



INFINITE DESCENT, PART 3: ANTICIPATION AND RESPONSE

TYLER VELIN | DECEMBER 25, 2016 | PSALM 67

Good Christmas morning to all of you. I'm not sure how many of you have already opened gifts, or how many of you have yet to open your gifts, but my family is still waiting to do this after the service today.

But I'm extremely nervous for this, because my wife told me that I'm really bad at faking excitement over gifts that I'm not really excited about. I know I'm not a perfect person, but I am a person who genuinely appreciates anything which people give me. So I have this weight hanging around my neck this morning knowing that I am going to be judged by my wife as to my response to the gifts I'm given.

Though I might be particularly bad at this, we all face this dilemma of anticipation. There are some people who give out Christmas lists to relatives, and when they finally get those presents, they have this hope that it is something from their list. Even people who get surprised by unexpected gifts begin to weigh and analyze the package attempting to ready ourselves for what's inside.

And whether we know it or not, all of this anticipation that we feel is a response to what we think we need or want. One would expect that good gift givers give gifts that people want or need right? So the tension you feel in your hearts as you begin to tear the wrapping off of your present is really the tension of, "Is what I perceive to be my true desire, the same thing this person sees as my true desire." Our anticipation and our responses are tied to our ability to understand our past wants.

Will my former longings be met? And in this anticipation we face the tension of response. Will I be satisfied, or will I be disappointed? Well as we gather this Christmas morning we intend to look at the gift of Jesus Christ and we want to gage our own responses and understandings of him. And what we are going to look at briefly this morning is **The Birth of Jesus makes sense of our past and defines our future**. We are going to look at the two things we just talked about, we are going to look at the indefinite anticipation, and the infinite response.

Our text today is going to be Psalm 67, so I want to read **Psalm 67:1-7**. Let's pray.

The first thing I want us to see in Psalm 67 is the tenses of the passage. They are all future: may God bless us, may he make his face to shine upon us, so that this may happen, let the people praise, let the nations be glad, God shall bless us, let the earth fear him. There is a future desire in this text and this is our first point this morning, in this text we see **The Indefinite Anticipation**.

That's because this Psalm was written by and sung by Jews hundreds of years before Jesus was born. In the time this Psalm was written God had made known the way of salvation: circumcision and law keeping. If you obeyed God's law you would know peace with God, and if you disobeyed God's law you would know the displeasure of God.

It's the typical: Do good, get good, Santa equation. The problem was, no one was good.

And the cycle of the Old Testament Jew was this: disobedience, repentance, re-acceptance. And here we see a future desire for God to continue to be gracious to them. But the thing that strikes me here is the audacity of this request in **Psalm 67:1**.

I haven't met that many famous or powerful people in my life. But I remember on one occasion where I met the then head coach for the Tennessee Titans. And I remember my approach to him, he had this enclave of security guys around, and I approached slowly with great anticipation.

And being granted access into his exclusive circle, I asked for an autograph, and walked away. I didn't ask him to watch the game with me. I didn't ask him to give me part of his salary, I didn't invite him to be my new dad. Culturally we know those things are off limits to the petty people like us.

Yet here in this Psalm we see the congregation asking for those bold things. First they ask for grace. This seems normal right? People ask celebrities for autographs and people ask their God for grace. But then they go on to ask for a blessing. That's a little more aggressive right? Grace covers sin, but blessings are a reward.

But then they go one step further: be gracious to us, bless us, and make your face to shine upon us. This phrase might be a little foreign to us today, but what it expresses is a desire for a relationship of good favor. Not only are they asking that God forgive them, not only are they asking that God bless them, but they are asking that God becomes relationally favorable to them. There is an almost awkward intimacy wrapped up in this request.

You see the anticipation of the Jewish singers of this text is that God would find favor with them, that God would not only apply forgiveness and mercy, but that he would give them a relationship with himself.

The Jews looked at their past record of being unable to please God and they interpret their need as the ability for God to see them as favorable. For him to turn his face to them so that they might be accepted. They looked at their history and interpreted their need as not only a God who is gracious to them, but a God who is personally concerned with them.

And whether you believe God is capable of doing this or not, we have all prayed this prayer thousands of times in thousands of different ways, to thousands of different things. We look at our past lack, our past wants, our past experiences and we say: if only I could find the favor of this. May the gods of money bless me, may the gods of relationships be gracious to me, may the gods of acceptance make their face to shine upon me.

And the greater your perceived need is, the more fervent the anticipation. The more frantic the quest. Solomon spent a large portion of his life exhausting this desire to be found pleasing in the eyes of every possible vice. And in Ecclesiastes 7:29 he says, "my soul has sought repeatedly, but I have not found...See this alone, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes."

