

Make Your Face Shine Upon Us

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[0 : 00] So, as Sean invited me to share with you guys a little bit, I thought it would be good for us to look at Psalm 67, as it's an encouragement for our time of prayer tonight, as it itself is a prayer for God's work among the nations.

And also, we're just very excited to be with you guys. It's such a joy to worship God together with people who are excited for His glory, and just a blessing to be with you.

But if you could open with me to Psalm 67, and we'll go ahead and read it together. It says, 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. God shall bless us.

[1 : 16] Let all the ends of the earth fear Him. And so the first thing that I think we can notice tonight is that this is David crying out for the Lord to act.

That it's a prayer of his. May God, all the rest, let the peoples, let the peoples. It's David asking God to work on God's people's behalf.

And so as we enter into a time of prayer later, we're entering into the same kind of act that David is here. And we see then the very next words, be gracious to us.

So it's rooted in the mercies of God. Everything he asks for from here on out that we're going to look at, we know that it's him asking, and it's foundationally rooted in the mercies of God that he is asking for these things from the Lord.

And so what I think is probably the most pivotal portion of this short psalm is in verses 1 and 2. So we're going to spend most of our time looking in verses 1 and 2.

[2 : 21] So let's read that one more time. 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.

And I think there's a part to David's request here in verse 1 that can make us uncomfortable. He asked God to bless us, bless his people.

And I don't know about you, but sometimes I feel awkward asking God to do good things for me. It feels like I'm asking too much. And I think as we want to come with a heart that's requesting from God to do work among his people, we need to remember that God is for us.

God loves us. As it says in Romans 8, There's this incompatibility in Paul's mind between a God who would give his son to save people and a God who would do that and not be willing to give every good thing that we need.

And so I think as we look at this psalm and the prayerful heart that is asking of God, we need to remember that God has already proven his unending faithful love to us in the giving of his son.

[3 : 55] So we can ask with expectation that he really does want to bless us and that we don't need to shy away from asking of him. But then on the other side, we want to sort of tamper our overzealous perhaps at times requests of God where we might get consumed with the blessing and forget the motivation that we see here in David's prayer.

So if you think about the way that the world might finish David's sentence, May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us that, and there's a lot of things that someone might insert there, I wrote down a few, but I'm sure there's lots of others, that we can have whatever we want.

Like that happens sometimes. I just really want to not be sick or I just really want my kid to go to sleep. Like there's lots of things that I might ask God for selfishly. Or that we can be happy, that no one would be in need.

There's even noble goals, that God would bless us so that we would have reason to rejoice in God. Like there's great reasons that we might ask along the lines of what David prays here.

But lots of times my heart forgets, and I think our culture tempts us to forget, the motivation that we see here. We want to be blessed that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations.

[5 : 17] The reality that God's blessing leads to the spread of his fame, and to more people worshiping him, is foundational to God's story.

So I want to back up for just a second, and like explain perhaps where David was thinking through as he got to this point in expressing his heart. It didn't come out of nowhere.

But if we look back to even the very beginning, in Genesis 1, you can see that when God is making man, he talks about making them in his image, and gives him the command to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the whole earth.

And so we see that God's heart has always been that there would be people glorifying him all over the earth. Great. It's a nice flower.

And then, even more directly related to this passage, is probably in Genesis 12, which it sounds like you guys might have looked at recently.

[6 : 22] But Genesis 12, 1 through 3, where you see that God makes this covenant with Abraham, where he's going to bless him, so that he can be a blessing to all the nations, all the families of the earth.

And so, David is not inventing something new here. He's simply aligning his prayer with God's heart for what he wants to do. His plan has always been to fill the earth with people who bring him glory, and to do that through blessing his chosen people, which, as you know, we're now all a part of Abraham's family by faith.

And so we're a part of this ongoing blessing of God to bring his name and fame to the ends of the earth. And another way that I can end up personally ruining the heart that David has here, that perhaps some of you can relate to, is just being prideful about the way that I look at God's blessings, where I forget the relationship that God and I have in his benevolence, in the fact that he is worth everything, and I can end up thinking I'm worth too much, and I can end up separating Christ and his benefits.

So I think this is another thing where our culture, or even our Christian culture sometimes, can portray it as, I am here, and I have a legal standing problem with God, where I've accrued too much debt, and then I need Christ over there.

He went and he died a long time ago, and he resurrected a long time ago, and he paid this debt of mine, and now he's raised, and one day I'll go be with him. But in scripture, the way that Paul always talks about it is, we've died in Christ.

