

# Praise and Thanksgiving

Psalm 65:1 *"To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David. A Song.*

**Praise** is due to you, O God, in Zion, and to you shall **vows** be performed.

<sup>2</sup> O you who hear prayer, to you shall **all flesh** come.

<sup>3</sup> When **iniquities** prevail against me, you **atone** for our transgressions.

<sup>4</sup> Blessed is the one **you choose and bring near**, to dwell in your courts!  
We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the holiness of your temple!

<sup>5</sup> By **awesome deeds** you answer us with righteousness, O God of our salvation, the hope of all **the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas**;

<sup>6</sup> the one who by his strength established the **mountains**, being girded with might;

<sup>7</sup> who stills the roaring of the **seas**, the roaring of their waves, the tumult of the peoples,

<sup>8</sup> so that those who dwell at **the ends of the earth** are in awe at your signs. You make the going out of the morning and the evening to shout for joy.

<sup>9</sup> You visit the earth and water it; you greatly enrich it; **the river of God** is full of water; you provide their grain, for so you have prepared it.

<sup>10</sup> You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers, and blessing its growth.

<sup>11</sup> You crown **the year** with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with abundance.

<sup>12</sup> The **pastures** of the wilderness overflow, the **hills** gird themselves with joy,

<sup>13</sup> the meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout and sing together for joy.

**66:1** *To the choirmaster. A Song. A Psalm.*

Shout for joy to God, all the earth;

<sup>2</sup> sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise!

<sup>3</sup> Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies come cringing to you.

<sup>4</sup> All the earth worships you and sings praises to you; they sing praises to your name." Selah

<sup>5</sup> Come and see what God has done: he is awesome in his deeds toward the children of man.

<sup>6</sup> He turned the sea into dry land; they passed through the river on foot. There did we rejoice in him,

<sup>7</sup> who rules by his might forever, whose eyes keep watch on the nations - let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah

<sup>8</sup> Bless our God, O peoples; let the sound of his praise be heard,

<sup>9</sup> who has kept our soul among the living and has not let our feet slip.

<sup>10</sup> For you, O God, have tested us; you have tried us as silver is tried.

<sup>11</sup> You brought us into the net; you laid a crushing burden on our backs;

<sup>12</sup> you let men ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water; yet you have brought us out to a place of abundance.

<sup>13</sup> I will come into your house with burnt offerings; I will perform my vows to you,

<sup>14</sup> that which my lips uttered and my mouth promised when I was in trouble.

<sup>15</sup> I will offer to you burnt offerings of fattened animals, with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams; I will make an offering of bulls and goats. Selah

<sup>16</sup> Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for my soul.

<sup>17</sup> I cried to him with my mouth, and high praise was on my tongue.

<sup>18</sup> If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.

<sup>19</sup> But truly God has listened; he has attended to the voice of my prayer.

<sup>20</sup> Blessed be God, because he has not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me!

<sup>67:1</sup> *To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song.*  
May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, Selah

<sup>2</sup> that your way may be known **on earth**, your **saving power among all nations**.

<sup>3</sup> Let **the peoples** praise you, O God; let **all the peoples** praise you!

<sup>4</sup> Let **the nations** be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth. Selah

<sup>5</sup> Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!

<sup>6</sup> The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, shall bless us.

<sup>7</sup> God shall bless us; let all the ends of the earth fear him!"

## Psalm 65-67

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## Chief End

THE CATECHISM FAMOUSLY ASKS, “**What is the chief end of man?**” Most people have no idea what their chief end, their purpose in life is supposed to be. Many think that there is no purpose at all. They live their lives like sailors lost at sea. Or like Solomon, they fill the void in their hearts with any number of self-centered pleasures and/or sins.

