

# “Let the Nations Be Glad!” Selected Text

Preached @ Harambee Church by Pastor Michael Gunn on March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2009

*“The **Goal** of missions is the gladness of the nations in the glory of God!”*  
**John Piper**

## Intro

For the past eleven years Donna and I (and often my kids) have traveled to Visakhapatnam, India with a team to teach at a pastor’s conference and work at their children’s home. This week, we leave again with 10 people for 12 days, and our crew is going to put on a Vacation Bible School for over 300 children, many of them who are Hindus. Please pray for that trip!

Even though we began 1 Peter last week, I wanted to start an annual “Missions Sunday” highlighting the bible’s call in the life of the people of God to proclaim the “Good News” to the nations! However, I was not able to finish my sermon last week, so I am going to dovetail 1 Peter 1:1-2 with Psalms 67:3-4. I feel there is a cool crossover that will give us the content and scope of our mission to the nations to which we are called!

1 Peter begins as we saw last week with election, which gives us great comfort that God’s plan to reach the nations will happen based on His will, and that our obedience is a result of His will in our lives.

## From the Head...

Mission is not what happens overseas, it is what the church (that means all of us) is called to do (**Matthew 28:19-20; John 20:31; Acts 1:8**). With that said, it is our duty to take the “Good News” of God’s story to the “ends of the earth.” It is our privilege and we are all called to participate in one way or another (**Matthew 9:38**). It is because He is so glorious and he has done so much, that we can’t help but proclaim it to the nations!

It is also important to state that ultimately mission is not the “goal” of the church – worship is. Mission exists because worship doesn’t!

Today we are going to take a look at the content and scope of our mission:

### The Content of Our Mission (1 Peter 1:2)

The content of the mission is the gospel of God’s “Good News.”

The beauty of God’s elective sovereignty is that He has prepared the hearts and minds of men and women all over the globe to hear the message of the gospel, and to respond to it in faith. As I said last week, election saves no one. It takes a response to the call of the gospel on their heart (see **Romans 10:9-10**), and a “preacher” to allow them to hear the beauty of the good news (**Romans 10:14-15**). **1 Peter** reminds us that the gospel is given to us by the work of our “Trinitarian” God (Father, Son and Spirit). Here we see that “Election” is:

*“According to the **Foreknowledge** of God the Father...”*

As we see in verse one, God doesn’t choose on the basis of seeing into the future who would choose Him. He chooses based on His “foreknowledge,” (Prognosis), which is based on His intimate knowledge of us prior to the foundation of the world. The fact is, we did not “choose” Him, He chose us (**John 15:16**). Foreknowledge means an intimate knowledge by which He knows His people (**Palm 1:6; Amos 3:2**). We see that God “chose” Abraham (**Nehemiah 9:7**) while Abraham was a pagan (**Joshua 24:2-3**), and that was on the basis of God “knowing” him (**Genesis 18:19**).

*“In the **Sanctification** of the Spirit...”*

This all occurs by God’s work in our lives (**2 Thessalonians 2:13**). He is the “*author and perfecter of our faith*” (**Hebrews 12:2**), and He will complete the work He began in us (**Philippians 1:6**). Salvation is of the Lord, and because of that we can humbly fall before Him in praise!!

*“For **Obedience** to Jesus Christ and for **Sprinkling with His Blood**”*

Here is the result and intention of election in God’s foreknowledge. This is only made possible by Christ’s work on the cross, who has executed God’s plan from the foundation of the world (**Acts 2:23; 4:28**) so that our lives could be lived in holiness to our Lord. Our righteousness is His (**2 Corinthians 5:21**), and we can rejoice that we can live a holy (separated) life because of what Christ has done. Our works of obedience are the result of God’s work in us (**Ephesians 1:12; 2:10; John 15:16**), and a confirmation that His grace is evident in our lives (**1 Peter 1:5-11**).

It is this content that shapes our faith, and sends us into the world to proclaim His glory, which leads us to the “scope of our mission.”

