

Psalm 67: A Prayer for the Nations (*Blessed to Be a Blessing*)

Psalm 67:1–7

March 11, 2026 Pastor Trent Eastman — New Baptist Church, Huntington, West Virginia

Archaeological Moment

In 1908, archaeologists excavating Tel Gezer — an ancient Canaanite and Israelite city located between Jerusalem and the Mediterranean coast — unearthed a small limestone tablet approximately four inches tall. Inscribed in early Hebrew script and dating to the tenth century BC, the era of Solomon, the Gezer Calendar lists the agricultural seasons of the year in sequence: planting, late planting, flax harvest, barley harvest, wheat harvest, grape harvest, and summer fruit. It is one of the oldest Hebrew inscriptions ever found, and it currently resides in the Istanbul Archaeology Museum.

Move forward three centuries. In 1979, archaeologist Gabriel Barkay was excavating a rock-cut burial cave at Ketef Hinnom, just southwest of Jerusalem, when he discovered two tiny silver amulets, rolled into scrolls and dating to approximately 600 BC. When carefully unrolled, they were found to contain a version of the Aaronic blessing from Numbers 6:24–26. These Ketef Hinnom Silver Scrolls are now the oldest surviving fragments of text from the Hebrew Bible — predating the Dead Sea Scrolls by four centuries. They are housed today in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.

And then, just this past January, during construction work for a new neighborhood near Kiryat Gat in southern Israel — approximately thirty-five miles southwest of Jerusalem — the Israel Antiquities Authority uncovered a fifth-to-sixth-century AD monastic complex described as the largest Roman and Byzantine site ever found in the region. At the center of its remarkably well-preserved mosaic floor, surrounded by crosses, lions, doves, amphorae, and geometric patterns, is a Greek inscription quoting Deuteronomy 28:6. The mosaic is currently being conserved and will be placed on public display in Kiryat Gat.

Why do I bring these three together tonight? Because each of them, in its own way, touches the world of Psalm 67 — the world of agricultural blessing, the Aaronic benediction, and the witness of God’s people among the nations across centuries. And together they remind us that this psalm is not a pious abstraction. It is rooted in soil, in stone, in the physical world that God made and intends to fill with His glory.

Introduction

Psalm 67 is a psalm I have never taught before, and I find myself wondering why. The more I have studied it, the more I am in awe of it. It came up in my personal devotions this week and genuinely moved me — and then, as I was working on the text for this Sunday, I found that this psalm sits at the very center of what is happening in the gospel passage. So here we are.

Background

The superscription tells us very little by way of historical setting:

| *To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song.*

What the superscription does not tell us, the canonical context begins to fill in. The psalm immediately preceding it, Psalm 66, is a call for all the earth to praise the Lord: “*Shout for joy to God, all the earth*” (Psalm 66:1). The psalm immediately following it, Psalm 68, describes God’s victory over the nations and ends with the kings of the earth bringing tribute to Jerusalem: “*Nobles shall come from Egypt; Cush shall hasten to stretch out her hands to God. O kingdoms of the earth, sing to God; sing praises to the Lord, Selah*” (Psalm 68:31–32).

Psalm 67 stands between these two as the *how* — how all the earth shall come to shout for joy and sing praise to God. The short answer the psalm gives is this: it is through God blessing His people.

The Chiastic Structure

Psalm 67 is constructed as a chiasm — a form of Hebrew poetry in which ideas mirror each other across a central pivot point, with the most important idea placed at the center rather than at the end. It is more than a literary technique; it is how the psalm makes its argument, and recognizing it is the key to reading the psalm well.

The structure looks like this. The psalm opens (A) with a blessing invoked upon *us*, drawn directly from the Aaronic benediction. Moving inward (B), the purpose of that blessing is declared: that God’s ways might be known among the nations. The refrain (C) then sounds for the first time: “*Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!*” At the very center (D) stands the hinge — the ground upon which joy for all the nations is possible: God judges with equity and guides the nations upon earth. The refrain (C) sounds again, and the psalm moves back outward: the harvest arrives as the fulfillment of the blessing’s purpose (B),

and the psalm closes (A) with the blessing now extended not merely to *us* but to *all the ends of the earth*.

This is the architecture. Now let's walk through it.

A — The Blessing Invoked on “Us”

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, Selah
(v. 1)

Does this sound familiar? It should.

Near the beginning of the book of Numbers, a remarkable moment takes place. The people are still at Sinai. The tabernacle has been constructed. The Levitical priesthood has been ordained. The nation is preparing to break camp and march toward the Promised Land. And at this hinge moment, God gives Moses a commandment — not about sacrifice, not about dietary law, not about civil order — but about blessing. He commands Aaron and his sons, the priests, to bless the people of Israel with these specific words:

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. (Numbers 6:24–26)

Every Israelite, regardless of their spiritual status, stands in need of this blessing — and is entitled to receive it. Let's take a moment with it.