What do I mean by **a void in the heart?** The poet sings,

There's a void in my heart I can't seem to fill.  
I do charity work when I believe in the cause,  
    But in my soul it bothers me still.  
Hey, Lord, you made me like I am;  
    Can you heal this restlessness?  
    Will there be a void in my heart  
    When they carry me out to rest?<sup>1</sup>

**Blaise Pascal** comments, “What else does this craving, and this helplessness, proclaim but that there was once in man a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace? This he tries in vain to fill with everything around him, seeking in things that are not there the help he cannot find in those that are, though none can help...” (Pascal, *Pensées* VII[425]).

As the Apostle went on his missionary journey, he came to the most famous city in Greece, wherein he began to look around and see that they were very religious. They had many objects of worship, hoping to fill that void with the gods. They even had an altar to “the unknown god,” whom Paul began to preach to them. He told them that this God

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<sup>1</sup> **John Mellencamp**, “Void in My Heart,” Big Daddy, Mercury Records (1989).

made everything, but lives beyond the creation and is not served by human hand as if he needed us. He made from one man every nation, determining their allotted boundaries and periods, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way [as if in the dark] toward him and find him, even though he is not actually far from any of us (**Acts 17:22-27**).

This is why he put this great void into us at the fall, or as Ecclesiastes puts it more positively, “**He has put eternity into man’s heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end**” (**Ecc 3:11**). He put it there so that we might go looking for him. Yet, he knew that none of us would do that, so God in Christ came looking for us. Until he finds us, as **Augustine** put it, “**Our heart is restless.**” But when he finds us through Christ, our soul finally finds rest (Augustine, Confessions 1.1). As Pascal finished saying, “**... since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words by God himself.**”

But even as Christians, there is a profound yearning for something more. As **Bono** sings (in a song that as a high schooler I didn’t understand),

You broke the bonds and you  
Loosed the chains  
You carried the cross  
You took my shame  
You took the blame, Lord  
You know I believe it.  
But I still haven't found what I'm looking for.<sup>2</sup>

I used to wonder, how could he say that? Now I know, this is exactly it! We have what we are hoping for in justification, but the fullness of what we are looking for does not come until sin is removed and our bodies are glorified in the future. We sin, but why? It is an existential dilemma that chills us all to the bone. And in it, Christians are tempted to not seek out our chief end as we should. We all fall and stumble in many ways. Our souls begin to bother us again. The void filled by Christ starts to feel like it isn't actually full. And how can you find satisfaction and the fullness of joy in times like these?

The catechism famously answers its own question, “**To glorify God and enjoy him forever.**” **That is the chief end of**

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<sup>2</sup> U2, “I Still Haven’t Found What I’m Looking For,” *Live from Mexico City* lyrics.

man. If you are here today, you know deep down in your heart that this is true, otherwise you would not be here. But perhaps you have also come simultaneously with that nagging void-feeling gnawing away on your insides, not finding the fullness of what you are looking for, and wondering if it is really possible to have this side of heaven. The Psalms today address this question and sing of its answer. May those who have ears hear...

## Structure of the Songs

The second major collection of songs of David (Ps 51-65) ends in our first psalm this morning. Psalm 65 begins, “To the choirmaster (For the End). A Psalm of David” (Ps 65:1).<sup>3</sup> However, though it is the last of a series of Davidic psalms, it actually begins a shorter series that form a unit of thought focusing on praising and thanking God.<sup>4</sup> This is quite different from anything we have seen in a while, as most of this Davidic collection have been about sin and

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<sup>3</sup> Some versions of the LXX read *A psalm for David. A song of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and of the people in exile when they were on the point of departing.*

<sup>4</sup> Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51-100*, ed. Klaus Baltzer, trans. Linda M. Maloney, Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 141.

confession and lamentation and enemies. Things change now in a radical way, and we get a much needed breath of fresh air. You can't lament and cry all the time.

This unit (65-68) begins with a song of David and ends with a song of David (Ps 68). In between are two anonymous songs to the choirmaster, one played with stringed instruments (67). All four are given the special designation as “songs” (*shir*, as distinguished from “psalm” which is *mizmor*). This is fairly unique in the superscriptions and if further shows that they were grouped together. No one is really sure what the difference is between a psalm and a song in these introductions.

