



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Summer Playlist

Encountering God's Blessing –

Psalm 67

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We've been going through a series titled "Summer Playlist"

through the Christian song book—the Psalms. We've studied a number of topics and themes in this book, including Psalm 1, which is a psalm of wisdom, and Psalm 71, a psalm of lament. We've also studied psalms of thanksgiving, like Psalm 103. Today, I want us to look at Psalm 67, my personal favorite—a psalm of praise in the form of a prayer.

Do you have a friend or family member like one of my coworkers who is always talking about Christmas? Whether it's summer, fall or spring, she's always excited about the Christmas season. Her phone even has wallpaper that's a countdown to Christmas. She starts it the day after Christmas—364 days. She's so excited for the season.

I'm not much like that, but there is one aspect of Christmas that I really enjoy—the candlelight service. If you don't know what that is, Christians gather together on Christmas Eve to hear a message about the coming of Christ, the Light of the world. We illustrate that truth with candles. Everyone receives a candle, then at the end of the service, the pastor lights his candle, goes to the congregation and lights one or two of their candles. Then those people light other people's candles, passing on the flame. It's such a beautiful picture. The fathers in the congregation are passing the flame to their sons; mothers are passing it to their daughters. You'll see children scurrying around because they see others who don't have this flame. They'll run across the aisle and pass their flame to the next person. It's such a magnificent illustration, because what was once a dark room with no light slowly and progressively becomes more and more illuminated until everyone has a lit candle.

What I want to do today is to study Psalm 67 that has this same theme of the light of the gospel spreading throughout the nations of the world. If you would, open to Psalm 67. We'll read it, then we'll dive right in.

- ¹ May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us,
- ² that your way may be known on earth,
your saving power among all nations.
- ³ Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you!
- ⁴ Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you judge the peoples with equity
and guide the nations upon earth.
- ⁵ Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you!
- ⁶ The earth has yielded its increase;
God, our God, shall bless us.
- ⁷ God shall bless us;
let all the ends of the earth fear him!

First, let me point out this Psalm is a chiasmic psalm which means the psalmist uses a literary device called a chiasm to help point out or emphasize relationships between verses. What we see here is that verse one and verse seven have a relationship. God is gracious and blesses us and His face shines up on us, which results in the ends of the earth fearing Him.

Likewise, verses two and six, God's way is known upon the earth and results in the earth yielding an increase, or a harvest. Three and five are obvious parallels. They use the exact same phrase. This frames verse four, which is the main idea of this entire Psalm—that the nations have something to be glad and joyful about, the reign and the justice of our King and God.

Let's look at three questions I think Christians must answer if the nations are to encounter God's blessing.

1. Are we seeking to encounter God or hiding our faces? (67:1)

Verse one states, *"May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us."*

For those of you who have been in the church for a while, this might sound familiar. This is a condensed version of the benediction found in Numbers 6:22-27:

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, 'Thus you shall bless the people of Israel: you shall say to them, "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." So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them.'"

Now, I imagine Moses was a little concerned about this benediction. You might say, "Oh, it sounds fine. It's actually quite beautiful and poetic." But there's something about this benediction, and something about the beginning of our Psalm, that is actually quite concerning and problematic. Look at this phrase: *"The Lord make his face to shine upon you..."*

You see, Moses was a man who had experienced God in so many ways during his life. Think of the burning bush where God first encountered him. Or the plagues God brought upon Egypt. Or the times Moses climbed Mt. Sinai and was in the presence of the Lord. Moses had experienced much of God's presence. Moses asked, "Lord, I want to see Your face. I want to see Your glory." And the Lord said, "No. Instead, I will put you in the cleft of a mountain, put My hand over you and pass by you, declaring My name. Then I will take My hand away and you can look at My back side." This seems strange, doesn't it?

But the Lord explained it to Moses this way: "Anyone who sees My face shall not live. Any man who sees My face will not live." It may seem a little strange to us that we can't see the face of God, but throughout Scripture, that is consistent. You see, starting in the Garden, we lost the ability to see the face of God.

The face is a very intimate thing. If you've ever been to a dinner party or been around a table in a group of people, there is an essence in which you are in the presence of those people, but it's not very intimate. But if someone is talking and they turn their face and look at you, you're face to face with them and there's intimacy in that. There's a private intimacy happening between you and the other person.