The LORD bless you and keep you. This speaks of God's providential protection — His watchful care over the totality of a person's life, guarding and sustaining what He has made.

The LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. Here God is not merely acting on your behalf from a distance. He is turning His face toward you. His countenance — which carries the fullness of His being — is directed at you with favor.

Think of a moment when you walked into a room feeling invisible: tired, unnoticed, carrying something heavy. And then someone across that room saw you, and their whole face changed. Not a polite nod, but a genuine brightening — eyes alive, a smile that broke before they even spoke, their whole body turning toward you as if you were the most important person who had walked through that door. In that instant, something happened inside you that no amount of self-talk could manufacture: you felt known. You felt wanted. The weight you carried didn't disappear, but it suddenly seemed bearable, because someone whose opinion mattered to you had made it unmistakably clear — without a single word — that your presence was a gift to

them. That is the nearest human analogy to what the ancient Hebrews meant when they prayed that God would make His face shine upon them. They were not asking for good weather or a prosperous harvest, though those might follow. They were asking for something far more primal: *turn toward us. Let Your eyes find ours. Let us see in Your face that You are not displeased, not distant, not indifferent — but glad. Glad that we are Yours.*

The LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. This word for peace is *shalom* — the Hebrew word for wholeness, completeness, flourishing; the state of a person, a community, a creation living exactly as God intended. It encompasses physical health, relational harmony, spiritual wholeness, and material sufficiency. Shalom is what Eden was. Shalom is what the New Jerusalem will be. And here it is spoken over ordinary Israelites standing in the desert — God declaring over them what they have not yet fully experienced but what He fully intends for them.

What exactly does this blessing accomplish? The very next verse in Numbers tells us: “*So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them*” (Numbers 6:27). When the priest raised his hands and spoke these words over the congregation, he was placing the name of YHWH upon the people.

B — The Purpose of Blessing: God’s Ways Known Among the Nations

The writer of Psalm 67 understands exactly what it means for God’s name to be placed upon a people. It is not the end — it is the means to an end. And the end is stated plainly in verse 2:

| *that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations. (v. 2)*

This is the purpose of God’s blessing. The blessing is not the destination. The blessing is the vehicle.

This is not a new idea in Psalm 67. It is as old as Abraham. When God speaks to Abram for the first time in Genesis 12, the structure is unmistakable: “*I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing... and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.*” The structure of the Abrahamic covenant is precisely the structure of Psalm 67. God blesses Abram not so that Abram can hoard the blessing, but so that all peoples on earth might be blessed through him. The blessing always has a trajectory. It is aimed at the nations. Israel was never meant to be a reservoir; she was meant to be an aqueduct.

The language of verse 2 is worth lingering over. The Hebrew word translated *nations* is (*goyim*) — the standard word for the Gentile peoples, the non-Israelite nations of the world. And the phrase translated *saving power* is the noun form of salvation in Hebrew: *ye-shu'ah*). When the psalmist prays that God's salvation would be known among all nations, he is praying — whether he fully grasped it or not — that the One whose very name *means* salvation would be made known to the ends of the earth. The psalm breathes the name of Jesus long before Bethlehem.

God chooses a people so that through that people He might display His glory and extend His grace to all nations. Psalm 67 is a prayer to be blessed — because the people who pray it understand that their blessing is bound up with the world's redemption.

C — The Refrain: The Desire of God's Heart

| *Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! (v. 3)*

This refrain, which will sound again in verse 5, expresses something close to the heartbeat of the Psalter itself. Throughout the Psalms, the nations are not merely tolerated — they are invited, summoned, longed for. “*All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him*” (Psalm 22:27). “*All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, Lord*” (Psalm 86:9). “*Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth*” (Psalm 96:1).

This vision of universal worship is not an afterthought in Scripture. It is the destination toward which all of history is moving.

D — The Hinge: The Ground of Joy

| *Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth. Selah (v. 4)*

Here we reach the center of the chiasm — the hinge upon which everything else turns. And the question the psalm raises at this center point is a real one: *why* should the nations rejoice? Power alone does not produce joy — it produces fear. The nations of the earth have been ruled by pharaohs and caesars, by tyrants and demagogues, by the powerful exploiting the powerless. Human governance, at its best, is deeply flawed; at its worst, it is monstrous.

The answer the psalm gives is this: the nations should rejoice because God rules with perfect equity. The Hebrew word here is *mes(harim)* — uprightness, straightness, equity, justice. There is a King before whom every injustice will be addressed, every oppressed person vindicated, every crooked path made straight. There is a Judge before whose bar the verdict will always be true. *“His judgments are true and righteous altogether”* (Psalm 19:9). This is why the nations sing for joy — not because life is easy, but because the One who holds the ultimate gavel is perfectly righteous.

I believe this hinge verse looks forward to the Messiah. Isaiah 11 describes the coming Davidic King:

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him... He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth. (Isaiah 11:1–2, 3–4)

Who is this shoot from the stump of Jesse? It is Jesus. We see the beginnings of His just reign in the Sermon on the Mount, the Golden Rule, the judgment of the nations in Matthew 25. And we await its full consummation at His return. The nations will have ultimate reason to rejoice because the Son of David will govern them with perfect equity.

B — The Fulfillment of the Purpose: The Great Harvest

After the refrain sounds a second time in verse 5, the psalm shifts registers in a way that is easy to miss in English but unmistakable in the Hebrew. Up to this point, the psalm has been a series of prayers and wishes — *may God bless us, let the peoples praise, let the nations be glad*. But verse 6 is a declaration:

The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, shall bless us. (v. 6)

The NIV renders it with full clarity: *“The land yields its harvest; God, our God, blesses us.”* The verb has shifted. The harvest is not merely hoped for — it has arrived. The blessing has come. Something has happened.

It is worth pausing over the harvest imagery here, because in the Jewish calendar, the great harvest festival was Pentecost — the Feast of Weeks, the Feast of Firstfruits, fifty days after Passover. God chose that harvest feast to launch the harvest of souls. When the Spirit fell on the gathered disciples in Acts 2, and Peter stood and preached and three thousand were added to the church in a single day, and devout Jews from every nation under heaven heard the mighty

works of God declared in their own languages — the agricultural imagery of Psalm 67:6 was being fulfilled before their eyes. The land was yielding its harvest. God, *our* God, was blessing His people — and through them, beginning to bless the world.

A — The Blessing Extended to the Ends of the Earth

| *God shall bless us; let all the ends of the earth fear him! (v. 7)*

The chiasm closes, but it closes with an expansion. The blessing invoked in verse 1 upon *us* is now aimed outward, toward the uttermost edges of the earth. The phrase *all the ends of the earth* in Hebrew is *kol-afšei aretz* — literally, *all the extremities of the earth*, the most remote and forgotten corners of the globe. And the word *fear* — *yir'u* — is not terror. It is the reverential awe that is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10), the humble and worshipful recognition that one stands before the Holy One of Israel.

Notice the logic of the conclusion. The blessing of God upon His people is not exhausted by the harvest. The psalm does not end with *us* well-fed and spiritually satisfied. It ends with the mission reaching its intended destination: the outermost edges of the earth have heard and feared. The mission is not complete until then.

This is the vision of Revelation 7:9–10, which is the New Testament fulfillment of Psalm 67's prayer:

| *After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb... And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."*

The psalmist's prayer will be answered. The nations will praise Him. The ends of the earth will fear Him. The great multitude no one can count will stand before the throne. This is not in doubt. The question for us, gathered here in Huntington, West Virginia, at this particular moment in the history of the church, is simply this: how are we participating in that story?

What This Means for Us

Psalm 67 is not primarily a psalm about *feeling* blessed. It is a psalm about *being* a blessing. Those are not the same thing. Many Christians have learned to pray for God's blessing — on

their families, their finances, their health, their church — but have never connected that blessing to the missional purpose for which it was given.

Let me be direct: every blessing you have received from God is misused when it terminates on you. The job, the health, the family, the freedom to worship, the spiritual gifts, the Word of God in your hands — none of these are given merely for your personal enrichment. They are given so that your life, your witness, your generosity, your love might make God's ways known on earth.

And nowhere is this more personally true than in the blessing of the shining face of God. If God has turned His face toward you — if you have seen His glory in the face of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6), if the light of His countenance has been lifted upon you — then you are not meant to hoard that light. You are meant to reflect it. Moses came down from the mountain with his face shining, and the people of Israel knew he had been in the presence of God. The world around us should be able to tell the same thing about us: that we have been with Jesus.

This psalm calls us to at least three responses.

Pray for the nations. Psalm 67 is, at its core, a prayer — and it models for us the right posture of intercession, not merely for our own needs but for the peoples of the earth who do not yet know the salvation of God. How often do we pray for unreached peoples? How often do we intercede for missionaries laboring at the ends of the earth?

Give generously. The harvest imagery of verse 6 reminds us that material blessing is a stewardship, not a possession. When the land yields its harvest, the appropriate response is not accumulation but offering. The Feast of Firstfruits was marked by bringing the best of the harvest to the Temple — not keeping it, but giving it back to God. Our financial generosity is one of the primary ways the blessing of God flows through us to others.

Bear witness. The word *known* in verse 2 — *laʿaʿat* — implies personal, relational knowledge, not merely intellectual information. God's ways are made known on earth through people who live them, embody them, and proclaim them. You are the way that God's way becomes known in your neighborhood, your workplace, your family. Do not underestimate the missional significance of your ordinary life.

The prayer of Psalm 67 is still being answered. God is still blessing His people. The nations are still coming. The ends of the earth are still yet to hear. And you and I, gathered here tonight, are part of the answer.

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make His face shine on us — so that His ways may be known on earth, and His salvation among all nations.

Amen.