Curiously, the LXX tells us that Psalm 66 is *a Psalm of resurrection* and we will see why this might be later. There is a possible chiastic structure with Psalm 65-66, meaning that the latter could have been conceived as a reversal of the former.<sup>5</sup> This reinforces that reading them together is helpful. Apart from Ps 66:13-20, the pronouns are plural, meaning that the church of the OT was singing them together. Thus, we need to hear their meaning and reflect

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<sup>5</sup> On this structure see, “Psalm 65 & 66 Chiastic Structure,” <http://www.alittleperspective.com/psalm-65-66-chiastic-structure-2/>



upon them ... together. Each of them seems to **start with some passage in the books of Moses** (Ps 65 = Gen 1; Ps 66 = Ex 12; Ps 67 = Num 6:22-27 with Gen 12:1-3; **Ps 68 = Num 10:35**).<sup>6</sup> What we will look at today is Psalm 65-67 as they are manageable enough to do in a single sitting. We will conclude with Psalm 68 next time.

## **Praise is Due to God: He is the Creator (Ps 65)**

**Psalm 65 begins**, like us this morning, with the worshipers gathering together. In their context, it was the temple (**vs 4**). Their song reminds them of the chief end. **“Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion” (Ps 65:1)**. Now, this is a song (note again the superscription), and rightly so. This praise was to be offered through song, and not just words on paper. God gave humans the ability to write lyrics and compose music that is **profoundly satisfying** on a level of the soul that you really can't communicate with words.

Song was incredibly important in the life of the temple, as it is in the life of the church today and throughout her history. To downplay its importance (perhaps we Reformed

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<sup>6</sup> See **Geoffrey Grogan**, *Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 121.

can be guilty of that too often) is just as bad as overplaying it to the point of nearly worshiping the music rather than the Chief Musician who gave it to us (which is happening far too often in other circles). Both do harm to this precious gift that God gave to man. But here, I want you to know how important the musical part of this is. This is not just a psalm of praise, but a *song* of praise. And that is what we are to do. This is emphasized in the superscription as it gives us these opening lyrics. To begin to fill that void this side of heaven, you must praise *God*.

But you praise him because it is due to him. In other words, it isn't just music, but also lyrics. Most of the lyrics of these songs today will tell you why he is due this praise. Now, there is a general way I believe that men can praise God through secular music. All lyrics do not have to be explicitly about God and what he has done in order to give him praise in your heart. But in the communion of the saints? We don't sing Dan Fogelberg's "Leader of the Band," even though those lyrics are extremely moving and praiseworthy in a common grace way. Why? Because they do not tell us about what God has done, and that is a chief purpose of worshiping him together. This psalm tells us that

it is important to remember that we worship God *because it is his due*. He alone is worthy of praise. All the songs today tell us why.

But curiously, before it does that, it explains that **praising God goes beyond either the music or the lyrics**. What a lesson this is to learn. In the second half of the verse, we get the missing piece. Praising God is **performing your vows** to Him. This is a 24/7 kind of worship. Thus, the first verse(!) is teaching you that when you come together, it is for the purpose of reordering your life so that the rest of the week you can praise him with it. How so?

In the law, you can make vows for all kinds of reason, including to worship. But vows most often extend far beyond public worship. In other words, it is obeying God. This is a duty that exists for those other 167 hours in your weeks. Someone sums it up, “**Singing praise and making melody, he will make his whole life a continuous paying of vows.**”<sup>7</sup>

In the second verse, we get the first of many concrete reasons to praise God. We don't just “Praise You, Praise

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<sup>7</sup> Delitzsch, cited in Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, vol. 20, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 116.

You, Praise You,” and be done with it. You must know why you are to praise God. You must know why it is his due.

