

“The Gospel to the Nations”
Psalm 117
(Preached at Trinity, September 23, 2012)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. I must admit, I’ve been drawing near to this psalm with a bit of apprehension. It is the shortest psalm in the Psalter at only 2 verses. On the surface it doesn’t seem to have a lot to say—but we also know that with the Word of God things are not always as they seem. **Psalm 117** is the last of the section in the Psalter known as the Hallelujah Psalms – **Psalms 111-117**. God is worthy of the greatest of praise—Praise Yahweh!
2. **Psalm 117** also stands as a part of the Egyptian Hallel, the series of six psalms sung annually at the Passover celebrating God’s abiding presence when His people called upon Him for deliverance. They mark God’s redemption that was demonstrated in Egypt but they find their fullest expression in the redemption of Christ.
So far we’ve looked at the first four of the six:
 - A. **Psalm 113** is simply a glorious demonstration of praise. It begins and ends with praise. God is without equal.
Psalm 113:4-5 KJV - "The LORD *is* high above all nations, *and* his glory above the heavens. ⁵ Who *is* like unto the LORD our God"
 - B. **Psalm 114** rises up to exalt God’s power and dominion. Everything falls beneath His infinite sovereignty.
 - C. **Psalm 115** declares the unsurpassable greatness of God.
Psalm 115:3 KJV - "our God *is* in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased."
Psalm 115:1 KJV - "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, *and* for thy truth's sake."
 - D. **Psalm 116** presents God as the God who hears. This results in great confidence, hope, and boldness in His people.
Psalm 116:2 KJV - "Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon *him* as long as I live."
3. But what about **Psalm 117**? It is both small and huge. You might say **Psalm 117** is a micro magnum. It contains the great declaration of God’s purpose that the Gospel would cover the earth.

We’ll look at it under three headings:

- I. The Gospel is universal – It goes out to all the nations
- II. The Gospel is unique – It calls upon all nations to worship God alone
- III. The Gospel is unmerited – His covenant love is granted by grace alone

I. The Gospel is universal – It goes out to all the nations –
"O praise the LORD, all ye nations"

A. This is the grand mystery kept hidden from the ages

Romans 16:25-27 KJV - "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, ²⁶ But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: ²⁷ To God only wise, *be* glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen. "

Colossians 1:26-27 KJV - "*Even* the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: ²⁷ To whom God would make known what *is* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:"

1. The Jews could never understand it

2. This is God's eternal purpose. Christ didn't come for a single nation but for people from every kindred, tribe, and tongue

Revelation 5:9 KJV - "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;"

Revelation 14:6-7 KJV - "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, ⁷ Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters."

3. The Kingdom of God is diverse. It involves every color of skin, many different cultures, languages. We must guard against exclusivism—turning people away if they are not just like us. This was the problem with the Jews and they persecuted Paul mightily.

4. One of Paul's themes in the Book of Romans was the union of the Jews and Gentiles into one body. He quotes from **Psalm 117** in **Chapter 15**
Romans 15:7-11 KJV - "Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God. ⁸ Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises *made* unto the fathers: ⁹ And that the Gentiles might glorify God for *his* mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. ¹⁰ And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. ¹¹ And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people."

5. This continues to be an issue, even for the church today. We have to guard our own hearts regarding this sin. The Body of Christ is diverse. Jesus came that people from across the whole world might hear the Gospel

