

2. Blessed to Bless

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[0 : 0 0] Okay.

You really need to get shorter speakers. Now, there were some microphone issues last night. I hope they're not repeated tonight.

Can you hear me clearly? Yes. Okay. Long may that continue. Well, thank you, Brian, again, for the invitation to be here.

It's been a great delight to be back in Kuching, and especially with KEC and any other guests. I want to think in this session about one of my favorite psalms.

I don't know about you, but sometimes I find people who do dumb things very amusing. In fact, not just me.

[1 : 0 8] You may have heard there's a dinner held every year where they give out what's called the Darwin Awards. Now, have you heard of the Darwin Awards?

They're awards given to people who do something so stupid they get themselves killed. So last year, the runner-up was a man from New Jersey.

There'd been a big thunderstorm, and tens of thousands of homes lost their light, their power. And there were power lines down across the city. And at one place, there was a power line sputtering away.

So the crews put these orange little pyramids there on the road to stop people driving on that road. And there's a sign. Don't drive on the road.

Live power wire. So one guy was in a hurry. So he drove around the orange little pyramid. And there was the line sputtering away.

[2 : 1 0] He drove over the line, the power line. And there was a man. The car was immediately engulfed in flames and blew up, and he died. How dumb is that?

And the guy was an electrician. Really? So that guy won the runner-up award for the dumbest thing last year that got someone killed, the runner-up award.

He didn't win first place. They gave first place to a man whose name you might remember, a Chinese-American with the name John Chow.

Remember John? John's that young guy who rode or paddled his kayak to North Sentinel Island in the Indian Ocean to bring the gospel to a remote and completely untouched tribe.

John landed on the beach, and it's said he called out, I am John. I love you. And Jesus loves you. And they immediately spared him to death.

[3 : 2 5] And the secular media just laughed at John. How stupid to go there to a remote island of people with no contact with the West, bring your Christian message, what a dumb way to die.

That was the assessment of the secular media. I don't think it was God's assessment. Now maybe John could have been wiser in his strategy.

But he's a tribe of people who don't know God, don't know the Saviour, and are on the brink of hell. And he loved them and gave his life for them.

In my view, that's not dumb. But if you read the secular media, they just pan and criticise missions. They call missionaries paternalistic, arrogant, imperialistic, destroying cultures.

All over the world are good, healthy cultures. We go in there and ruin their culture. That's what they say. It shows they don't know missionaries and don't know cultures.

[4 : 52] One of the first societies, missionary society, was the London Missionary Society, which began in 1794. Some Christian men met in a pub.

And over a beer, planned to win the world. They began a mission. They sent out, two years later, 30 people on a boat for the South Seas.

Just ordinary men, 30 men, six wives and one child. Ordinary men. Carpenters, bricklayers, a harness maker, a shoemaker, and one clergyman.

No preparation. The streets of London were lined with people to cheer them on. It took them seven months to get to Tahiti.

They dropped off 18 people in Tahiti. Tahiti had had, before they came, European visitors, sailors and whalers, explorers, who brought to their island alcohol and guns and disease that ravaged the island.

[6 : 06] So these foreigners were not welcome. Of the 18, eight soon wanted to go home. Two went native.

One was never heard of again. one they found his crushed skull two years later. Two went mad. One had a nervous breakdown.

They dropped off nine missionaries in Tonga with no provisions. They endured, quote, two and a half years of indescribable horror without a single visit from a European ship.

Of the nine, three were murdered. One gave up the faith. And when war broke out, the rest fled and hid in caves and lived for two years a hand-to-mouth existence before they were finally rescued.

Tahiti, Tonga were not island paradises. the practice of killing babies infanticide was rampant.

[7 : 27] It's estimated that in Tahiti three-quarters of all children were killed at birth normally by their parents to satisfy their gods. Three-quarters of all children killed at birth.

One woman was asked, how many children do you have? she said, the one in my arms. And how many did you kill?

She said, eight. Another woman killed seventeen babies. These were not island paradises.

Yet despite those early setbacks, the gospel spread in the South Seas. twenty years later, the mission sent out two men to see how the work was going.

They went to a small island called Huahim. It was a Sunday morning and they went to church. The entire population was there in church, all converted. The king rose up in church and said these words, Our hearts rejoice exceedingly on account of the great goodness of God in bringing you amongst us this day.

[8 : 48] Our hearts are filled with love and affection for you, though we never saw your faces before yesterday. We here were in darkness, without the knowledge of God or the way of life, when you and your country turned your eyes towards us.

It was God who inclined you to think of us and send teachers to instruct us in the good word and lead us into the way of heaven.

We were on the brink of the fire of hell. We hated and hunted and killed one another. Through God's love alone, that word was brought to us by our kind friends and teachers who leaped hither over the tops of the breaking waves to help us.

And the gospel spread from Ireland to Ireland and we saw in the 19th century one of the great revivals in church history in the South Seas. I just think it's an inspiring story.

I say that for two reasons. One to remind you as I did last night what our forebears endured to bring the gospel to the world.