His first reason? God hears your prayers (**Ps 65:2**). When we his people pray to this God, we are sure that they do not fall on deaf ears. To hear our prayers means that he will answer them according to his will.

A second reason instantly arises, and it becomes perhaps the major theme of these songs. Because he answers prayer, “**To you shall all flesh come**” (2). God cares about reaching the nations with his mercy and grace. When the people hear that this God answers prayers, they will be encouraged to come and see for themselves.

But how do they come to him? First (or third, depending on how you look at it), **he takes away our sins**. God is the Atoner! People do not come to God of their own accord and the main reason is that they are sinners. This includes Christians who drift away in their prayers and obedience. Yet we sing, “**When iniquities prevail against me, you atone for our transgressions**” (**Ps 65:3**). Sin does overtake us, and far too often. But when we sin, our God atones for our transgressions. This is striking, because it tells us that *God* atones for sin. We don't. This isn't about your offering or

your sincerity or your feelings or your sacrifice. This psalm looks forward to the death of Jesus, for his death alone is able to take away our sins.

Not only does God atone for our sins, he brings the sinner near to himself. He chooses them. “Blessed is the one you chose and bring near, to dwell in your courts!” (4). This is good news to any sinner, but not to people already righteous (in their own eyes). People want to say that they choose to come near to God. No. They are sinners, and they would never do such a thing. The only reason someone would think that is because they don’t know their own wickedness or God’s holiness, because those two things terrify people and make them run as far from him as possible.

But the fourth reason praise is due God is because he chooses and brings a person near to himself. This is because of his lovingkindness, his mercy, and his grace alone. Nothing else can explain it. To be chosen as a sinner? It makes no sense, unless God has something inside of him that causes him to want to be in fellowship with us, to want to forgive us, and to want to bring us near.

Amazingly, a fifth thing occurs because of this. “We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the

holiness of your temple!” (4b). We are satisfied in God when he finds us. This is just as Augustine and Pascal both believed. And that is the point of the catechism, for glorifying God and enjoying him forever is to be satisfied. This is who it is that we have come to today, a God that is due praise for this kind of work for his people.

The Psalm now turns to God’s “awesome deeds” (5). First among them, God is now viewed as a divine warrior.<sup>8</sup> As a Warrior, he answers us with righteousness (5). We might think that this has the prayers from earlier in mind, but it probably has what comes next in mind. “O God of our salvation.” God answers us by saving us. He did this by winning the greatest battle in the universe. Jesus overcame Satan, Sin, and Sheol. Therefore, he is able to powerfully save us, a thought that we will see culminate in Psalm 68.

This salvation becomes “the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas” (5). Anyone who desires salvation, God is the God who answers that desire. All you

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<sup>8</sup> See Grogan, 121. What is interesting to me about calling him this is that it puts our minds first, upon the Commander of the Armies of the LORD, who is Christ. Second, in using Genesis 1 language, it teaches us how Christ by his word, is the great warrior who makes all things bow to him as he builds his great creation temple so that we might worship him. For more on this, see my sermons on Genesis 1, and compare this thought with the Baal Cycle where Baal battles Yam (the Sea) as a warrior and finally builds his temple in seven days to glorify himself.

need do is turn to him. All you need know is that he is calling you to do this through his Word at this very moment. He is good and he is kind and he saves any who hope in him, even if you at the farthest end of the seas like one of those lost sailors.

How can he do this? Because **he is the Creator of all things**. Creation becomes the longest reason to praise God in this psalm. It is built off Genesis 1 and a Divine Warrior theme. Much of the imagery is of **water**. Recall that at creation, the world was without form and void and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters (**Gen 1:2**). What did God do with those chaotic, turbulent waters?

He brought land out of them. “**The one who by his strength established the mountains, being girded with might**” (**Ps 65:6**). The mountains exist at the Word of God who called them out of the depths of the seas.