## The Scope of Our Mission (Psalm 67:1-4)

### **Includes the What? (Psalm 67:1-2)**

This part of the mission is impossible without understanding and believing the first point. As John Piper writes, *"You can't commend what you don't cherish. Missionaries will never call out, 'Let the nations be glad!' who cannot say from the heart, 'I rejoice in the Lord...I will be glad and exult you, I will sing praise to your name, oh most high' (Psalm 104:34; 9:2). Mission begins and ends in worship."*<sup>1</sup>

C.S. Lewis writes on this topic and says, *"I had never noticed that all enjoyment overflows into praise...The world rings with praise...I had not noticed either that just as men spontaneously praise whatever they value, so they spontaneously urge us to join them in praising it."*<sup>2</sup>

As a matter of fact, worship is both the *"fuel and goal of missions"*.<sup>3</sup> Like anything we do in Christ's name, we do it as an act of worship from a heart that has been transformed by the "content" of the gospel.

In **Psalm 67:1** we see the psalmist praying for blessing, but **Psalm 67:2** cannot be missed, because it gives us the reason for the prayer ...*"so that your way may be known on earth; your saving power among all nations."* God blesses His people for the sake of the nations! Theologian and Martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote *"We are the people of God for the sake of others!"* This is the logic of election. Election was never pre-conceived before the foundation of the world by God the Father for us to live in comfort and pride as His own people. We were called and marked out to suffer (like His Son) for the sake of His mission and His glory here on earth. This idea is not new. In **Genesis 12:2** we see the same idea. Abraham's name will be made great, *"so that you will be a blessing."* In **1 Peter 2:9** we see the blessing of a new identity we have in Christ, so that we would, *"proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness."* We can't escape the idea that we are elected to be in service to the God who saved us, but it's a natural act of obedience from believing the gospel in our lives.

### **Includes Who? (Psalm 67:3-4)**

"Who" is the "nations" (see **Revelations 5:9-10; 7:7-12**). This is in context with God's plan from the beginning of the ages (**Genesis 12:1-3; Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8**). At Harambee (and in my relationship with Acts 29), we are convicted and convinced that it is the prerogative of the church to spread the joy of God in the glory of God to as many people as possible throughout the entire earth. It transcends all cultural, ethnic, gender and socio-economic systems, and calls us into the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. There are no "closed" countries. We are called to sacrifice for the sake of the gospel. We are NOT called to comfort and safety, but to be bold and wild and trusting in God for His mission in the world.

Verses three and four begin with the "gladness" (joy) of the nations in the glory of God as a result of the people's praise for God's glory in the world. I agree with Pastor/Theologian John Piper when he says that, *"The **Goal** of missions is the gladness of the nations in the glory of God,"* especially as it relates to our verses here in the Psalms. Note here in verses three and four that there is a trajectory from praise to gladness. Again C.S. Lewis writes, *"I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation."*<sup>4</sup> It is our joy made complete in our praise that extends the glory of God to the nations, so that their joy would be made complete. And we are most satisfied when we are doing what we are created to do; praise the creator of the universe. We reach the Nations when we are passionately praising God in our proclamation, experience and expression of the glory of God. Only God can satisfy the human soul! To this C.S. Lewis also writes,

*"Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for desires exists. A baby feels hunger: well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire: well, there is such a thing as sex. **If I find in myself a desire, which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.** If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing. If that is so, I must take care, on the one hand, never to despise, or be unthankful for, these earthly blessings, and on the other, never to mistake them for something else of which they are only a kind of a copy, or echo, or mirage. I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country, which I shall not find till after death; I must never let it get snowed under or turned aside; I must make it the main object of life to press on to that other country and to help others to do the same."*

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<sup>1</sup> John Piper, *Let The Nations Be Glad*, 17

<sup>2</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 94

<sup>3</sup> John Piper, *Let The Nations Be Glad*, 17

<sup>4</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Reflections On The Psalms*, 95

### **...To the Heart**

Many of us desire comfort rather than the joy that comes from having a passionate desire for God's praise and glory. We settle for second best. We settle for comfort and safety instead of believing the gospel in a way that actually transforms our lives to live in a way that expresses belief in God and His gospel.

Many of us turn to God to heal our souls, and in our mind that healing is the ridding of pain from our lives; whereas the gospel often allows us to wallow in pain for the sake of the gospel and His glory.

The joy we seek is only found in the person of Jesus and His mission in the world. The world needs Jesus, as Jesus prayed to the Lord of the harvest, "*to send out laborers into the harvest (Matthew 9:38)*". Not necessarily more full-time workers, but more of God's called/elect to move into mission here and all through the world!

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