The reason why this is so problematic is because being in the presence of God—the One Who is holy, righteous and just—for a sinner is perilous. It is like putting newspaper next to a raging fire. For someone who has sinned and fallen, it is quite dangerous to be in the presence of the Lord because His holiness, righteousness and justice would burn us up.

What we need is for something or someone to scrub us clean, washing our sin away and giving us a new identity. If not, the face of God is not a privilege, but is actually very problematic. This is why, in the book of Numbers, Moses explained that during the tabernacle service, an animal would be slain, and as the biblical language puts it, the blood would "atone" or cover up our sin. It would wash us and make us clean. This benediction would be God's way of putting a new name on us. In the New Testament, after Christ came and lived a perfect life and died for us, we see now that Christ is the final sacrifice. He washed us clean of our sins and gave us a new name and a new identity. Because of this, now the shining face of God is not problematic. Now it's a privilege.

So church, are we seeking that privilege? Are we seeking an encounter with God? Are we seeking His grace and blessing? Are we seeking His shining face? This comes in a number of ways, but there are two main ways we encounter God.

The first one is prayer. The book of Hebrews says that prayer is when we come before the throne of God. Because of the blood of Jesus Christ, we can boldly come to Him and have a face-to-face conversation with Him. We are able to ask Him for our needs, but also spend time with this King and with this God of ours. We get to seek His face through prayer.

The second is through studying the Word, something we're doing right now. When we study the Word of God, we are actually seeking God's face. When we study the New Testament, we get to see Who God is in the face of Jesus Christ. The study of the Word is to seek His face.

Are we seeking this kind of encounter with God? Moses had many encounters with God. On one occasion, he went up on Mt. Sinai and the Lord came down to him. Moses spent 40 days and 40 nights in the presence of the Lord. During that time, he spent very intimate time with God Who then gave him the Law. This Law gave us a way to know what God's desires are and Who He is in His character. Moses knew the Lord.

Scripture says that when he came down from the mountain, he was carrying two tablets of stone and his face was radiating light. The people were afraid and didn't know what to think. Moses had to put a veil over his face. Nobody could look at him and say, "You have not had an encounter with God," because his very being was so transformed. Are we seeking to encounter God in a way such that we are transformed like that? If we do, what we're going to find is that people are going to look at us and see that we know Who God is.

2. Does our example reap praise for God or praise for man? (67:2-4)

Look with me at verses two through four. God, bless 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."*

Notice that when we receive a blessing, when we receive His shining face and encounter the living God, we do this so His way may be known. The ultimate goal of our encounter is so other people will know Who God is. There are three things God wants the nations to know about Him.

- The first is His saving power—His ability to save us from crisis in our sin and death.
- Second is His justice—His ability to judge between good and evil, not with any bias or bribery, but to judge objectively.
- Lastly, He wants them to know about His unshakeable and victorious reign.

These are the attributes of God we put on display in the world by the way we live and the way we talk.

One time when I was scrolling through Facebook, one of those popular BuzzFeed quizzes popped up. This one wasn't, "What kind of cheese are you?" or, "If you were a squid, what would your life be like?" This one asked, "What do you post about the most on Facebook?" So then Facebook basically analyzes all your posts from the time you joined all the way to the present day, counting up all the words and showing you on a colorful chart what you talked about, what you researched, what you did the most, what you displayed the most on your Facebook page. So I took this quiz.

As a Christian, I was excited, hoping to see how much I talked about God, Jesus and salvation. But I was actually quite disappointed with my results. It seems that I didn't talk about God as much as I talked about other things or other people.

If we as Christians were to put our lives and deeds into this quiz, would we be able to say that God's reign, saving power and justice would be displayed by our lives? What topics would our conversations be most about?

There's an interesting thing about these three attributes—God's saving power, ability to judge well and His stable reign—all things the world is desperately looking for. We're always looking for people who fit these characteristics so we can exalt them and so they can lead us.

Every four years we encounter another situation where we're trying to find someone who has a stable reign, who is able to judge well and who is able to save us from crisis. So during these times, are we exalting God as this person, or are we dedicating ourselves to other men, parties and ideas, instead of the Kingdom of God? We are meant to encounter God so we will display these beautiful attributes to the world. The peoples of the world will never encounter God and His saving power if they don't know anything about Him. God did not intend for us to encounter Him and for the blessing to end with us.