[8 : 05] Like, there's no separation. It's not that he was over there doing an act, and I was over here. It's that together, we died, we resurrected, and we rose. And so, when I lose sight of that link between Christ, and the benefits of the gospel, I'll end up with a heart of pride, expecting God to benefit me without that connection.

So I think that's something that at least helps me, and I think helps us to pray, as David prayed here, to remember the unification of us in Christ, being the source of our blessing.

As it says in Ephesians 1, we've been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus. So we receive all these blessings, that we share to the ends of the earth, through what Christ has done, and you being united with him.

And so, just in summary, what we can get out of this psalm, we can see God's heart, being prayed through David, that his people would be blessed, so that his glory could go to the ends of the earth, and all people, all people would praise him.

And we can pray for God's blessing, remembering that he loves us, he's our heavenly father, who's proven that he loves us, and wants to bless us. We can humbly pray for God's heart, which is that the whole earth would be filled with his glory.

[9 : 26] And we can even pray expectantly, knowing that he's going to do it, because we see in Revelation 5 and 7, that there are people from every tribe, tongue, and nation, worshiping the Lord.

And it says in Habakkuk 2.14, that the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. It's going to be everywhere. We know that God is going to do this, so as we pray tonight, we can pray expectantly, knowing that God is going to cover the earth in his glory.

Did you want to tell us about the mission? Yeah, yeah, so if that's all right, I can, or if there's a better way, we can do it later. Do you like, can you, can you actually, yeah, let's sing a song and then you can hear it.

Okay. So there's like a typo of machines, but rather than reprints of the trees, and I think like for the trees, so from the depths of the sea, from the heights of the heavens.

Let me grab one. I've got quick little cards here that kind of summarize the main points so you can see a little bit as we're going through this, but it's all Mandy.

[10 : 37] It's all Mandy. She does all the good stuff. Hi, Mandy. Very pictorial. So the short version is that the Essan people are 22 million people in northeastern Thailand.

It's over 98% Buddhist and less than like 0.2% evangelical Christians. That's like one or two people in a thousand. And there's large regions where there aren't any known believers.

So like the area that we are going to is the southern part of Nekompanom province. And it's like 300,000 people where there aren't any known Christians or any churches or anything like that.

And so how did we end up involved in this? I got to share those guys just a tiny bit. But basically, we were doing life in Charleston, South Carolina, part of a sovereign race church there for a little while.

And we had felt God stirring our hearts to something more, but weren't really sure what that was for quite some time. And we're earnestly asking him what it was.

[11 : 48] And then one day, the Wendell Myers, which I think you guys are all familiar with, came to visit us. And on Saturday night, we went over to Mike, our pastor's house, and had a time of prayer.

And we left that time. We're like, wow, they're doing something really great. We will definitely pray for them and encourage them. And then Sunday morning rolls around and Fred is on stage preaching.

Mandy is out. She's not able to hear him. She's hanging out with the baby we had before this one. But Fred's preaching and I'm sitting there and he's describing the 1040 window and the billions of people who have little to no opportunity to ever hear about how awesome God is.

And it was just the voice in the Lord saying, you have to go be a part of solving this problem. So I was like, oh, okay. I guess I got to go home and tell Mandy we're moving somewhere way over there in that big box.

And Mandy is not by nature an adventurous person. I mean, she was like a grilled, or sorry, like a fried chicken fingers, a grilled cheese sandwich kind of person when we met.

[13 : 07] And had never left the country. You know, so not like a big, let's go on an adventure on the other side of the world type person. But as she was going home, we were going to have the Wendell Myers and a few families over for lunch.

And she was driving and she starts thinking about lunch and the Wendell Myers. And all of a sudden she just says out loud, I guess I'm moving to Thailand. And it was kind of a shock to her.

And so she started sort of asking God what was going on and felt like he confirmed like, oh, that was me telling you you're going to Thailand. And so when everyone left at the end of lunch, we looked at each other.

She said, I think we need to go to Thailand. I said, okay, we're definitely going to go to Thailand. God has spoken. He's the king. We're going to start marching. And so that was kind of how we got drawn into this.

And that was early March of 2015. So it's been a little while. And it was a little bit of a process of first to figure out what that looked like, to sort out going with the organization Pioneers that we're going with, to sort out what the team looks like.

[14 : 13] And eventually in November of the following year, we went on a survey trip to spend a couple weeks in Thailand and in Kisan. And it was really eye-opening.