Your schemes are driven by what you hope to find ultimate acceptance and peace in. Your life is lived out of the anticipation of your heart. A 2003 study discovered that Americans spend 55 million dollars a year on therapy and counseling. That's 55 million dollars a year to help us determine what it is we need to fix our past: 55 million to create a direction in our anticipation.

But Psalm 67 is a song of people who see and aim their desire at the right end.

God has promised an ultimate turn of his face. This Psalm is written as a future desire because God had promised his people that be merciful to them, he promised that he would redeem them, he promised that he would be with them. And he did this through prophecy.

And this prophecy was indefinite, they didn't know when it would come true, but also compelling. We often picture prophets in our minds as stoic figures uttering bleak messages. But I love the story we get in the book of Daniel. In the book God begins to share things with the prophet Daniel, and he prophesies a time when this Son of Man will come, and this man will establish his kingdom and dwell with his people. And you know what Daniel does after this? **Daniel 12:6b.**

How long O' Lord? How long till your redemption comes? How long till you make your face to shine upon us? How long till your salvation is known to the ends of the earth?

The Christmas story answers the question of Daniel and provides the hope of Psalm 67. The incarnation is the answer for the desire of God's face shining on his people.

Read with me **2 Corinthians 4:6**.

Where are we to experience the reality of Psalm 67's hope? Where can we point to the blessing of God in our life? Where can we point to God's good favor shining upon his people? In the face of Jesus Christ.

In Jesus the gift box of God was opened for the world to see: **Titus 2:11, 3:4-6**. The good will of Psalm 67:1 will forever be foreign to us until Christ becomes God's favor to us. This salvation is what Peter describes as the good news into which angels long to look.

And this is where we see our second point tonight: **The Infinite Response**.

As much as Psalm 67 provided a future hope, it also brought with it a clear and real response. Let us read this passage again, and note the response that will happen when God's face shines on his people: **Psalm 67:1-7**.

Let the people praise him, let the nations be glad, let them sing for joy, let the earth produce its harvest, let the ends of the earth fear him, for God, our God has blessed us.

We all encounter Jesus in the same way we encounter any other gift. We base our need for him based off what we think to be true in our own life. Sometimes we come to Jesus because we feel we need motivation, or encouragement, or a role model, or perhaps some sort of promise of relief.

But if our response to Jesus is anything less than the response we just read in Psalm 67, we have failed to grasp what it is that we ultimately need. Now no one look at Jesus on their own and sees him attractive. Our eyes have been blinded, but as the Psalm asks, God makes his face to shine on us. As Titus say, the Holy Spirit washes us. And when God intervenes with our faulty eye sight we get a new hope. Look at **Romans 10:9-13**.

If we see Jesus as the one who meets our sinful condition with the mercy of God, and if we throw all of our future anticipation into his basket, we will never be put to shame. The tension you have with everything else in your life: job, sex, gifts, health will never be experienced in the gift of Jesus.

We will sing with the nations. We will know the grace of God, we will experience the blessing of redemption, and we will live in the glory of the face of the Lord all the days of our life.

This recognition of what Jesus did to our past shapes our future. Notice what the Psalm says, **Psalm 67:1-2**. If God shines his face upon us, the world will see the way of God, the world will see the salvation of God.

So if God has shone the light of salvation on your heart in the face of Jesus you have become not only redeemed but re-purposed. In you people see the joy of God through your right response. In you God's way is made known as you speak, share, disciple and evangelize, and in you God's saving power goes to the nations.

Because Christ has made us pleasurable to God, our lives are wrought with worship. Because we know the blessing of God in Jesus Christ we seek to praise him, and because we praise him we seek to know greater the blessing we have in him.

The Puritan Thomas Manton describes it this way: "the more we praise him, the more our blessings come down; the more blessings come down, the more we praise him."

Psalm 67 illustrates the right anticipation and response to the work of Jesus Christ and it also becomes the barometer for our view of Jesus. If our response to the saving work of Jesus is not personal praise and a desire for others to join in that praise, then perhaps we don't yet see Jesus as we ought. Perhaps we are subtly thinking that Jesus should be something other than he came to be.

But this Jesus came to be exactly what man needed him to be. The one who restores people to God through his

saving work. The one who makes the face of God shine upon us, to bless us, and to be gracious to us.

Church, our gift is here. Our anticipation can give way to right response. Come and try the work of Jesus. Come and see the provision for the deepest need in your heart. Come and receive his grace, come and know his blessing, come and feel the warmth of God's favor in the face of Jesus Christ.

God, our God has saved us. God has saved us. Let the ends of the earth fear him.