[10 : 12] How they suffered. Today the biggest issue for the missionary is is there Wi-Fi? Now that's important. I like Wi-Fi.

That's our big issue. Back then they suffered and they died. Just remember what they went through to bring to you the gospel. And second to remind you the work there hasn't finished.

If you know the book Operation World it has a report on Tahiti today. It says this. Tahiti is a paradise gone tragically wrong.

Once a Christian nation that sent missionaries all over the Pacific Tahiti is now debased through promiscuity, prostitution, alcoholism, drug abuse, family breakdown.

The evangelical witness is very small. people. So I thought I'd kick off tonight. We're looking at a marvelous psalm which reminds us of two things.

[11 : 25] One, how blessed we are by God here in Kuching and secondly, why God has blessed us so abundantly.

So if you have your Bibles there, turn to the lovely Psalm 67. It's a psalm they think was written for a harvest festival.

Now I'm not sure if you have them or have had them. When I grew up as a boy in Australia, we had in my church every year a harvest festival where people would bring into the church their cans of food, their vegetables, to remind us in the words of the hymn how God sent the snow in winter, the warmth to swell the grain, the breezes and the sunshine, the soft refreshing rain, all good gifts around us.

To remind us how God's been so good to us that we give that food out to the poor. So this psalm is reminding us of how God's been good to us, but then to remind us again of why God has been so good to us.

It's a simple psalm with a simple structure. It's what's called by the scholars an inclusio. It's like a wheel. And the outer rim of the wheel is blessing.

[12 : 47] So it's verses 1 and 2 and the last two verses speak of God blessing us. Verse 1 May God be gracious to us and bless us. Then turn over to verse 7 May God bless us still.

So 1 and 2 6 and 7 remind us God has blessed us. So there is the outer rim of God's blessing. Then you may have picked up as Angelina read out that passage verses 3 and 5 are identical.

This is the psalmist poison- earth let's look at this psalm briefly first of all the the outer ring of blessing it begins with really an allusion to the famous blessing of Aaron the Lord bless you and keep you the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you the Lord turn his face towards you and give you his peace I love that picture of God's face shining on us the shining face of God it's like I guess it's like the groom at the wedding there's the groom at the altar the word comes the bride has arrived the groom turns around and he just beams at this picture of loveliness the shining face of the groom this is the shining face of God our father our Lord our king our friend who longs to bless us and we're told in verse 7 how the look the land has yielded its harvest now kuching's like Melbourne we're so blessed with our food aren't we I went home last night and I had an email from my wife she said I'm sure you're being wined and dined in kuching I said well I'm being dined I'm not sure about the wine part but I'm certainly being dined I've been out for two amazing meals these last two nights how you eat so much food and look like you do bemuses me but the abundance is incredible isn't it just incredible and like Melbourne I live in the inner city of

Melbourne if you've been to Melbourne or Sydney you know there's a Coles or Woolworths you've you've you know the supermarkets I went down to cool Coles a while ago I just did a check a numbers check of the food on the shelves do you know in my city how many kinds of water you can buy if you're dumb enough to buy water when you get it free from a tap but anyway how many kinds of water I did a check you can buy spring water not just spring water you can buy pure spring water as opposed I guess to buying impure spring water okay you can buy natural spring water you can buy Australian spring water you don't want to buy New Zealand spring water buy Aussie spring water you can buy premium spring water or mineral water you can buy artesian water lightly sparkling water formulated sports water formulated sports water unteen flavored waters you can buy coconut water tonic water soda water or just get it from the tap free of charge that's that's the water we love in my country our breakfast cereals I did a count on the shelf was 94 kinds of cereal 43 different mueslis but I went there to buy yogurt I didn't know buying yogurt could be such a trauma

I could have got Greek yogurt creamy yogurt thick and creamy yogurt probiotic goodness yogurt low fat naturally sweet Indian or my first yogurt yogurt for babies then there's the flavors I could have got blackberry blueberry strawberry strawberry and raspberry mixed berry smashed berry vanilla peach and mango mango and passion fruit mango and blood orange banana tropical caramelized fig toffee and honeycomb it's mind-boggling that's just the yogurt my point is this the land has yielded its harvest we are so blessed but verse 2 that your ways may be known on earth your salvation among all nations why has god blessed kuching not just in food but in so many ways with wealth why has god blessed you that you can take these blessings god's salvation to the ends of the earth that's why you're blessed blessed to be a blessing but i think god will particularly bless a church or a person who has a heart for the nations so enjoy his blessings but remember their purpose he has enriched you that you can take the wealth of the gospel to the nations that's the outer ring of blessing now we come to verses 3 and 5 the inner ring of praise he wants all the nations to praise god that's why the world exists you know that but not just the world the whole cosmos for the glory of god the heavens declare the glory of god god you exist for the glory of god the praise of his name i think one of the best books on mission is by john piper it's the title comes from this psalm it's called let the nations be glad his book has in my view the best opening line of any book on mission piper writes this missions is not the ultimate goal of the church worship is missions missions missions exists because worship doesn't then he goes on worship is ultimate not missions because god is ultimate not man when this age is over and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of god missions will be no more it is a temporary necessity but worship abides forever do you know what i think is the worst sin of my city melbourne it's not the billions wasted in gambling it's not the binge drinking