It knit our hearts even more to the people and to the mission and to just recognize very clearly that while God absolutely deserves the worship of those people, he's not receiving it.

And it's very sad that he is not getting the worship due his name. And it's just, it's very prevalent that the type of idolatry that you don't see as much of here is just everywhere there.

I mean, there's spirit houses on every corner. There's temples with golden images, like a church in the South. I know it's different up here, but back in Charleston where we're from, there's a church on every corner.

It's like that there too. There's a Buddhist temple on every corner. And, you know, Psalm 135 comes to mind. The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the work of human hands.

[15 : 15] They have mouths but do not speak. They have eyes but do not see. They have ears but do not hear. Nor is there any breath in their mouths. Those who make them become like them. So do all who trust in them.

And our hearts break for the people over there. There was one time as we prayer walked through the city that we think we'll be living in for a while.

And we went to the temple to kind of see what it was like. And as you enter into the temple space, there's this little stand off to the left. And they've got things you can purchase to make offerings with.

And one of them is like kind of little woven flowers and stuff. And so you'll watch people go. They'll buy the flower. And they'll go over to the temple area. And they'll do some prayers and some...

I'm not quite sure what they're doing yet. We're still trying to understand more. And then they'll offer the flower. And they'll go. And then a few minutes later, one of the monks will come by and scoop up all the flowers. And he'll take them right back to the place where they sell them.

[16 : 17] And seeing that just immediately came to mind in Hebrews 10, where it talks about how the priest had to make sacrifice every year, and it never was enough.

It was never going to finish the work until Christ came, and he finished it, and it was done, and there was no more to be done. And to just recognize that the people there don't have that hope.

There is no version of their lives apart from God bringing Christ to them where they'll be done with their merit making. They'll have to come over and over, offer the same flower over and over, make the same merit over and over, and there's never assurance.

So we long for God to receive the worship that he's due, and for the people there to have light, because it's a dark place. And we have many stories that we'd love to share with you about experiencing some of the darkness there.

And it was very palpable to us, even in the short time we were there. And we were encouraged by the fact that God had many people praying for us. Some folks sent us texts at just the moment that Satan was attacking.

[17 : 24] And just to encourage you that as you pray for the Wendemeyers, as you might pray for us, it's working. God is listening to the cries of his people and answering, and so please fight that fight for the folks overseas that are in some tough places.

And so just real quick, what are we trying to do? So it's a big need, hundreds of thousands of people with no believers. So our goal is an indigenous church planting movement.

So what we want is to enter the space, pray earnestly, and wait for God to bring about people that he's drawing to himself, people that receive faith and believe, and then to work with those people to disciple them, to encourage them to build whatever network they already have, family or work relationships, whatever it is, and to start walking through Scripture together until eventually they build a church.

And then we want to equip them with the types of practices and the DNA, the culture of people who want to replicate them so that their church would replicate and those churches would replicate until we have a movement of house churches that can then spread throughout the area.

And so for us, that looks like going with two other families, the Winnemars who you know and the Snyders who you might not know who are from the Atlanta, Georgia area. So our three families will first spend a little bit of time in Chiang Mai learning the language, learning the Thai language.

[18 : 53] Isan has its own language, which is another hurdle we'll cross eventually. But we'll learn Thai first, and then after a year or two, we'll head out to southern Nkampanam, which is on the very far eastern and right up against the border with Laos of Thailand.

And we'll probably live in a city called Thapanam, which is like the hub of the region. And we'll live there for a few years trying to build relationships, understand the culture, be able to describe the gospel in a culturally authentic way until God raises up his church.

And so we hope to leave at the end of the year, December, maybe through February, somewhere in there. Our lease ends in December, and we're hoping we won't have to sign another one. And so I'm still working right now as a software engineer, but we'll hopefully be able to stop that soon.

And some things that have to line up for us to go, we still need more financial support to be able to go. God has blessed us immensely. We have everything we need in terms of deploying one time, but monthly committed partnership.

We plan to be there for at least 10 years. So you can't raise it all up front. And so yeah, we still need that. And once we have sufficient financial partnership lined up, then we'll get approval from Pioneers, our organization.

[20:11] Then we can buy a plane ticket. And once we have the plane ticket, then we can fill out the visa paperwork and try to get the visa set up. And then we can go. So those are kind of the steps between here and leaving. But Lord willing, we'll head out at the end of the year.

Thank you. That's very exciting. Maybe we could do this. Maybe we could pray. Let's pray first. And then maybe at the end, maybe we could...