

God's Joy Amongst the Nations

Blessed to become a blessing, and a God who wants to be famous and followed

SPEAKER	Steve Hawthorne
DATE	Sunday, September 11, 2022
PASSAGES	Psalm 67; Genesis 12:1-3; Genesis 26:3-4; Genesis 28:12-14; Galatians 3:8; Galatians 3:26-29; Numbers 6:22-27; Psalm 23:3
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:04:15 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

God blesses his people with a purpose: *that* his way may be known on earth and his salvation among all nations. [Psalm 67](#) sings the end of that story in advance — a glad God, smiling on his people, known and loved and praised by every people in its own heart language.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ The psalm is built in mirrored layers; the centre, verse 4, is the turnkey that makes the rest work. The “nations” it names are peoples and ethnicities, not countries.
- ◆ Blessing is not a fleeting feeling. It is God’s empowering gift of life, fruitfulness and fullness — the “mo betta factor.”
- ◆ Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all heard the same promise: I will bless you, and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed. The scope was always global.
- ◆ If you belong to Christ, you are Abraham’s descendant and an heir of that promise — given the dignity of carrying blessing to all peoples.
- ◆ For God’s face to shine on you means he is smiling. We serve a glad God, predisposed to like his children.
- ◆ God wants to be famous and followed, because he cannot be loved unless he is known — and he wants real love, not worship robots.

- ◆ To “judge” in Scripture is to make right what has gone wrong. God rules the peoples with uprightness and guides the nations, and that is good news.

► 1:04:15

Steve Hawthorne, whom Evan introduced as someone anyone at Hope for “even like a minute” would know, preached a single psalm: seven verses, four points, and “a song of global hope.”

1. The shape of the song

► 1:05:05

Steve started with “verse zero,” the heading: *for the choir director, with stringed instruments — a psalm, a song*. It is meant to be sung, and the church had already sung part of it that morning.

“God be gracious to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us — Selah. That Your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation 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 will judge the peoples with uprightness and guide the nations on the earth. Selah. Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. The earth has yielded its produce; God, our God, blesses us. God blesses us, that all the ends of the earth may fear Him.”

PSALM 67 ↗ (NASB)

► 1:06:32

The psalm is chiastic: the top and bottom answer each other in layers. The congregation found the shared words in verses 1–2 and 6–7 — *bless, earth, God* — and Steve added a crucial one: *that*, a purpose word. Verses 3 and 5 are identical. “This was an amateur poet that couldn’t figure out how to make words rhyme,” he joked; really, repetition means this is a big deal.

► 1:08:40

In this kind of poetry the centre is the turnkey that makes the rest live — here, verse 4. Jewish scholars noticed the seven-strand shape centuries ago and likened it to a menorah. And the two *Selahs*, whatever exactly the word means, invite us to pause and ponder, because right after each comes the purpose.

► 1:11:19

The “nations” are not nation-states but peoples — ethnicities, tribes and languages. The psalm sings the culmination of every people’s story, ending in people who love and honour Jesus. When God created, he finished and was glad: “He’s a finishing God,” with a global purpose.

2. The promise of blessing for all

► 1:13:15

We have shrunk the word *blessing* to a pleasant feeling after a concert, or “bless your heart,” or what you say when someone sneezes. But on the fifth day of creation God made the creatures, called them good — and then made them “gooder” by blessing them ([Genesis 1:22](#)): infusing them with a potency to flourish, be fruitful, multiply and fill.

► 1:15:16

Teaching this in Hawaii, Steve heard the locals’ pidgin word for something even better: *mo betta*. “Think of blessing as the mo betta factor.” It is a gift, an enabling, an empowerment. And one of the best blessings is children — which is why he paused to celebrate the birth of Katie Jane Ryniker on September 7.

► 1:16:41

The psalm celebrates the end of a long story. Here is its beginning:

“Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

GENESIS 12:1–3 ↗ (NASB)

► 1:17:18

Abram is the only person Steve sees in Scripture told to separate from his family — because God was starting a new kind of family, “the faith family.” And the promise is absurd on its face: how could one man bless all the clans of the earth?