[21 : 34] it's not the domestic violence it's not the sexual morality that's not the worst sin in my city in my view the worst sin is day by day the people of my city walk the corridors of coles and woolworths and myers and david jones by all their food and other things every single thing they buy a gift from their creator their sustainer and their redeemer and they don't even give him a thought they just take the blessings and enjoy them in paul's words in romans for though they knew god they did not give glory to god or give him gratitude blessed so abundantly so few acknowledge that so the psalm said that the nations let all the peoples praise you oh god let all the peoples praise you let them thank you for your abundant blessing to them so the outer ring of blessing the inner ring of praise and now we come to the hub of the psalm let the nations rejoice and shout for joy for you judge the peoples with fairness or equity and lead the nations on earth does that strike you as a little bit odd there's an exhortation everyone should be joyful not just the christian god wants all people to rejoice to be full of joy but here's the thing that surprises us why rejoice for you judge the nations with fairness that i think is the great disconnect between the world view of the bible and the world view of the modern church and i mean by that the evangelical church the bible rejoices in god's judgment we're embarrassed by it the bible proclaims the goodness of god's judgment we are apologetic for it the bible has songs we rejoice in judgment we don't write them or sing them in our church we avoid the topic i spoke last year at a pastor's conference of uh actually chinese methodists and one pastor said to me mike i feel guilty but i never preach judgment though it's in the bible but i feel guilty but i never do because i want my church to be a welcoming church and my fear is if someone comes to church for the first time and i'm preaching judgment they'll never come back so but it's in the bible but still i never preach judgment but the bible writers know as any victim of injustice knows that true and fair justice is a wonderful thing this year in perth in my country for the first time ever in that state a man was sentenced to life imprisonment until the day he dies he murdered with a knife his wife three small children and mother-in-law planned it and ran away he got life that's good that's good that's fair that's just it's just but here's the other problem with this verse how can god judge the nations rightly with justice and these very same people rejoice in that how can they in other words how can god be the righteous judge of the nations who stand condemned and at the same time have his salvation known across the world i don't think the psalm writer or conductor knew the answer to that problem how god could be just and at the same time justify the ungodly he didn't know that but we do because we know the gospel we know the place where justice and mercy met where god in paul's words was both just and justify the ungodly i want to say if this psalm could rejoice in god's justice and mercy how much more could we do it and possibly the most important sentence paul ever wrote paul said in romans 3 god presented jesus as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in his blood he did this to demonstrate his justice you see when god watches the people of my city walk in those corridors in those supermarkets taking all his good gifts and not giving him a thought god did not say way to well to hell with melbourne when he sees the people of gu ching in your lovely restaurants having your amazing meals giving god no thought he did not say i could care less about coaching he didn't he did not say to hell with melbourne instead he went to hell for melbourne he didn't say i couldn't care less he could not have cared more for the people of gu ching that he gave his son that his salvation might be known throughout the earth that's the hub of this psalm it ends with the prayer that god might keep on blessing us god has blessed the harvest god still blesses us and god will bless us in the future god's blessed us to be a blessing let me say two things about this before we finish i just think i've said this before i think for christians being thankful is one of the most important things we can do i begin every day in my prayers with a prayer of thanks like this prayer i thank you father for the simple pleasures of daily life for waking and sleeping for mind heart body and energy for a bed a home for fresh water for food and drink for family and friends for plants trees flowers and grasses

for earth sky and sea for the delights of the city for sunshine clouds and rain for books and music for teachers for composers musicians authors artists architects builders craftsmen farmers farmers gardeners doctors nurses scientists and all other workers i thank you they're all such a blessing but secondly and importantly remember why god has blessed k ec i attend i've said there's a small church in west melbourne just tiny maybe 50 60 people on a piece of land worth about 18 million dollars and with a building there which last year we leased out to a school for a hundred years it'll bring in i'll just say this a very large amount of money every year for the next hundred years very large for a church of 50 people god has done something else in west melbourne if you were there 30 years ago west melbourne was largely industrial factories shops etc that's all gone it's now all by and large high-rise apartments in those apartments are almost entirely asians students young workers most unconverted god's done two great things for my church he's blessed the church financially abundantly and has brought to my doorstep our doorstep the nations who are unconverted the duty of my church is obvious why is god blessed us so abundantly that we can be a blessing to the nations that his salvation might be known throughout the earth and the coming also to kooching and you're blessed abundantly and you're blessed abundantly praise god for that but remember why you're blessed to bring his salvation to the ends of the earth let's pray thank you father we sit here tonight in our comfort in in our in our wealth all these things are just our good gifts from your kind and gracious hand and we lift our voices and hearts together tonight and we say thank you heavenly father thank you for bringing to us the nations so please give us a heart for them may we use these blessings to take to them the good news of jesus that they can find salvation in him we pray this in his name and for his praise and glory amen