

**What Jesus Prays For**  
Psalm 67:1-7  
*Halifax: 7 April 2019, 10:30 AM*

**Introduction**

In our sermon series from the gospel of Mark we have just completed chapter 3 where we saw a lot of very different responses to Jesus...

- everything from the response of the twelve who left all to follow Him to the response of the scribes from Jerusalem who accused Him of casting out demons by the power of Satan.
- And we also saw the responses of Jesus to these responses.
- In connection with this part of Mark, we sang Psalm 70—where God's Christ cries out for God's help,
  - asking God to frustrate those who seek His hurt (and the hurt of His people)...
  - and asking Him to bless those who seek God and His salvation.

Today, I want to take up a new Psalm of Focus that correlates with Mark chapter 4 where Jesus tells several parables about the growth of the Kingdom of God.

- The Psalm I have chosen is Psalm 67.
- In this Psalm, we see God's Anointed earnestly praying...
  - First for His church, that they might be richly blessed...
  - And then for the nations—that they might see the blessing of God upon the church and come to be His people too...
  - And then that this might set off a chain reaction... with more blessing to the church leading to more people coming to believe until the whole earth worships God.

It is a Psalm that is full of marvellous hope!

- And not only that, but it reveals to us the heart of our blessed Saviour who earnestly prays for the earth to be filled with people who are full of God's blessing.
- We are not told specifically if this Psalm was written by David or someone else, but it really doesn't matter because now that Jesus has come in the flesh,
  - He has, as the Christ, taken all of the Psalms as His own.
  - They always were His, of course, because they were inspired by His Spirit; but now that He has come in the flesh, He is our mediator, and as man, a part of the church.
- And as our Mediator, He is the one who leads us in singing our praise to God.
  - Hebrews 8:1-2 describes Him as our **High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.**
    - The word *minister* is a rare word that means *liturgist*.
    - He is the one who sings Psalms of praise with us as His brethren in the midst of the assembly as it says in Hebrews 2:12.
      - That means that when we sing the Psalms, we join with Him as our Mediator, knowing that the only reason God accepts us is because we are with Him as our priest who offered Himself to atone for our sins.

- I say all of this because we are going to look at Psalm 67 from this perspective today.
  - We will get much more out of it if we look at it as a song that originates with Jesus Christ our Mediator.
    - It does not originate with mere men, but with Christ Jesus the God-man who has been crucified for us.
    - How marvellous it is for us to see in this Psalm His heart for His church and for the nations. He wants us and them to be blessed and happy in God.

Let me begin by reading this Psalm to you. Again, it is Psalm 67.

- This is the precious, holy, infallible word of God.
- Give it the attention that it deserves.

**Psalm 67:1-7: God be merciful to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us. <sup>2</sup> That Your way may be known on earth, Your salvation among all nations. <sup>3</sup> Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. <sup>4</sup> Oh, let the nations be glad and sing for joy! For You shall judge the people righteously, and govern the nations on earth. <sup>5</sup> Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. <sup>6</sup> Then the earth shall yield her increase; God, our own God, shall bless us. <sup>7</sup> God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.**

May the Lord add His blessing to His word and help me as I now expound it to you.

### **I. In the first verse, see how Jesus our mediator prays for the church.**

#### **A. The words are: God be merciful to us and bless us and cause His face to shine upon us.**

1. The *us* that we pray for when we sing this Psalm is the church... those who are called to be God's people under Christ our Saviour and Lord and who are sanctified by His blood.
  - This is a prayer for the church of which He is the Head.
  - He leads us to pray that God will be merciful to us and bless us and cause His face to shine upon us.
2. Knowing that this is His prayer is a great encouragement for us...
  - First of all, it is an encouragement to hear our dear Saviour express His desire for us (His church) to be blessed.
    - As Christians, whenever we hear Him praying that we would be blessed, we cannot but think of the cross where we see the strength of His desire.
    - Here is the Son of God, who desired our blessing so strongly that He left the glories of heaven to come here and dwell among us, becoming fully man that He might represent us.
    - And knowing all the while that to secure our blessing, He must bear the curse for all of us—the guilt of our sin, the shame of our sin, the rejection of God for our sin, death for our sin, and physical torment for our sin.
    - The request for our blessing is no flippant half-hearted wish—it is a request in which our dear Saviour is fully invested.
      - His love for us is unparalleled... there is no love like this love!

