



[Rev. Steven S. Billings](#)

**Sermon for Easter 6**

May 25, 2025

## Benediction

### Psalm 67

<sup>1</sup> *May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, Selah*  
<sup>2</sup> *that your way may be known on 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. Selah* <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, shall bless us.* <sup>7</sup> *God shall bless us; let all the ends of the earth fear him!*

Time flies. As quickly as today slips into yesterday, tomorrow just as quickly becomes today. So many of us find ourselves nearing the end of our lives thinking: "I always wanted to do this or that, but I never took the chance. And now time has passed me by and that opportunity will never come again." Time certainly flies. Can you believe we're nearly halfway through another decade? Many of us here are well past the middle point of our lives. Dear brother or sister, how quickly will your last tomorrow come? How soon should you begin to plan for what follows? Eternity is always just around the corner. Perhaps this is a good time for us all to consider again what waits for us on the other side of life, that side that comes the day after our last tomorrow.

As we turn now to today's Psalm, we find that it is a perfect prayer for this purpose, for it contains a plea for God's mercy, for His blessing, and for His grace and favor.

Ever since sin ruined the intimate relationship that used to exist between God and man, believers have felt the desire to pray as the Psalmist does in this text. For one thing, they have realized that this kind of prayer, and certainly this kind of attitude, has to serve as the foundation for all other kinds of prayer. The reason for this is that sin infuriates God, who is holy and righteous, and turns the sinner – whoever he or she may be – away from God, placing that sinner in danger of God's wrath and judgment. As the Lord spoke to Israel, He also says to us: "Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear" (Is. 59:2). In other words: Until our sin is removed, it forms a barrier between us and God, cuts us off from His favor and blessing, so that He will not even listen to us when we pray. It's no wonder then that the prayers of the church begin with the words: "Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy!"

Are we not reminded, beloved, of what an appropriate starting point this is for us by



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a simple look back over the past week? No matter who we are, our actions surely call attention to the fact that we, like everyone else, are sinful by nature and that although our gracious God has regenerated us through His Word and Sacrament, our inherited sinfulness has often asserted its evil influence in our lives. Again and again it has obscured our view of the Lord and His holy will. Again and again it has attracted us to evil, and caused us to violate God's holy Law. I know that's true for me; I suspect it's true for you.

Be honest, my friends! This day in the Lord's house provides us a great opportunity to be made aware of these things, if we haven't been already. We must dig deep into our souls and grapple with the reality of our condition. Simply to confess our general sinfulness is not enough. We must bring to mind those particular sins by which we have made ourselves guilty of treason against our loving God and Father – those sins in which we have betrayed our lack of love for God and His grace: our perpetual listlessness in prayer, our flippant attitude toward worship, our overall lackadaisical use of the Means of Grace, through which the Lord comes to us and blesses us. An honest assessment of ourselves will also reveal our lovelessness and lack of kindness toward our neighbors; yes, even our downright selfishness, insincerity, and dishonesty.

An honest gaze into the depths of our soul will most likely cause us to turn away from what we see. Yes, we react to the ghosts of our past like Ebenezer Scrooge and the Ghost of Christmas Future. We don't like what we see, so we don't want to keep looking. It's a painful experience, but as Christians we can't afford to shut our eyes and ignore our sins. We have to face them. We have to confront them with a repentant heart if we're ever to be free of them. No matter how we try to bury them, they will keep coming back to accuse us. We must let the Lord put them to death in the Person of His Son. So now is the time, today is the day for each of us to confront those sins we have been trying to ignore, and to dig them up from the catacombs where we have hidden them, and bring them to Jesus and lay them at His feet. Scripture tells us that if we confess our hidden sins to the Lord and turn in faith to Him who on the cross was made sin for us, praying: "God be merciful to me, a sinner" we have the promise that we will receive full forgiveness and can then be at peace with the knowledge that we have been made clean in the eyes of God.

