

God be Merciful to Us and Bless Us

April 28, 2021 Scott Gunn

*May God be merciful to us and bless us, *
show us the light of his countenance and come to us.
Let your ways be known upon earth, *
your saving health among all nations. —Psalm 67:1-2*

I love Psalm 67. Whether we sing it or say it, I find the words comforting and challenging in just the right measure.

Mercy is not something we talk about enough in our time. I hear a lot about being fair or just. And those are good things. But how often do we hold up the value of showing mercy?

I love that this psalm starts by asking for God's mercy on us. The scriptures seem pretty clear that God's grace is given to us whether or not we deserve it. Reader: we don't deserve it. So our hope is that God is merciful to us, giving us not what we deserve but what God chooses to bestow on us out of sheer love.

But it's not just about us and God. There's a community aspect to the psalmist's prayer. "*Let your ways be known upon earth, your saving health among all nations.*" How will God's ways be known? Perhaps we have a role to play here.

Earthly things cannot save us. We find our salvation in heavenly things: hope, grace, and mercy. Truly, the psalmist reminds us, we find our saving health in God alone.

But what is that saving health? Jesus said, "*I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly*" (John 10:10). The saving health of God is a love-centered way of living that takes us away from our selfish impulses toward a sacrificial love of God and our neighbors.

Mercy really only works in the context of love. If we want to learn to be merciful to our neighbors, we must love them. If we want to understand God's mercy toward us, we must see ourselves as beloved of God. It all hangs together: mercy, love, hope, grace.

Psalm 67 has a refrain that is repeated two times in just seven verses. "*Let the peoples praise you, O God; * let all the peoples praise you.*"

You see why I love this psalm? It grounds us in what matters, and then it leads us to praise. It's exactly right. If we can accept God's mercy toward us, and if we can work to spread God's saving health among all nations, joy will well within us.

Let the peoples praise you, O God. Let us praise you, O God. Alleluia.