Psalms 67 was sung by Israel. They looked forward to a day when God's goodness would break out from Israel into the world. We've now received that blessing. But like Israel, we—the church—look forward to a day when it will break out even further into the nations, so that the nations will rejoice and be glad at Who God is because that blessing has gone from us out to the nations.

3. Are we keeping the harvest in mind when we sow our blessing or are we paralyzed by fear and uncertainty? (67:5–7)

Look with me at verses five through seven: *“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!”*

Christians have been given a very interesting luxury that sometimes goes overlooked. We get to know what the end is, which is that all nations, tribes and tongues will bow before Christ and proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord. After Jesus rose from the dead He said, “Go into all creation, preaching the gospel, baptizing, discipling and teaching everything I have commanded you.”

That’s our primary point—Point A. He’s also revealed to us our Point B—our goal at the end—which is that all nations will proclaim Him as King and Lord. So are we keeping that in mind?

When I went camping as a kid, one of my favorite games was called “Star Tripping.” In this game, your friends would gather around you and you would look up into the night sky with everything dark around you. You would pick a star, then spin around as fast as you could about 20 times. After that spin, you would look away from the sky and someone would shine a flashlight in your face from about ten yards away. In the darkness and with others screaming around you and with your equilibrium totally off, your goal was to run as fast as you could toward the light without stumbling and falling. The people who succeeded at this game were the ones who kept their eyes on the light. Even though they couldn’t see around them because of the darkness and unknown obstacles in their way, those who kept their eyes on the light and ran toward it with all fervor were the ones who succeeded. They weren’t the ones who stumbled.

Let me tell you, Christians, we’re in a time when we’re very disoriented. It’s not often that our world goes through a pandemic and our governments ask the churches to close our doors for the safety of others. All this tumult and all the problems around us in the world are very disorienting. So our purpose and goal—and the only thing that’s going to save us through these troubling times—is to keep our eyes on the end goal, then without fear and uncertainty, continue sowing our blessings.

What does this look like? For some, this looks like financial sowing, taking the resources God has blessed you with and sowing it into the ministries of the church, those who are going out into missions, those who are preaching the gospel. It means giving with the harvest in mind, knowing that one day the nations will rejoice in the Lord.

For others it looks like giving your time, investing in the ministries of the church. Student ministry is a great example, coming and investing your time, sowing your attention into these children who need the gospel and doing it with the harvest in mind. For others it looks like discipling your children. Whether you’re a parent, an older sibling or someone who has wisdom, it means picking someone up and discipling them, sowing the seeds of the gospel into their lives with the harvest in mind.

For all of us, it’s sharing the gospel fearlessly and victoriously to the world. Even though some may reject us, we keep sowing those seeds, knowing that God will give growth to them.

Let’s go back to the first illustration I brought up about the Christmas candlelight service.

About two years ago, my brother and I went to a small church down the road to attend a candlelight service on Christmas Eve. We entered and received our candles. It was a very lovely service. Then the minister lit the candle and began that candlelight part of the service, passing on the flame to a few people. Then he did something I found absolutely fascinating. When someone received the flame, they leaned down, opened up their hymnal and began singing. Fathers, while they were singing, passed the flame to their sons, who then opened up their hymnal and sang. Mothers did this for their daughters, children to their neighbors, neighbors to their neighbors. Slowly but surely in this dark and silent room the light began to grow and the sound of praise for God began to grow louder and louder, until it came to me and my brother. We received the flame, picked up the hymnal and joined them in the song of praises to our Lord.

When I read Psalm 67, that’s what I read. That’s what I see. We sing this song with the anticipation that one day the nations will join us in this song, asking for the blessing. They’re asking for God’s face to shine upon them. Then they also become missional and go out to preach the gospel. Church, this only happens if first we seek an encounter with God, seeking His blessing and His grace and His shining face. This happens when we exemplify our God in our lives. People will know Who God is by the way we live. His reign, saving power and justice are known through us and by the way we live. We do this by keeping the harvest in mind, not with fear and uncertainty, but

knowing that God will fulfill His promise by blessing the nations. We look forward to that. So Christians, do we desire that? Do we desire the nations to join us in singing this song?

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

Note: This transcription has been provided by Sermon Transcribers (www.sermontranscribers.com).