But this calling from the seas would surely make the seas rage and foam all the more, right? “**... who stills the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, the tumult of the peoples, so that those who dwell at the ends of the earth are in awe at your signs**” (**7-8**). Recall our Lord Jesus on the sea, in the storm, sleeping. Recall his disciples becoming

increasingly frightened, full of worry and dread. So he got out of bed, spoke and word, and the sea was instantly still as glass.

Or recall the sailors on their way to Tarshish, the remotest part of the known world. When the storm came, they were terrified, and not until they threw Jonah overboard were the seas calmed. Jesus called **his death** the “sign” of **Jonah**, and by it he calmed the raging sea in which the sea-monster, Leviathan, the ancient dragon of old, Satan who held the keys of death dwelt. Now, to the Lord Jesus the keys of death and hades have been given, and he has power over their domain, so that he can save and become the hope of all the world, for he has the power over sea and men, being able to subdue them when he chooses.

Why else is praise due to God? “**You make the going out of the morning and the evening to shout for joy**” (8). This could refer to nature. That fits the Genesis 1 “**morning and evening**” formula. The point would be that he makes our days and nights happy and glad. I was recently watching a young artist explain a song she was writing. Sadly, she is literally a pagan and she is haunted by nightmares and by the poisonous words of people who hate her and her music.



Even she, living far away in Nordic Europe, most likely worshiping the goddess *could* know the hope and joy of this Psalm if someone told her the Gospel and she turned to Christ through its power.

The verse could also be translated, “**Make the twinkling stars of dawn and dusk shout for joy.**” If this was in mind, it parallels **Job 38:7** when the stars, the sons of God are shouting for joy at creation.<sup>9</sup> The meaning would then be that God’s power extends not only on earth, but to the heavens, and over the heavenly beings. They will praise him. Therefore, we must too. Truly, he is a divine warrior!

The water themes continue as God now begins to do good things to men through it. God is now seen as **a dispenser of great gifts**, especially water and fertility which are the basics of life. “**You visit the earth and water it; you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; you provide their grain, for so you have prepared it. You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers, and blessing its growth**” (**Ps 65:9-10**). This speaks of **God’s common grace**, which is shown here particularly to

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<sup>9</sup> See Mitchell Dahood S.J., *Psalms II: 51-100: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, vol. 17, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 113.

his covenant people, for that is where the river of God flows—to his people as the very water of life so that they thirst no more.

His common grace—common not because it isn't amazing, but because it occurs every moment of every day—continually and without ceasing. “You crown the year with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with abundance. The pastures of the wilderness overflow, the hills gird themselves with joy, the meadows cloth themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout and sing together for joy” (13). God has made the earth to serve man, and the earth is happy to do it! When it yields grain, it is praising God in its own way. And it does it beautifully, as he decks the entire planet out with its own kind of clothing fit to bring it and its creator glory. The planet is glorious, therefore worship its Creator, even as it does.

Friend, this psalm sings of many things that teach you why praise is due to our God. They focus on the mundane and ordinary to the special and saving. From providence over all affairs to sovereignly intervening to save and bring his chosen people to himself, God is worthy of praise.

## Look at What God has Done: He is the Redeemer (Ps 66)

Psalm 66 continues the same themes and adds more. And if there is a chiasm shared between it and Psalm 65, **its center** is the first three verses: “**Shout for joy to God, all the earth; sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise! Say to God, ‘How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies come cringing to you’**” (Ps 66:1-3). The command is to **shout for joy!** Joy, happiness. We do not come to worship God begrudgingly, or because we have no choice. We come out of the overflowing happiness that he has brought into our lives. But we must fight for that joy, because the sadness and sin of life seeks to overwhelm it. Worship then, is how **we renew our joy in the LORD.**

Shouting is something we Reformed people who hail from the bleak northern lands of Europe don't do much of in worship. Who am I kidding. We never do it. But think of it in Israel at the temple, a throng of tens of thousands gathering together, singing these psalms of praise. The shouts would make your spin shiver and raise goose-bumps

on the back of your neck. God is deserving of our shouts of praise, so that the whole world knows who he is and what he has done for us.