- Secondly, it is encouraging that this is His prayer because we know that the Father always hears Him.
    - He does not pray prayers that are not answered.
    - His prayers are rooted in His merit.
    - We can look at them as prophecies of what will be done.
- B. But just what is this blessing that is being requested here for the church?
- What is it that our dear Saviour wants God to do for us—for Him and for us?
    - What is it that we join Him to ask for with these words?
1. First, there is the request for mercy.
    - Mercy is where God’s blessing begins.
      - The word translated *mercy* that is used here is a word that speaks of a superior showing mercy to an inferior who has no merit or claim.
      - A man knows he is guilty of a great transgression—he has no justification for what he has done—to try to find one would only weaken his case.
        - All he can ask for is free pardon.
        - All he can say is, “Have mercy on me.”
    - Now we might look at this and say, “Yes, but with Jesus as our Mediator, do we not have *His* merit to claim?”
      - Yes indeed we do... that is indeed what we claim.
        - But remember that Jesus is God’s answer to the church’s prayer for God’s mercy...
        - Jesus crucified is the provision for mercy so that before He was crucified, when we pled for mercy we were asking for God to provide Him for our sins,
          - And now that He has been to the cross, we ask God to apply His merit to us for the remission of our sins.
          - We ask for mercy in His name as those who are completely unworthy.
          - It is a great comfort to us to come to God in the merits of Christ.
            - It is in Christ and His righteousness and sacrifice for our sins that we rest and find assurance.
      - But to us, this is the sheer mercy of God.
        - It is He that purposed to provide for our sins in this way—by giving us His only Son that He might become flesh and die for us.
        - We are brought in and given the blessing by mercy, and it is only by mercy that God continues to accept His church in this world as we continue to sin and have forgiveness only through God’s provision.
  2. Second, there is the request for blessing—that God would bless us.
    - This means that He would not only have mercy so as to pardon us and accept us, but also that He would give us good things.
    - There is the blessing of sanctification—by which we die more and more to sin and live more and more to righteousness...
      - we put off the old man and put on the new man that is renewed in righteousness and true holiness after the image of God.

- And we have the blessings of church unity, of prosperity, of assurance, and of grace to serve...
  - And the blessing of faithful church officers—elders and pastors and deacons...
  - And the blessing of deliverance from our enemies so that we are able to serve God as we should, whether in persecution or in instituting godly laws.
  - And there is also the request for the blessing of health, of wealth and temporal prosperity, all things that the Lord will bring about for His church in time.
- But there is another request that goes beyond mercy and blessing...
- Understand of course that all three of these blessings could be classified under the prayer that God would bless us...
    - But in separating mercy, blessing, and God's face shining on us,
      - mercy is highlighted as the starting point of the blessing of God for us...
      - and God's shining face is highlighted as the climax of all true blessing.
3. So the third request is that God would cause His face to shine upon us.
- This is the longing of Jesus Christ for us above all others... that we would see the glory of God in loving us—even the glory that Jesus has had with Him from before the foundation of the world as the Son of God.
    - To see the face of God shining on us is to see the Father's love and favour toward us... it is to see Him delighted with us.
    - There is nothing finer than this, nothing more excellent, nothing that even begins to compare....
      - Think of it... to have our creator, such a noble, such an awesome holy being, full of immeasurable love, of infinite justice, power, wisdom, purity, beauty, excellence...
        - I say, to have Him looking upon us with delight and favour!
  - This is what our Lord enjoyed from all eternity and this is what He desires for us... forever and ever.
    - To be beloved of God is the root of true happiness—it is His all-consuming, all-encompassing blessing that fully saturates us.
  - It was this shining face of God that Moses refused to be without...
    - When God told him that He would send His angel to bring Moses and the people to the promised land, but that He would not go with them lest He consume them in His anger...
      - Moses refused to go on.
      - To have the land with every blessing it could produce, to have victory over enemies and peace among themselves without the favour of God would not do.
        - The whole purpose of the church's calling is that we have God as our own God... we have the light of His countenance upon us.
    - This is what thrills our Saviour.
      - Let us pray with Him that the Lord will cause His face to shine upon us... that we will see Him as a Father full of grace to us in Christ.
        - That we will behold Him as the gracious Father that He is.

