

When most people think of missionaries, they have this idea of going away to faraway lands to preach the gospel to foreigners. But a missionary is more simply defined as one who is sent on a mission, and in fact everyone who follows Jesus is a missionary. We are sent to the world as witnesses for Jesus. And when we spread the gospel, we are taking part in God's work, because God Himself was the first missionary. In Genesis 3:8-10 after Adam and Eve disobeyed, it was God who came to the garden and called them back to Him. And as their offspring became more evil and tried to reach heaven by building the Tower of Babel, God scattered them. But He created and chose one nation, Israel, which began with Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3). Through Israel, God would bless all people.

Psalm 67 is a seldom read psalm that hints at God's mission for all nations. The psalm has a chiasmic structure (vv. 1 and 7, 2 and 6, 3 and 5 are parallel and also even have the same number of words in Hebrew). The center of the chiasm (v. 4) is the emphasis of the psalm, which is that all nations will praise and fear God. This fear of God isn't being terrified of Him, but rather being in a right relationship with Him. Verses 1 and 7 say that Israel was blessed so that they could bless the nations. The word "earth" in v. 2 refers to the world and all its inhabitants. The words "nation" and "peoples" used throughout the psalm refer to all the nations, Jews and also Gentiles. Verse 1 is similar to the benediction in Numbers 6:24-25, except in Numbers God is referred to as Yahweh and in Psalm 67 He is called Elohim. The name Yahweh brings to mind the covenantal relationship between God and Israel, whereas Elohim has the more universal meaning of "God" (as in, Supreme Being). This is the God of all people, not just of Israel. But Israel forgot this fact. They thought God was blessing them only for their own sakes. This psalm, written about 1000 years after Abraham was first called, reminds Israel of what He promised Abraham, that through them all nations would be blessed. And through the prophets God continued to remind Israel that the Gentiles were meant to worship God in His temple one day. But the Jews still forgot. And sometimes in the church we also forget. We enjoy God's blessing but forget to pass it on to others. If we know how great our God is, we should bring others to Him.

Genesis 15:6 says that Abraham believed and it was credited to him as righteousness. Abraham wasn't perfect, but he had faith, which put him in a right relationship with God. God wants to call all nations into this relationship with Him through faith. And we see this same mission in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20), where Jesus calls His disciples to make disciples of all nations, and in Acts 1:8, where the Holy Spirit empowers Christians to be witnesses for Jesus. Throughout history there has been this mission to bring all people to God, because those who leave God end up in darkness.

Among the brave and bold missionaries in history who have spread the gospel in foreign lands is James Hudson Taylor, as well as his descendants, who have faithfully ministered in China. When James Hudson Taylor IV was asked to describe the life and work of his father in one sentence, he replied that his father lived to make a difference. Many missionaries throughout history have lived to make a difference; and without them, many wouldn't know Christ. But how do we who aren't necessarily called to go to foreign lands make a difference? Sometimes we say to ourselves that we make a difference for our company, family, or country. But how do we make a difference for the kingdom of God? We should be a light to those around us, leading them to Jesus, whether it be in the workplace or at home. We can also make a difference through this church, by supporting missionaries and taking part in short term missions. God's blessing isn't just for us to enjoy; we must share it with those around us.

Buddy Owens, a pastor at Saddleback church, said that whenever he was worried, God would send a bird to remind him that God cares for even the sparrows, and He values us much more than sparrows. When Buddy was going to be laid off, he was under stress because his home was gutted due to incomplete renovations. His neighbor invited him over to show him how to call a blue jay to feed from his hand. This was the bird that God sent to remind him of how much He cared. Additionally, the neighbor said that he had been training the blue jay for one and a half years to eat food from his hand. So we see that God planned more than a year in advance to send this bird. We may not know why we are here exactly, but we know God has a plan for us too. We should pray and follow His leading. Don't be afraid to go where He is calling you, because He has prepared the way.