We sing to the glory of his name (2), and the Name of God and Glory of God are for us [the Lord Jesus](#) and what he has done in redeeming us. Not coincidentally, Psalm 66 is built off of Exodus 12 and the Passover story. These are themes of death and resurrection. A Psalm of Resurrection.

It begins with God's [enemies coming cringing to him](#) (2). That is, they hate it, they don't want to do it, but they have no choice. For he is that powerful over them that they must acknowledge who is God. Every knee will bow sooner or later to the King of kings and Lord of lords. This is one of his mighty deeds. His enemies come groveling at his feet. In the immediate context, this would be the Egyptians who were hurled into the sea.

Next, the world hears about this. Great fear seized the inhabitants of the surrounding nations and many came to know the LORD because of it. "[All the earth worships you and sings praises to you; they sing praises to your Name. Selah](#)" (4). Why [pause](#) here? Because God has the power to make the whole earth worship and sing to him. This is

happening around the word this day in fulfillment of this psalm, as people from nearly every tribe and language and nation and tongue are worshiping the Triune God this Lord's Day.

I said this is a psalm rooted in Exodus 12, and now we can begin to see it. “Come and see what God has done: he is awesome in his deeds toward the children of man” (5). It is interesting to me that these songs are not limited to Israel. Even though this song will sing of the Exodus, the psalmist knows that a mighty host went out that great day from bondage, a mixed multitude consisting of many who were not descendants of Abraham. Again, this is a foreshadowing of the work of Christ that will extend to the Gentiles as—in the culmination of this series of songs—he leads a train of captives free (see Ps 68:18) as the divine conqueror.

“He turned the sea into dry land; they passed through the river on foot” (6). He may have both the Red Sea and the Jordan crossings in mind, and God delivered them from slavery, and brought them into the Promised Land. These are images of coming back to life from the dead. You are not supposed to be able to cross a sea like this and come out alive. This is about resurrection.

“There did we rejoice in him, who rules by his might forever, whose eyes keep watch on the nations—let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah” (6b-7). There is a hint of warning here if you are not listening and do not believe. What we sing of here is rooted in real history. God did this for a people who still exist to this day, though most are themselves rebellious and exalt themselves rather than their God.

**The Lord watches the nations.** He is the Watcher of heaven, and he is Most High of heaven and earth. He sees all the vain things attempted by angels and men who seek to thwart his will. He sees, and he delivers those whom he calls his own. Therefore, you need to pay close attention to your heart. Do not boast in yourself. For he is able to humble you one way or another.

The song now bursts forth into a command for the peoples of the earth to “**Bless our God**” and “**let the sound of his praise be heard**” (8). Why? Because he kept his chosen people alive when they should have perished many times. From Joseph, to slavery in Egypt, to the wars of Joshua, to the many undeserved preservations in Judges, to the captivities—**he did not let our feet slip** (9).

This doesn't mean God was always easy on them. "For you, O God, have tested us; you have tried us as silver is tried" (10). We are reminded especially of the forty years of wandering in the desert. And entire generation falls, but the people were still allowed into the Promised Land. "You brought us into the net; you laid a crushing burden on our backs" (11). The thought seems to go further back to slavery in Egypt. "You let men ride over our heads" (12a). The task-masters and slave-drivers of Pharaoh were cruel and hard.

"We went through fire and through water; yet you have brought us out to a place of abundance" (12b). He pictures the pillar of fire, the parting of the sea, the smoke of Sinai, and the consuming blazes of his wrath at various times in the Exodus (like Nadab and Abihu). All of these images were seen both as testing, but as eventually purging. And God led them into the Land flowing with milk and honey.