TRANS> And do you know what will happen when God does bless His church?

- And especially when He lifts up the light of His countenance upon us?

**II. Jesus envisions that the nations will be blessed when that happens. He envisions that when we are blessed, the nations will be blessed.**

- Oh how it thrills Him to anticipate this!

A. This is one of the reasons Jesus prays that God will bless us and cause His face to shine upon us...

- verse 2 **that Your way may be known on earth, Your salvation among all nations.**

1. It was always God's plan to give the nations to Christ as His inheritance.

- And it was always His plan to do that by blessing Israel with His salvation first so that the Gentiles would see the blessing and then come.

- They would see God bless them and cause His face to shine upon them...

- They would see that beautiful, gracious face that accepts sinners.

- That beautiful, gracious face that shines on them because Jesus bled for them.

- That beautiful, gracious face of the Father that now calls them... even them, idol worshippers and sinners, to come and be saved.

2. The prayer of Psalm 67:1-2, in one sense, has already been answered.

- God has had mercy on Israel His people, He has blessed them, and He has caused His face to shine upon them...

- He did that when He sent Jesus to die for them.

- But do we not need Him to have mercy on us today?

- Do we not need Him to show mercy to us who have drifted away and become stiff-necked?

- Do we not need God's mercy and grace and fatherly delight to be restored to us today?

- Not that Jesus needs to come again, but that God needs to turn our hearts to Him from whom we have strayed.

- Do the all nations know His salvation?

- Are we not a stumbling block to them?

3. Oh that He would bless us that the His way might be known on earth, His salvation among all nations.

- Jesus is praying that we will be blessed—because He loves us and wants to bless us—but also that His salvation might be known among the nations.

- He wants them to know of the Father's shining face by seeing His face shine upon us.

B. See how He cries out for the nations in verse 3.

- He says: **Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You.**

1. This could be translated as an assertion—that the peoples will praise you...

- Whether it is that or whether it is as translated here... "Let the peoples praise you," this is the loving desire of Christ.

- He wants to see people praising His Father because they have learned what a gracious glorious beautiful Father He is to us.

2. These lines emphasise that Jesus wants *all* the nations to praise His Father.
  - If He said, “let the people praise you,” He might well be talking about the people of Israel... or in our day, about His church...
  - but when He says “the peoples” (plural) He is referring to the peoples from different nations.
  - And note well, He wants *all* the peoples to praise God.
    - The word *all* is given great emphasis here...
      - By first saying, “Let the peoples praise you...” and then saying “Let all the peoples praise you...”
      - it is a stronger emphasis on *all* than if He had simply said, “Let all the peoples praise you” to start with.
    - From the beginning, the promise has been that all the nations of the earth would come to praise God.
      - That is the joyful assured hope of our Lord Jesus.
      - That is what He prays for and what we pray for with Him when we sing this Psalm with Him.

