



### Monday

Psalm 67

- <sup>1</sup> May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us,  
<sup>2</sup> that your way may be known upon earth, your saving power among all nations.  
<sup>3</sup> Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.  
<sup>4</sup> Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity  
and guide the nations upon earth.  
<sup>5</sup> Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.  
<sup>6</sup> The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, has blessed us.  
<sup>7</sup> May God continue to bless us; let all the ends of the earth revere him.

Psalm 67 begins in a familiar way; the opening verse sounds very much like a blessing that is often spoken at the end of worship services. It is an ancient blessing, found in its most familiar form in Numbers 6:24-26. But verse 2 here is something new; it is a purpose statement. It says in effect, “May God bless us *so that* God’s way might be known on the earth and God’s saving power among all nations.” I wonder how often we think of things in this way. We might regularly ask God to bless us, but do we make that request so that God’s ways might be known more widely? Just think of the effect this could have on the world. We might ask God to bless us so that we might make known God’s compassion to the world through greater generosity. We might ask God to bless us with good health so that God’s way of humble service might be more evident in our lives. We might ask God to bless our relationships, so that God’s ways of reconciliation would spread to all people. There is no end to the blessings that could come to people if God’s ways were known more widely.

### Prayer

Gracious God, grant us your blessing, but not only so that we might prosper, but so that your saving ways might be known to all. Grant us health and wisdom, so that we might serve and guide others according to your gracious will. Grant us prosperity and peace so that your ways of reconciliation and abundance might be spread to all. In all things grant us your blessing so that others might be blessed. In your gracious name we pray. AMEN.

## Tuesday

Proverbs 2:1-5

My child, if you accept my words and treasure up my commandments within you,  
<sup>2</sup> making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding,  
<sup>3</sup> if you indeed cry out for insight and raise your voice for understanding,  
<sup>4</sup> if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures—  
<sup>5</sup> then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.

Notice the words that are used in this proverb as we are urged to seek wisdom: *treasure* my commandments, be *attentive* to wisdom, *incline* to understanding, *cry out* for insight, *raise your voice* for understanding, *seek* and *search* for it as for a hidden treasure. All of these words urge us to be very diligent and determined when it comes to seeking wisdom. Perhaps this is a hint as to the obstacles that there are to gaining wisdom. Or perhaps this is an encouragement when we are tired and likely to give up. Or maybe the writer just means to emphasize how important it is. In any case, we are exhorted here to do everything in our power to obtain wisdom, and why? So that we will “understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.” To understand the fear of the Lord means to discern God’s otherness and to appreciate how appropriate holy awe is in the presence of God. To understand the fear of the Lord is to come to terms with the fact that God is holy and we are not. And to find the knowledge of God is simply to understand how obedience to God is the way of life. May we all find such wisdom.

## Prayer

God of all Wisdom, come to our aid so that we might truly know you as you are. Keep us from false notions of you that would lead us into foolishness and destruction. Grant us a heart for wisdom, so that in all ways we are growing more into the image of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. AMEN.

## **Wednesday**

Acts 16:1-5

Paul went on also to Derbe and to Lystra, where there was a disciple named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. <sup>2</sup> He was well spoken of by the brothers and sisters in Lystra and Iconium. <sup>3</sup> Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and had him circumcised because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. <sup>4</sup> As they went from town to town, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup> So the churches were strengthened in the faith and increased in numbers daily.

The final verse of this passage indicates that the church was strengthened and growing because of “the decisions reached by the apostles and elders.” What this points out is the necessity for conflicts to be resolved before we can grow and prosper together. Sometimes we are tempted to believe that if we just push it under the rug, ignore it, or stomp out any discussion of an issue, that a conflict will magically go away and we will prosper in spite of it. Nothing could be further from the truth. When families do this, family life suffers. When couples do this, marriages suffer. When churches or other organizations do this, the mission of the organization is hampered or even stalled completely. But when we courageously confront our problems, come to some resolution and reconcile, then we are assured that new life is ahead for us.

### **Prayer**

God of all Wisdom, grant us the courage to face our conflicts and difficulties. Grant us wisdom and patience, compassion and understanding as we work through those difficult, yet human problems we often encounter. Help us to be people of peace, seeking always the greatest good for the greatest number. Guide us we pray. In the name of Christ. AMEN.

## Thursday

Luke 19:1-10

He entered Jericho and was passing through it. <sup>2</sup> A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. <sup>3</sup> He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. <sup>4</sup> So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. <sup>5</sup> When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.” <sup>6</sup> So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. <sup>7</sup> All who saw it began to grumble and said, “He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.” <sup>8</sup> Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, “Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.” <sup>9</sup> Then Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup> For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.”

It is amazing how little Jesus says to Zacchaeus in this passage. All he says is, “I must stay at your house today.” Why is this so powerful? Several reasons: It indicates Jesus’ refusal to judge Zacchaeus for his actions in the past. It indicates Jesus’ acceptance of him. It indicates Jesus’ willingness to accept his hospitality and to be found in Zacchaeus’ company. In a word, Jesus’ words *honor* Zacchaeus, something that Zacchaeus likely received very little of. We might take a lesson from Jesus here by remembering that small acts of acceptance, forgiveness, and welcome go a long way toward giving honor to others. Maybe by something as simple as remembering our neighbor’s name, or complimenting them on their gardens or landscaping can honor them. Maybe thanking a person for some small act of kindness or responsible service, like a good waitstaff at a restaurant, can honor them. What if, every day, we made it our aim to honor those we encounter? How would that change us and them?

## Prayer

You have honored us in so many ways, O God. As the psalmist has said, “You have made us little lower than the angels and crowned us with glory and honor.” You have forgiven, welcomed, and rescued us, despite our unworthiness and ingratitude. We thank you for your constant gifts. Help us so to receive these gifts that we might pass them on to others as well. In the name of Christ we pray. AMEN.

## Friday

II Chronicles 15:1-7

The spirit of God came upon Azariah son of Oded. <sup>2</sup> He went out to meet Asa and said to him, "Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: The LORD is with you while you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you abandon him, he will abandon you. <sup>3</sup> For a long time Israel was without the true God and without a teaching priest and without law, <sup>4</sup> but when in their distress they turned to the LORD, the God of Israel, and sought him, he was found by them. <sup>5</sup> In those times it was not safe for anyone to go or come, for great disturbances afflicted all the inhabitants of the lands. <sup>6</sup> They were broken in pieces, nation against nation and city against city, for God troubled them with every sort of distress. <sup>7</sup> But you, take courage! Do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded."

The prophet Azariah is not a prophet we know because there is no prophetic book named for him. Nevertheless you can hear in his words many of the themes spoken by other prophets like Jeremiah or Zephaniah. Like those prophets, Azariah links the conflict and lack of security in the land to the abandonment of God by the inhabitants of the land. This is certainly a theme that has been lifted up in our modern day as well, even though it has been politicized beyond recognition. The fact remains, when people of faith and good will have authority, and when people of compassion and generosity lead, the inhabitants of the land are blessed. Conversely when people who are their own god and have no concern for others are given power, and when people who lack compassion and live only to satisfy their own lusts are in charge, all suffer. As people of God, we are exhorted to both *be* people of faith and *elect* people of faith who will lead and serve with integrity and compassion.

## Prayer

We pray for our country these days, O God. We pray that we would be drawn to elect leaders who are people of faith compassion and love. We pray that those who wish to gain power only to serve themselves would be thwarted in their pursuit of power, and that those who follow in your ways would emerge. Grant us courage these days, O God. We pray in your holy name. AMEN.