Because of God's mighty redeeming deliverances, the corporate "us" suddenly becomes a personal "I." This is the way all corporate worship must be. We worship together, and yet each of us must worship as individuals. I must worship, not just we. "I will come into your house with burnt offerings; I will perform my vows to you" (13). This

is the theme of 65:1. But now the vow is explained: “That which my lips uttered and my mouth promised when I was in trouble” (14).

“I will offer to you burnt offerings of fattened animals, with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams; I will make an offering of bulls and goats. Selah” (15). Why the pause this time? If you come to worship, you are to offer the sacrifices of praise in his church today. But *you* must do it. The pastor, your parents, your spouse ... they can't do it for you. You must do it.

You must fight to worship God if at the moment you don't much “feel” like it. And if you don't feel like it, then you must remember all that we are learning today about the reasons why he is worthy of praise. And you must ask yourself if you believe this God is worth it or not. If he isn't, then he isn't God and you shouldn't be here. If he is, then you must put all other things aside and shout before the world: **Bless the LORD, for he is alone is worthy of praise.** You must fight for this worship, because your senses and your sin and Satan are fighting hard against it, to keep you from having this joy, this contentment in Christ. This is the meaning of the pause here. It is the chief end for which you



were created; it is the thing in the here-and-now that fills the void in your heart; it is the purpose of life.

And **it doesn't stop in the church**. It becomes a way of life that you can't help but tell others about. **"Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for my soul"** (16). You can only do such a thing if he has done something for your soul. If he hasn't, how could you ever tell anyone? But if he has, how can you not?

What did he do for the Psalmist? **"I cried to him with my mouth, and high praise was on my tongue. If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. But truly God has listened; he has attended to the voice of my prayer"** (17-19). It isn't that he never sins in his mind and body, because it is for sin that he cries out and it heard. It is that he does not cherish his sin in his heart, and this is why God hears him.<sup>10</sup> He hears and attends his voice, forgiving him of his sin as we saw in Psalm 65.

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<sup>10</sup> It is literally, "Iniquity, seen [it] in my heart. Hear not Adonai. It has been variously translated as the ESV does here, or as "If I have regarded iniquity in my heart, let not the Lord hearken to me." (Ps 66:18 LXA)

"If I saw falsehood in my heart, *would* the LORD not hear?" (Ps 66:18 PST). The heart is the key to the translation, because this is the seat of the affections. Is iniquity something he loves or hates?

Therefore, “Blessed be God, because he has not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me” (20). At the end of the day, it is the fact that God is merciful and full of covenantal *hesed* (loving-kindness) to the one he chooses to bring near. He forgives his sin. He restores his soul. He lifts his head. He unburdens his heart. He heals his mind. He saves his persons. He raises him from the dead. It is personal, not merely corporate. This is why God is worthy of praise.

## Let All Peoples Praise the LORD (Ps 67)

Psalm 67 sees “the universal note struck in 64:9 and continued in 65 and 66 come to a climax here.”<sup>11</sup> The “I” becomes “us” again. The company of the saints who have looked inward for salvation, now look again at the host and throng God has saved together. “May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, Selah” (Ps 67:1). The Aaronic blessing (Num 6:22-27) becomes the foundation of this psalm. We have moved from creation to redemption to eschatological blessing in Christ as spoken to God through Aaron.

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<sup>11</sup> Grogan, 123.

The Aaronic blessing is fascinating. It is still used throughout Judaism, but in an almost mystical way. As Leonard Nimoy has said, some think that the feminine Shekinah comes when the Vulcan hand greeting (which is actually perfectly Jewish) is raised at the end of the service. In this respect, it is almost goddess worship. But they still do it to the Aaronic blessing.

