

Isaiah 66:10-14
*God's people will
flourish like the grass*



Psalm 67
God's people = harvest



Luke 10:1-12, 16-20
*Jesus sends his disciples to
gather in the harvest.*

I love the fall. I'd even say it's one of my favorite seasons. The weather's starting to cool off, the trees start to change colors, but my favorite part is that the fruit trees are ripe and ready for picking. If you have an apple tree in your yard, the branches are full and weighed down—apples are ready to pick. Or even late August already those fresh peaches start to come in from Palisade (so I've been told). I love fall. So do farmers for that exact reason. It's the harvest season. All that they've worked for that year and waited for is finally ready to be harvested—to be gathered and put to good use. In the heat of summer, it feels like the harvest season is still pretty far away. You drive by those cornfields and the stalks are still pretty low. Not looking so ripe, and not quite ready to harvest...

Jesus looked around and he saw that the fields *were* ripe. They *were* ready for harvest. He wasn't standing in an apple orchard or in a cornfield, though. He was in villages and cities and what he saw were individuals. He saw people that needed to be gathered and hear God's Word. Jesus was talking about a harvest of souls. He said to 72 of his followers, "***The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.***" There are countless souls that could be rounded up and brought to faith—that's the harvest. But the question: who's going to go into the fields and take up that daunting task? Well the answer: he tells them, "***Go! I am sending you...***"

I. His ways recounting

I wonder what was on their minds as Jesus said, "Go!" I wonder if some of them were singing the words of Psalm 67. "**May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine on us, that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among the nations.**" God's people sang that awesome line for centuries before Jesus sent out his harvest workers. But how fitting a prayer it is for anyone sent out into the harvest that Jesus was talking about. Look what God's people are asking... "God, you've been gracious to us—you've forgiven us! You've blessed us—given us everything we need. God, keep on doing that!" And here's why they're asking God to bless them—"that *your* ways may be known on earth..."

Remember who's talking here—It's Old Testament Israel. Remember who their God is—it's the LORD! This was the God who made them into a powerful nation out of one old man named Abraham who was way past his prime. This was the God who rescued his people after nearly 400 years of slavery by stretching out his mighty hand. He sent plagues upon Egypt so they'd let his people go. He led them through the Red Sea by parting the water, and when their enemies came after them, he the entire army. That was their God and those were his ways. He saved his people. He crushed his enemies.

That makes you think, what are the Lord's "ways" according to certain people? To that Guy across the street, do God's ways really matter? "Life seems to be going fine as is, I don't need God." To that friend in your life who is confused are God's ways a little intimidating? "He's perfect, I'm not." What about to a relative that has slipped away from church over the years, do God's ways seem a little unfair? "I've gone to church for years and my life doesn't seem any easier, it's not fair." Or even to your own troubled conscience, do God's ways scare you at times? You know how he feels about sin, he hates it. God's ways are just, they're perfect. We are not.

Yet the psalmist sings of God's way that it may be made known to all the earth. Notice how he DOESN'T say, may your ways be known on earth, and you anger or judgment among the nations... It's a prayer

that God's "**ways be known on earth, his SALVATION among the nations.**" That word translated, "ways" is singular, so you see there's really only one way. There is one ultimate way that God deals with his people—through his Son. And you and I have experienced that and we continue to everyday. The way that God has dealt with your sin and your imperfection is the greatest example of his grace, his love. He took that burden off of you and nailed to the cross with Jesus. That means SALVATION. It means that God doesn't crush us for our disobedience. He doesn't punish us because Jesus took that punishment for us. In its place he gives the most important blessing of all—a perfect relationship with God and eternity with him. That's God's way—full and free forgiveness through Jesus.