C. He wants to see the nations full of joy under God’s rule!

- Look at verse 4: **“Oh, let the nations be glad and sing for joy! For You shall judge the people righteously, and govern the nations on earth.”**
1. They have been so long under the tyranny of Satan...
    - Satan’s dominion is the dominion of bondage to sin.
      - It is a dominion where everyone looks out for themselves.
      - It is a dominion where there is fear, anxiety, despair, addictions, futility, bitterness, hatred, malice, envy, jealousy, selfish lust, covetousness, oppression, exploitation, pride, disobedience to parents, drunkenness, selfish indulgence, financial bondage, rape, child abuse, wrath, deception, stealing, cheating, promise breaking...
      - It is a place where people want drugs or alcohol just to cope with life.
      - It is a place of loneliness and rejection, of strife and quarreling.
  2. But Jesus sees nations that are glad and singing for joy because they have come under God’s governance.
    - They have been rescued from Satan and his kingdom of darkness to serve the Lord—to serve Christ who serves His Father in heaven.
    - When it says, “You shall judge the people righteously,” it is talking not only about judgement such as you get in a courtroom,
      - but overall rule and government.
        - He guides the nations in ways of peace, of holiness, and of righteousness and justice.
  3. And that is why the nations are glad and singing for joy.
    - As Charles Spurgeon said, “What a sweet word is that *to sing for joy!*”

- “Some sing for form, others for show, some as a duty, others as an amusement, but to sing from the heart, because overflowing joy must find a vent, this is to sing indeed.”
- What joy and gladness people have when they come Christ and see the shining face of His Father upon them!
  - When they are brought under His government and start to love as Christ loves, to serve as He serves, and to worship as He worships...
    - That is what He guides them to do!
    - What happiness there is in this!
- This is true of nations that come to God, and it is also true of churches and Christian homes when they live under the rule of God...
  - Children, what pleasure do you get from your selfishness—from complaining about your brothers and sisters, from yelling at them, from pestering them?
  - How much better would it be if you started living for nothing else but to please the Lord?
    - If you decided that like Jesus, you were going to put others ahead of yourself...
    - If you decided that from now on, instead of whinging or yelling or demanding that things go your way, you are going to say, “How can I honour God right now? How can I love my brother? my mother? my father?”
      - And you married people—“How can I bless my spouse?
      - “How can I honour my Saviour who loves me so well?”
  - Can you imagine how full of joy you would be if you did that?
    - What a place of love and grace our homes would be?
    - What a delightful place our nations and our congregations would be, living under God’s government?
      - How full of joyful song we would be!
      - **Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you shall judge the people righteously and govern the nations on earth.**

TRANS> That is what Jesus wants for us.

- That is what Jesus is going to give us at last if we are His people.
  - Are you a stranger to His saving grace?
  - Come to Him and He will receive you... this is His gracious desire for the nations... that all the peoples will be glad in God.
- We have seen in verse 1 that He wants to see us, His church, blessed...
  - An then in verses 2-4 that one of the reasons He wants us to be blessed is that the nations might be blessed.... that they might find God’s mercy, blessing, and shining face that they see upon us.
  - So the church is blessed and then the nations are blessed...
- But now look at what Jesus wants in verses 5-7...

### III. He envisions an upward spiral of blessing.

- A. You know what I mean by an upward spiral, don't you?
1. You have heard of a downward spiral—like the downward spiral of depression...
    - You feel overwhelmed by your work load...
    - So instead of working, you procrastinate.
    - Then you have even more work piled up—and are even more overwhelmed...
    - So you do even less and down the spiral you go.
  2. But here Jesus envisions an upward spiral...
    - Where God blesses His church and then the nations see it and come in...
    - And then then that causes more blessing to the church...
    - And that in turn causes more people to come to the Lord from the nations.
    - It is an upward spiral—a kind of chain reaction that Jesus prays for in this Psalm.
- B. Look at how the upward spiral is described by our Lord in this Psalm in verse 5-7...
1. In verse 5, He repeats the request He made in verse 3: **Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You.**
    - I spoke of how it emphasise His desire that all peoples, all nations, should join in the praise...
    - And now it is repeated again to give it even more emphasis...
      - Because more have come in from the nations, the request is that now even more will come in...
        - That the kingdom will spread like leaven spreads in bread.
        - That it will grow like a mustard tree from a tiny seed to a great tree.
  - And then what do these additional peoples coming to God lead to?
  2. It leads to even more blessing for us who were already God's people!
    - This increase of blessing is spoken of in verse 6 as the result of the peoples coming in to the church to praise God...
      - Verse 6 says: **Then the earth shall yield her increase; God, our own God, shall bless us.**
    - What is the earth's increase—what does God want the earth to produce?
      - He wants godly people.
      - He made us in His image and He commanded us to be fruitful and multiply in the beginning.
      - The fruit of the earth referred to here is godly people—the earth filled with godly people.
        - That is the earth yielding her increase.
    - And when she does, the church is blessed...
      - These new people come to join us in praising God.
      - They bring their unique personalities, their gifts, their treasures, and they put them all into the service of love... love to God and love to us...
        - What a blessing for us!
        - What a blessing when the earth is filled with those whose aim is to please God—both to love and to serve each other!
      - I spoke to a couple of women on the plane who were coming to Halifax for a cannabis convention.