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan of the blessing in Numbers reads, “Speak with Aaron and his sons, saying: ‘Thus shall you bless the Israelites *while they (the priests) spread their hands upon the pulpit. In this language (Hebrew) they (the priests) shall speak to them:* May the Lord bless you and guard you in all your endeavor *from (the demons of the) darkness and from frightening demons and midday demons and morning demons and destroyers and night demons.* May the Lord make the graciousness of his countenance shine upon you *in your study of the Law and reveal to you obscure things* and protect you. The Lord make His face to shine upon thee, when occupied in the law, and reveal to thee its secrets, and be merciful unto thee” (Num 6:23-25). This reflects the ancient belief that the blessing could ward off evil spirits. It also begins to get into that mysticism of knowing the secret things of the LORD.

This Targum and even more so Targum Neofiti begins and ends this way, “Moses went forth from my Name and said to them [the blessing]. So they shall put my Name, my Memra, upon the children of Israel, and I, in my Memra, shall bless them.” The Name and the Memra (i.e. the Word, *Logos*) are what we Christians would refer to as the Lord Jesus Christ. And in this way, it reflects something of the Second Person being deeply part of the blessing.

The Psalm’s use of the blessing is much more subdued, and it fits perfectly with the other two Psalms. Its purpose is evangelistic: “That your way may be known on earth” (Ps 37:2). Its purpose is salvific: “your saving power among all nations” (2). If God be gracious to his people and bless them and make his face (*panim*; another word closely associated with Christ) shine upon us, then it will cause the nations to fear and hear; for God will be known in the saving power that he gives us.

Its purpose is doxological: “Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!” (3). This is exactly what we have been talking about all morning. And I love the way all three psalms have so much of their focus outside of Israel. God cares about the peoples of the world. In

Abraham, all the nations of the earth would be blessed. And surely, this is exactly what has happened in the coming of Jesus Christ.

“Let the nations be glad and sing for joy” (4). John Piper gets the name of his great book on missions from this verse. The entire song has a ring of missions to it. Let the nations—who are presently in darkness—be glad. Acts 17. Let them sing for joy. Given the current hatred of God among the nations, it seems almost impossible for this to be true. Yet, God is still saving. And he is still doing other things.

“For you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth” (4). God is the Judge of the nations, and his judgments are just and fair. He is never impartial. He does not take bribes. He does not favor some over others. He is not a racist in his judgments, nor does he engage in reverse discrimination. God is utterly unlike men in his justice. This is good news for anyone who knows himself to need God to save him.

Furthermore, it is a wonderful thing that even though (as we will see in Psalm 82) God has given the nations over to wicked heavenly beings; he is always sovereign over the affairs of the earth. He is guiding all exactly the way he

wants. This is why he is God, and they are not. And it is in his purposes to make his Name spread far and wide through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Do you believe this? Or do you think that God does not care about those living in darkness, who are groping around worshiping the Unknown God? We must gain a new zeal for reaching the lost with the only hope of filling that void that is in their hearts. Selah.

“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!” (5-7). This is praise. It is praise that extends well beyond the walls of the church, but it also must start here. For if we do not know why we are to praise, or worse, do not even want to praise, they how will anyone ever come to hear about the LORD from his people.

Christ is here, in his church through his Word. For some of you, he is personally far away. But he is as near as his Word. Nevertheless, you have a void in your heart, and only he can fill it. Cry out to him, for he hears your prayers and he will fill that void.

For others of you, he feels far away. You both have but haven't found what you're looking for. Sin has crept in

unawares. It is to his church (his people) that the Lord Jesus says he's right there at the door knocking. It isn't that he is out in every sense. But in the sense of warm fellowship, of eating and drinking with him, it sure feels that way. It is his promise to his people who have the Holy Spirit that he will come in if you hear him knocking and open the doors after being lukewarm and legalistic and loveless in your thoughts towards him. Open the door, Christian, and see if he will not dine with you anew. See if he won't come to your house like he did to Zacchaeus. See if he won't show you that he is the only thing that can and does bring fulfillment and satisfaction in this life. And do it by praising him from your heart and life today.

May the LORD richly bless you and profoundly change you as you think and act on why he alone is worthy of praise. To God be the Glory forever. Amen.