- B. This is the proper interpretation behind many of the passages that speak of the Gospel in universal terms. Passages that some interpret to mean either universal salvation or a universal atonement
1 John 2:2 KJV - "And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of the whole world.*"
- C. **Verse 1** is in the form of a charge – The Gospel is pressed upon all nations commanding all to bow and give worship to God.
 "O praise the LORD, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people."
 1. This is the nature of the Gospel – it goes forth to all and it goes forth as a command. It is not merely an offer.
 2. The duty of all men is to praise God
 3. But it is also a presupposition that we must go forth across the world and announce this good news. This is a great missionary charge.
- II. The Gospel is unique – It calls upon all nations to worship God alone
Verse 1 - "O praise the LORD, all ye nations" **Verse 2** - "Praise ye the LORD"
- A. Diversity doesn't mean all men have the right to believe what they will
 1. The Gospel is very distinct and narrow
 It presents the single worship of the one true God
 a. Praise Yahweh – period. There is only one true God. He is the God described in the Bible .
 b. People don't like doctrine today. Even some Christians avoid doctrine. They say doctrine divides.
 But doctrine is simply instruction about God. We call it Theology.
 θεός - λόγος
 c. The source of all doctrine about God is the Word of God
 2. And the one true God shall be approached by sinful men in only one way
 The Gospel presents Jesus Christ as the only way to approach this God
John 14:6 KJV - "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."
Acts 4:11-12 KJV - "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. ¹² Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."
This is a direct quote from the last psalm of the Egyptian Hallel
Psalms 118:22-23 KJV - "The stone *which* the builders refused is become the head *stone* of the corner. ²³ This is the LORD'S doing; it *is* marvelous in our eyes."
- B. The Gospel enters into cultures where every sort of false god is worshipped
 1. They must renounce their false gods. They must all be forsaken. They are all dead gods
Psalms 115:3-4 KJV - " But our God *is* in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased. ⁴ Their idols *are* silver and gold, the work of men's hands."
 2. God declares: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

- C. This doesn't sit well with our pluralistic relativistic society
1. We are taught that everyone has the right to their own religion – tolerance demands it.
 2. Freedom of religion has come to mean that not only must we be tolerant of everyone else's religion, everyone's religion has equal validity
 3. It isn't politically correct to declare that ours is the only true religion – that all who do not follow Christ will go to hell.
 4. God will not share His glory with false Gods. He alone is worthy of all praise. He demands that all bow before Him.

III. The Gospel is unmerited – His covenant love is granted by grace alone

- A. We find here once again the twin qualities of mercy and truth which are expressed over and over in Scripture
1. We seen them several times in the Psalms – 12 total
Psalm 25:10 KJV - "All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies."
Psalm 86:15 KJV - "But thou, O Lord, *art* a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth."
Psalm 108:4 KJV - "For thy mercy is great above the heavens: and thy truth *reacheth* unto the clouds."
 2. These words have particular significance as we consider God's covenant towards His people.
 - a. The word for mercy in the KJV is חֶסֶד
 He has chosen us as His own possessions
 He has set His infinite love upon us
 He has ordained all good things for us
 * The Psalmist attaches an adjective to it – “Great”
 "For his merciful kindness is great toward us"
 This is a mighty love. It means “strong, powerful, mighty”
 - b. The word for truth אֱמֶת
 The word means: firmness, faithfulness, sureness, reliability
 3. These words together express God's particular covenant relationship with His people—a relationship of steadfast, everlasting love.
- B. The amazing thing in **Verse 2** is who these covenant graces are being applied to
Psalm 117:2 KJV - "For his merciful kindness is toward us"
1. The context of this wonderful statement must include the people of **Ver. 1**
Psalm 117:1 KJV - "O praise the LORD, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people."
 2. His covenant love is strong, powerful, mighty towards “us”
 3. But these are Gentiles. This is speaking of us! We have no part among God's people. The promises were not made to us.
Ephesians 2:12 KJV - "That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:"

4. Everything has changed in the Gospel
Ephesians 2:13-19 KJV - "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; ¹⁵ Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even the law of commandments contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; ¹⁶ And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: ¹⁷ And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. ¹⁹ Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;"

C. How is this possible –

1. All we have to do is back up a few verses in **Ephesians**
Ephesians 2:8 NAS - "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is the gift of God*;"
2. It can only be by God's wondrous grace
 This is consistent with God's eternal plan
Genesis 12:3 KJV - "And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."
Galatians 3:8-9 KJV - "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, *saying*, In thee shall all nations be blessed. ⁹ So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham."
3. It is completely unmerited – Those who were of the outcast heathen have been brought in. This is the greatest of all gifts.

Conclusion:

1. There are a couple important lessons for us here.
 - A. First, if Christ has brought such transforming grace; if He has joined together what was hopelessly divided, then should we not recognize the worldwide community of faith? In a world filled with racism and hatred we must demonstrate our love for all. We especially need to pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ who are suffering.
 - B. Second, if the Gospel is universal in nature has God not purposed the Gospel to be carried to all people. Should this not be in our heart? Not every Christian is called to be a missionary. But we all have a duty to participate – in support, in prayer.
2. And most of all, we must praise God for His unsurpassable grace.
Psalms 117:2 KJV - "Praise ye the LORD."