Make *that* way known. That's the point of Psalm 67. The psalmist noticed the same thing that Jesus did—"the land will yield its harvest..." or in Jesus words "*the harvest is plentiful...*" Jesus looked around and he saw that the harvest was plentiful. In his day the population of the world was maybe a few million, and how many of them still needed to hear of God's way of salvation? Today the world's population is 7 billion! How many people still need to hear about God's awesome and gracious ways? Or just in our country—300 million—how many are still in the dark? How many people are your office who don't know their Savior? Who do you know? The harvest is plentiful. There's the harvest right before us, but who will go and work? Jesus told his disciples, **Go! I am sending you...** He says the same to us, Go! But how do you go about that harvest of souls? It's pretty simple—God makes his ways know *to* you so that they may be made know *through* you.

You get to go into the harvest field and retell the way of Salvation that you know so well. A little over a week ago, we got to do that at our soccer camp. Pastor and I, on behalf of this congregation, sat down with kids who had never really heard about Jesus and what he's done for us. We got to share the news that God is gracious. He forgives all sin through Jesus, the only way of salvation.

You get to go and tell anyone and everyone about God's awesome ways that God deals with his people. Like Psalm 67 proclaims, "**You rule the peoples justly.**" Or literally God governs and deals with his people in a straight, upright way. He takes broken, crooked lives and puts them on the straight and narrow path to eternal life. Also, "**He guides the nations of the earth.**" An awesome thought for this weekend as we celebrated the 4th of July. For almost two and a half centuries he's guided our nation, he's blessed us with a safe place to live and harvest fields throughout our country where we might proclaim hi Word. But most importantly he guides people of all nations to his Word where they can find true peace and true security. And he even uses us to do that, as workers in his harvest. What do say to that? "**God, be gracious to us. Bless us. Make your face shine on us that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among the nations.**"

II. Our praise resounding

There's a lot of reason to celebrate, isn't there? And people just love to take up the opportunity to do so. Just think of all the celebration that's been going on this weekend—shooting off fireworks, kids running around with sparklers, all kinds of cook outs. Why is that? To celebrate freedom. But think of the even greater celebration that happens when a soul is freed from the guilt sin. When that person learns that God's ways are gracious and his way of salvation is free, look at the celebration—"**may the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you.**" that same verse pops up twice in the psalm. When God's way, his salvation is revealed, his people praise him. When we realize that God rules our lives justly and guides the nations and all things for the good of his people, we praise him.

What does it mean to praise God, though? Well we've been doing that this morning. In worship many different people come together and with one voice we praise God. We come and confess our sins and then hear the sweet promise of forgiveness. And so naturally we praise God. We praise him songs, and with "Alleluias" and with "Amens". So, worship is praise, but don't ever think that your opportunity to praise God is limited to one hour per week. Don't think that it happens just inside these walls.

One of my favorite prayers we say at the end of worship puts it into perspective I think. It goes something like this: "Hear the prayer of your people, O Lord, that the lips which have praised you here may glorify you in the world." That doesn't mean you have to go to work singing hymns, chanting alleluia. The best way to give God glory is to give people in need what they really need. It happens a lot here during the week. Lots of people with lots of needs come looking for help. Some people think all they need as 20 bucks to get

from point A to point B. We don't always have that to give out though, but we do have what they really need, and so do you. You know all kinds of people in your life with different needs, but think of those who have the greatest need—Jesus. Sharing him with those who need it, that's giving glory to God.

God's Old Testament people, who first sang this psalm, got that point. Even though they were clearly set apart and different from other nations around them, their prayer is, "**May the peoples praise you, O God...**" God's people today, you and I, we get it too don't we? You look around and see that you are different from the world because you know God's way of salvation. You praise him. Yet our prayer is the same "**May the peoples praise you, O God, may all the people's praise you!**"

So the 72 finally come back. Jesus had said, "*I'm sending you out like sheep among wolves.*" Harvest work wasn't going to be all that easy, in other words. But still they came back rejoicing. They rejoiced because what psalmist said was true—"**The land will produce its harvest, and God, our God will bless us.**" God blessed their work as they went throughout Galilee to harvest souls, to bring them a message of peace. God does the same for us as we go into the harvest fields that right outside those doors... "**God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth will fear him.**" AMEN

Vicar Justin Gran