Of course, we know that the battle will not be over as long as we remain in this world; we will continue to be plagued by the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh, which conspire against us. In case you think that one moment of repentance is all you need, I have to tell you that you're going to find yourself sitting here again next week, undergoing the same grueling self-examination. The only thing that will make that experience less painful is if you live each day this week clinging to God's mercy and grace and praying: "God, for my Redeemer's sake, be merciful to me. When I stumble and fall, when I stray from the paths of righteousness, do not turn from me or cast me away! Come to me in mercy, and forgive me. Send Your Holy Spirit to lift me up with Your precious Gospel



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promises, always turning me back to You, and always ruling my thoughts and my life!" Your merciful God and Father has promised to hear this prayer. The Bible tells us that "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Not only is God our Source of grace and mercy, He's the Source of every kind of blessing. Scripture assures us that "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change" (James 1:17). Recognizing this fact, believers have always turned to Him with the plea: "God bless us." As we look toward the future, can you imagine a better prayer than this?

Going forward with God's mercy and our sins forgiven, it is only natural that God's fountain of blessings will begin to flow. God's blessings are unbelievable, and He gives them, not grudgingly, but lavishly! And what's more is He knows exactly which blessings we need and when to give them.

First of all, there are His spiritual blessings, such as a greater understanding of His Word, an increased love for Him, trust in Him in good times as well as bad, joy, peace, strength to follow His commands. And then there are the spiritual blessings of greater love for our fellow men, patience in dealing with them, a forgiving spirit, and a real desire to lead them to Christ.

All of these blessings God wants to give us through the power of His Spirit. Jesus Himself encourages us to ask for these blessings when He says: "If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him" (Luke 11:13).

And then there are the many earthly blessings which we need "to support this body and life," such as food and clothing, physical strength and health, a good job, enough income to live on, good government, tranquility, good friends, and so on. God help us to look to Him for these blessings, too! Do we have to work for them? That is usually the case. God expects that we will be faithful in our life's calling, and that we will be good stewards in the use of the money that our labor brings. He even lets us know that if we are unfaithful, we don't deserve to have these gifts [2 Thess. 3:10]. But, whatever success we enjoy, we must never forget that it all depends on God's blessing. Without that, it doesn't matter how carefully you plan or how hard you work. Without God's blessing, it's all in vain. "Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain" (Ps. 127:1).

To help us remember this, Jesus taught us to pray: "Give us this day our daily bread." If we do this trustingly, He will help us to realize that all our blessings come from Him, and that no necessity of life will ever be lacking. He will always give us what we need. Remember what He said: "Do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For . . . your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will



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be added to you" (Matt. 6:31-33). With this in mind, let us pray today and always: "God, bless us!"

The final part of our prayer from Psalm 67 asks God to "make his face shine upon us." A person's face often tells us what his feelings are toward us. If a person scowls at you or glares at you, you generally get the idea that maybe they're not pleased with you. On the other hand, approval, good will, and the desire to be helpful often will light up a person's face toward us. When the Psalmist prays: May God "make His face shine upon us," he's asking the Lord not to be displeased with him or to turn away from him because of his unworthiness, but to show him His eternal love, to stay with him as his gracious Lord and to lead him with the light of His truth.

So I ask again, can you possibly imagine a better prayer while considering your future in light of your past? What lies ahead for us? We can't know for certain. But what we do know is that the lives of even the most happy-go-lucky people are not without their dark moments, their trying experiences and difficult situations, times of discouragement and dejection. We, too, are most assuredly called upon to face dark moments from time to time. There may be times when everything around us will seem bleak and gray. At such times, what do you do? What is the best thing to do? Let there be no doubt, at times like these, we look to the Lord for light and guidance!

God help us when our world seems black to turn to Him and pray: "Dear God, because I trust in Your Son, make Your face shine upon me, let Your love never leave me; let the radiance of Your countenance, the light which streams from Your Word of grace and promise pierce the gloom which envelopes me; grant me the grace and wisdom to see Your guiding hand at all times; and give me the confidence to say in the words of the Apostle Paul: "A all things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

Into another week we go then, perhaps with anticipation and exhilaration, perhaps with apprehension and contemplation. But we may do so with confidence, knowing that we do not enter this week alone. God, our merciful God, is with us, preparing His blessings to shower upon us, ready to lead us and guide us through all that lies ahead. In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen