

Let the Nations Be Glad

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, Proper 6 [a]

May 18, 2017

PSALM 67

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!

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

We know—especially with recent headlines, with reports of violence and travail—that we live in a world of fear and despair. What does our Lord want the world to know of him?

India's Hindus, China's Buddhists, Arabia's Muslims, Salt Lake City's Mormons, those under tyranny in a North Korea or a Cuba, those running from the Islamic state in Syria—this despairing world of ours, what does our Lord it to know of him?

The Americans, the liberals in the north, the conservatives in the south, whatever other categories we want to come up with—what does our Lord want our neighbor to know of him?

The Hindus imagine gods who are many and for whom they must follow all the rules and rituals prescribed for sacrifice for gaining good life.

The Muslims and Mormons, they imagine a god who demands obedience and adherence to manmade rituals, a god who is forever coming up with rules and regulations, right down to what kind of under garments a holy person must wear or even to what kind of drink you can or cannot put into your mouth.

The tyrants design societies where everyone will find their legitimacy by being members of the collective and under the control of the leader.

Then what will our world want from a god?

It's easy enough to see the common thread. Whether the Hindus or the Muslims or the Mormons or some great social system designed to bring in the new age, when we have a manmade god or system, the common thread is the obedience to that manmade god or system, the adherence to the rules and rituals, the holding onto some small hope that by giving submission to whatever god or whatever system, order and peace will finally come, everything will be in control, maybe even a utopia.

So what will our world expect or want from a god? Just that, a god who requires submission, who demands the following of rules and regulations, even down whether you can or cannot eat bacon, you can or cannot drink coffee, or what kind of clothes you must wear.

And then into this mess enters the true God, the God of all life, and he will have none of it. Psalm 67:2:

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.

The Lord will have his “way” known among the nations. At first, hearing that word “way,” we think of a path of obedience, a roadmap for living, and we find ourselves looking for God to be a law-giver, as the One giving the way to lead a righteous life. Until we remember that *the way* is not a path of obedience, but a person. John 14:6:

⁶ Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

God will make his way known upon the Earth. It is his Son, Jesus. It is the cross, where Jesus shed the blood to cleanse every sinner on the face of the Earth. The Way is the righteousness not earned by the obedience of the sinner, but conferred as a gift by the Son of God.

So that, as Psalm 67 gives it, ***Your way will be known on Earth, your saving power will be known among all nations.***

Your saving power. But the Hebrew word in the Psalm is simpler and cleaner than that translation. The Hebrew doesn't say, *your saving power*, but, rather, simply, *your salvation*. This is not about God's power, not him demanding submission; the Psalm says, simply, *your salvation will be made known to the nations*. Salvation—that's Jesus giving his life for the sinner, Jesus fulfilling the whole law, undergoing the Law's verdict for our disobedience, Jesus completing all the demands of the Law, in order to bring to us ... salvation.

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly ... God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

[Romans 5:6]

That's the God our world does not know. In all her attempts to conceive of a god, to design a system, to bring submission, order, and peace, our world does not and cannot design the true God. For the true

God reveals himself most profoundly in ... his death on the cross.

So Jesus sent his disciples out to the lost sheep of Israel to proclaim that in him the kingdom of Heaven, the promised salvation, was at hand. Matthew 10:5:

⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, ⁶ but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷ And proclaim as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of Heaven is at hand.’ ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay.”

Then, after shedding his blood on the cross for every sinner, and before ascending to his Father, Jesus sent his Apostles out not only to the lost sheep of Israel, but also to every tribe and language in the world, telling his Apostles that his salvation was being sent to every nation, that people would be made his disciples by being baptized into the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and by being taught of his death on the cross, his resurrection from the dead, and the gift of his sacraments to justify the sinner.

Sin came into the world through one man, our father, Adam. Death came by that sin. Our world knows this sin and death, and has failed at every point to defeat it with any manmade religion, god, or system.

But the free gift is not like the sin. If sin came to all of us and to all the world by the first Adam, the free-gift, the grace of God, abounds to all nations and all languages, by the one man, Jesus Christ.

What does our Lord want our world to know of him? Our world already knows his Law. Already knows the demand for obedience. The Law is sunk so deeply into our bones that any time we despair of our standing before God, our first answer is the Law—more obedience, more accusation, more submission, more rules and rituals to bring some semblance of control and peace.

The Law: our world already has it. Even when in rebellion against the Law, or denial of it, our world already has it, and we already have it. No cross is needed for that. But our Lord wants our world to know of him by the Gospel, of him hanging on the cross for the guilt of every sinner, of him giving himself the ransom for many, of his blood shed to reconcile the sinner with God.

And that is the God we, each of us ourselves, must know: The God who looks upon us and our sin and says, *I forgive you*. Who sees us in our despair and says, *I bless you*. Who sees us living in fear in our world and says, *I look upon you not in retribution, but I make my face to shine upon you; you are mine*.

And against every expectation of our world—our world which expects a God of fear and condemnation and submission—contrary to our world’s every expectation, and over against the fear in a world saturated with news of murders, attempted murders, slanders, and personal attacks at every corner, contrary to and over against all of this, our Lord comes to our world, to our neighbor, as Savior.

Savior from sin, from death; Savior speaking blessing and grace; Savior gathering peoples and families into his Church; he comes as Savior to bring the sinner into life and to bring joy to our world. Psalm 67:4:

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