

Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family

Title: Where Does Blessing Come From?

Lesson: Psalm 67 NRSV Updated Edition

¹ *May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us, Selah*

² *that your way may be known upon 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. Selah*

⁵ *Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.*

⁶ *The earth has yielded its increase;
God, our God, has blessed us.*

⁷ *May God continue to bless us;
let all the ends of the earth revere him.*

(Slide 1) Good morning, Church! It's sixth Sunday of Easter. Let's say Easter's greeting: Christ is risen, Christ is risen indeed!

(Slide 2) Good to see you everybody. It's been two weeks, right? How have you been? I missed all of you. Thanks to all of you for allowing us a vacation, we were able to have a good break in Southern California. I think vacations are very good, important, and necessary for people because they allow us to experience various emotions and various events that we do not feel in everyday life. Psalm 67, which we read today, speaks about the blessings God gives us. Let us all read Psalm 67: 6-7: "6 The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, has blessed us. 7 May God continue to bless us; let all the ends of the earth revere him." In this text, the writer is asking God for a blessing because He is the one who created this world and the one who blesses it.

One of the things I realized during this vacation was that God really created this world, all blessings come from Him, and there is nothing I can do according to my will without God's help and permission.

(Slide 3) My family and I planned a vacation trip to CA from May 10th to 19th. We were very excited, and as the Mother's Day service ended, we were filled with

anticipation. From that Sunday to Monday we packed our luggage. When we packed our bags, Evan thought we were playing a game, he unpacked it, and when we packed it again, he unpacked it again. With Evan's help, we packed up until 2am on Tuesday. The departure time was morning at 10:30 on Tuesday, so I woke up at 5:30 a.m. And we had breakfast and departed for the airport at 7:30 a.m. We arrived at the airport around 9 o'clock and we checked in. But there was one problem. The airport parking fee was so expensive, so I had reserved a hotel parking lot 1.6 miles from the airport to save money. 1.6 miles was a very close distance, so I told my wife I would park there alone and be back soon. When I parked it, it was 9:50. It was too tight, but Minneapolis-St. Paul airport is usually quiet, so I figured I'd get to the gate on time. However, the hotel shuttle didn't come on time, so I called Lyft like a taxi. But the driver was lost and could not find me.

(Slide 4) As I was feeling anxious, worried and nervous, I saw a hotel shuttle coming from afar. So I waved to stop the car and got on the car and went to the airport. As the shuttle driver heard my departure time he said: "I really don't think you will make it." My wife kept calling me while on the way to the airport. My heart was too impatient, anxious, and worried. It was 10:10 when I arrived at the airport. We quickly moved to security. The problem, however, was that food for Evan is stuck at the checkpoint. In general baby food goes through, but the checkpoint staff searched it thoroughly. My wife and son made it to the gate in advance and I decided to carry all my luggage.

I ran and ran, and ran towards the gate. But the time was 10:29. From afar, my wife shouted at me: "We missed our flight!" All of our luggage went to L.A., and after hearing all the explanations from the staff that we had missed our flight, I dropped down in my place. And when we asked them what to do now, they offered us free tickets the very next day. We were so frustrated, but there was no choice. We came back home and made a new plan for our trip. I rescheduled our rental car pick up.

The next day we smoothly parked at the hotel, checked in at the airport, and arrived at the gate well and arrived in L.A. However, there was another problem. Our arrival time was 4:30 p.m., but the rental car company I booked with was so small that they had to close at 5 o'clock. LAX is very huge and very crowded. Can you imagine that I have to get to the company within 30 minutes? I contacted them about this even before I arrived in L.A. and asked and pleaded for help. I decided to find our bags later, and ran, ran, and ran to the company. Fortunately, I rented a

car and returned to the airport to find our bags. However, there was another problem. The flight we took was the last flight of the airline, so all the staff of the airline had already left work. So we couldn't find our luggage on that day.

We were supposed to stay in San Diego that day, but the very next morning we had to pick up our luggage at the airport, so we gave up our trip to San Diego and went to Esther's aunt's home. Before going to her aunt's home, we went to a Korean restaurant for dinner and ordered food. At that time we were so tired, exhausted, and so frustrated.

A man sat at the table next to our table, and he looked at Evan and smiled. While we were eating, an employee came to us and informed us that he had paid for the food on our behalf. We were so surprised because we didn't know each other at all. So we asked him: Why did you pay for our meal? Then he said that when he saw Evan, he remembered his grandson. And he asked me: "Are you a Christian?" I was not surprised by his question because there are many Christians in this world. I answered him: "Yes I am." Then he said he saw me praying before eating. And his next question surprised me. He asked me: "Are you a pastor?" Pastors are less common than Christians, so I was very surprised. So I asked: "How did you know?" I explained to him that I was a Methodist minister, served in Wisconsin, studied in Claremont, and came to L.A. on vacation today. Then he said: "I paid your meal for you because the Holy Spirit gave me such a heart. Have a good time in Los Angeles and return home safely."

The moment we listened to him, we felt that our tired and struggling hearts found peace and warmth. After dinner we went to Esther's aunt's home. We met our families and enjoyed Korean food while on vacation.

(Slide 5) We usually stayed in Esther's aunt's home or our American parents' house while on vacation in L.A., but we booked a hotel for one day to enjoy our vacation just for us. Esther searched and searched, and searched and decided on a very nice hotel a week before our vacation began. Look at the photos. That's the output of her search. Looks good, right?

One of the reasons we went to California was to attend my graduation ceremony. I had already graduated two years ago, but due to Covid-19, I had my graduation ceremony via Zoom without even trying on a gown and cap. Due to the consideration of the school, the 2020 and 2021 graduates were also invited to the graduation ceremony. However, there was one problem. Each graduate had to order their gown and cap from the company that connected to the school, and even

though I had already ordered a gown and cap a month ago to Esther's aunt's home and I even paid for fast shipping, I didn't receive it before the graduation ceremony. I was in the wonderful pool, but I didn't fully enjoy it and made annoying phone calls with the company. In conclusion, they admitted their mistake and sent me a gown and cap with the fastest delivery, but it only arrived after graduation.

(Slide 6) Fortunately, when I called the school the day before graduation, they told me they had an extra suit. It was a women's size though... But, it didn't matter to me. The important thing was that I was able to attend the graduation ceremony and had a good time with my friends and pastor and professors.

There were many ups and downs, but we had a very good and meaningful time in Southern California. Whenever we encountered worries and difficulties during our travels, the Lord turned them into joy and happiness. We arrived at the airport in a hurry not to miss our return flight to Wisconsin. By the way, our flight was supposed to leave at 6 p.m., but it was delayed and delayed, and delayed. What I realized through this trip was that nothing is taken for granted in this world, and nothing is possible without the Lord's help. We learned this hard, and when our departure time was delayed, we felt no worries or frustrations because we believed that the Lord would protect us. In conclusion, we arrived safely at Clear Lake at 3:30a.m.

(Slide 7) Friends How did you hear about my vacation? Until I share my vacation story with you, you were probably thinking that your pastor just went on vacation and came back well. However, how did you feel about hearing my story in detail? I think we all have some concerns and worries, even if you don't share them directly or specifically. Worries and concerns are a part of our lives. However, as in today's verse, when the writer prayed to God, the Lord heard their prayers. Let's read verse 6 again: "The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, has blessed us." Friends, everything is in the Lord's hands, and it is only our God who blesses us. May God continue to bless us; let all the ends of the earth revere him. Amen.