► 1:18:30

Isaac heard it again: “by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed” ([Genesis 26:3–4](#)). So did Jacob, in his dream ([Genesis 28:12–14](#)). That ladder, Steve said, was not a staircase for people to escape earth — “god’s people always trying to escape and get to heaven, as if it’s a

bad place” — but a stairway *from* heaven for God’s business all over the earth, angels sent out to accomplish things.

► 1:21:33

Jacob’s descendants would “bust out” north, south, east and west, as we see today. And it is never “blessed to be a blessing, period,” as if the point were being nice. “The promise is global scope every time.”

Abraham’s family includes you

► 1:22:47

All these old men in beards and bathrobes can be hard to relate to. But Abraham’s greatest descendant is Jesus Christ, and Paul says Scripture “preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘In you shall all the nations be blessed’” (Galatians 3:8). The gospel is essentially that all the *ethnē* will be blessed. The fulfilment, he said, is always better than we dared to dream, and always harder.

► 1:26:03

Baptism is taking Christ’s death as our own: there is a monstrosity within us that can only be changed by killing it, and we cannot — but we can take his death for it, and his life becomes ours.

► 1:26:49

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise.”

GALATIANS 3:26-29 ↗ (NASB)

Verse 28 does not abolish gender or class; it says we do not segment the people of God that way. And it does not say we are all the same. “We’re way more than equal — we’re precious in his sight. But we’re not just the same; we’re one, because we’ve been joined with one.”

► 1:28:09

Then the verse we stop short of quoting: you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs of the promise that through you blessing will come to all peoples. “You have extra ancestry that you may not have celebrated.” God is always the blesser, “we are the blessies,” but we are his agents, and each little life carries global magnitude. “Yes, we’re one of the stars that Abraham counted in the sky. He saw the day of Christ, and he saw you coming. You have been long awaited.”

3. The fullness of God's blessing

► 1:30:39

Aaron and his sons were told to speak one blessing over God's people again and again, until it was embedded in their hearts — the blessing the worship team had sung that morning:

“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 6:22-27 ↗

► 1:31:26

To bless is to give every kind of fruitfulness — health, provision, “adequacy and plenitude for all.” To keep is to preserve and protect. And verses 25 and 26 are parallel: many translations swap “countenance” in for the second “face,” which Steve regrets, because you are meant to notice it is the same face.

► 1:32:42

His face means nearness, a face-to-face relationship, and a face shining is an idiom: smiling, glad, proud of you. To lift up his face is to gaze on you and notice you. God is not scowling, trying to fix you. “We serve a glad God. He is the easiest person in the universe to please, because he's predisposed to like us” — the way good parents are predisposed to like what their children do. “This is not the God who's pestering us, trying to get us to behave. This is a relationship of joy.”

► 1:35:05

Now set the priestly words beside the psalm's opening line — bless, face, shine, gracious. They are the same. The psalmist is taking the blessing every Israelite child grew up hearing and saying: here is what it was for.

4. The sure hope: the praise of the peoples

► 1:36:33

Read verses 1–2 and 6–7 together. God blesses his people, and the *that* gives the why: so that there would be blessing among all peoples. “He blesses a few so that some from every people would be blessed as well.”

► 1:38:02

First, *that your way may be known*: God reveals what he is like through the lives of his people. And *your salvation*: not just getting up the ladder and out of here. God is still saving us from depression, conflict and the harm we bring on ourselves. “It’s not just afterlife insurance — it’s in-life fullness.”

► 1:40:09

All the ends of the earth: a people of about five hundred in remote Tibetan valleys near the Chinese border, with its own language, whom no one has ever brought the gospel. *Shall fear him*: not terror but awe. “The nearer you get, the fearer you get.” The devil pits God’s goodness against his greatness, and we file “little lawsuits in the courts of heaven”; seeing what God is really doing leaves us in awe of how great and good he is.

► 1:41:57

So God’s global purpose has two parts: to be known by all, and so to be followed, praised and loved by many. Steve had the congregation repeat it: *famous and followed*. “He longs to be loved. He cannot be loved unless he is known. No one loves an anonymous thing.”

► 1:43:28

Verses 3 and 5 say who sings. Revelation pictures every language praising God at the end of days, but this psalm is about this age too: people from every people loving him now. Hope has worked in one Middle Eastern country for about thirty years — so many from Hope have been that they would not fit in the room. At first there were a few hundred believers, and dialects in which God had never been praised. Now there are thousands.

► 1:45:23

Bible translators are jubilant when a people starts singing this psalm in its own language. A trade language never quite feels like home, but in the language they heard from their mothers a people can love God with one heart — and bring their arts, their cooking, the way they honour one another. Every culture has something defiled in it, and something marvellous God is redeeming in Christ. “It’s happening now.”

The centre: a God who rules and guides

► 1:47:18

The psalm’s “let” and “may” can sound weak, almost guessey. Steve loves it, because God does not coerce praise. “God does not want worship robots.” He could have made creatures programmed to say *we really, really praise you* — “what an absurd thing that is with the living God.” Like Pinocchio’s maker, he wants real boys and girls who love him sincerely.

► 1:48:43

Verse 4 says God will judge the peoples — and our culture hears “don’t judge me, man.” But in the Bible, to judge is to make right what has gone wrong; it is what kings do. A “don’t judge me” culture is dismal, “because we’re all just on our own. But no — there is a God who is right.”

► 1:50:44

And he *guides* — the same word for leading Israel out of Egypt by cloud and fire. We wish for a pillar of fire. But God makes himself near: “He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake” (Psalm 23:3). Even when every option looks wrong, he can lead us out righteous — not so we look good, but for his name’s sake.

► 1:52:05

So verse 4 is a summary of the gospel of the kingdom: God himself as king, stepping with his people on the earth and changing them from the inside out — not merely a code of ethics, which is all a powerless culture can offer. Jesus was raised, ascended, and poured out the Holy Spirit, so that ordinary people can learn to follow and serve him. Judging, Jesus subdues and overcomes satanic evil, and gives each of us a part in the story. “It’s God’s joy to bring blessing. He’s a glad God. It’s our joy to make him known.”

The why, not the how

► 1:54:03

Last week dealt with what missions is and how. This psalm is the *why*: God does not just want to be known or to rescue us — he wants to be loved, honoured and glorified, and he has given each of us the honour of being part of it. The service then played a seven-minute musical setting of the psalm with footage of worship among the nations.

► 2:04:00

“You are blessed to become this blessing to all peoples, and you already have been.” The great hope is that the nations are going to love him. Ten thousand years from now we will not be able to tear our eyes off the focal point of heaven, the shining face of God — and we will see how glad he is about Kurdish worship, the way Koreans “go nuts,” an African tribe that loves him like nobody else. “We’re going to see God’s joy.” So be a worshipper and lover of God with that hope, “and work and labour together to see that he is loved. That’s why we’re doing what we do.”

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- [Psalm 67](#) (NASB)
- [Genesis 1:22](#)
- [Genesis 12:1–3](#) (NASB)
- [Genesis 26:3–4](#)
- [Genesis 28:12–14](#)
- [Galatians 3:8](#)
- [Galatians 3:26–29](#) (NASB)
- [Numbers 6:22–27](#)
- [Psalm 23:3](#)

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Steve called blessing “the mo betta factor” — an empowering gift, not a feeling. How does that change the way you hear “God bless you”?
2. What does it mean to you that, in Christ, you are Abraham’s descendant and “long awaited”?
3. How would your prayers and your view of yourself change if you really believed God’s face is shining on you — that he is glad, not scowling?
4. Why does it matter that God wants to be loved freely, in every people’s own heart language, rather than simply obeyed?
5. What is one way you will help God become “famous and followed” among the peoples this week?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Dr. Steve Hawthorne is a longtime friend of Hope Chapel — introduced as someone anyone at Hope for even a minute would know — who first preached in this building some thirty years ago. He teaches Psalm 67 in many places, including Hawaii, has visited places where Hope’s mission partners work, and spoke this morning on God’s purpose to be known and loved among all the peoples of the earth.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LYfHtjn0BsY&t=3855s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.