- These poor girls are looking for joy through cannabis—pleasure through altering their minds by a drug...
    - They don't know what they are missing.
  - But do you what they are missing?
    - Are you living for the Lord?
    - Are you living under His blessing in Christ?
- So where are we in the upward spiral...
- Verse 5... the peoples praise God because they see what He has done...
  - Verse 6... God blesses His people even more now that these new people have come...
3. And now in verse 7, the result is that even more people come in because God has blessed us even more...
- **v. 7: God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.**
- a. Jesus is praying for an upward spiral that just keeps on going...
- It keeps on going until the whole earth fears God.
- 1) He prays that the evangelisation of the earth will be complete.
    - The **ends of the earth** are the remote places—God has blessed His people and now even those in the most distant places have learned of it.
    - All the ends of the earth shall fear Him...
      - That is what Jesus is praying for and what we are to pray for when we sing this Psalm.
  - 2) To **fear God** means that they become His true worshippers.
    - This is not the fear of dread, but fear in the sense of coming to see that God is the source of all blessing and cursing.
      - That if you have His favour, you have every happiness...
      - That if you do not have His favour, you have no true happiness at all.
    - The only people who come to truly fear God in this way are those who come to see that He is a God of mercy who receives sinners through Jesus Christ.
      - They see His shining countenance upon His people and they realise that they are accepted by God because of Christ...
        - Christ who died for them and Christ who is the righteousness of His people.
        - They realise that through faith in Christ, we are reconciled to the Father—the Father accepts sinners...
          - And so instead of running away from Him, they come with joy and gladness, fearing Him, and rejoicing that they of all people have found His blessing!
- Jesus is praying that this cycle of blessing will keep on going until all the ends of the earth fear God.
- b. Are you among those who fear the LORD?

- Have you seen that He is a God who shows mercy, who blesses, and whose face shines upon sinners who come to Him in Christ?
- Have you seen how Christ, as shown in this Psalm, yearns for the peoples to come—yes, for you to come?
- The way to God has been opened by Him.
  - All are sinners—none can come in their own righteousness...
    - That is why God sent Christ and that is why Christ came.
    - So that sinners could be restored to God...
      - So that sinners could be forgiven and could see the God of heaven as a gracious Father instead of an angry judge...
      - Not because He decided to let their sin go, but because Christ has taken sin upon Himself.
  - The yearning of this Psalm for sinners to come to God is not alien to Him at all...
    - This is what brought Him here for us.
    - It is His great love for the Father—that causes Him to do all that He had to do to make us His worshippers—
      - all that had to be done to bring us under His government.
    - It is the Father’s delight to give us the kingdom, and it is Christ’s delight to be the way for us to come the Father.

### **Conclusion**

So what about you?

- Will you join Jesus in singing Psalm 67?
  - Will you plead with Him for God to have mercy on us and to bless us and to cause His face to shine upon us?
  - And will you plead this that the nations might come to praise Him with us?
    - That they might be glad in Him and sing for joy...
  - And that we might be all the more blessed that still more people might come to God,
    - that we might be all the more blessed so that at last the ends of the earth will fear God?
- Our Saviour is so gracious to pray this prayer.
  - Do not stand aloof from it.
  - Engage with Him in lifting up this wonderful Psalm to our gracious Father.