice.

[36 : 58] Let's pray together. Father, we thank you for this table but yet our words are so trite when we're faced with really what took place here because you loved us when we hated you.

you came for us. You won us to yourself and you continue to win us to yourself by lavishing your goodness upon us.

Father, help us to remember we give you thanks for this table but help us to comprehend the enormity of this gift that our hearts would swell with joy and that joy would overflow to everyone around us.

Our cul-de-sacs, our subdivisions, our communities and the nations. So as we eat, would you feed us with your grace?

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. For more information, visit us online at southwood.org.