

Psalm 66

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[0 : 0 0] Please pray with me. And God, give us an increase of your grace again this day, that we may meekly hear your word, and receive you with pure affection, and bear forth the fruit of your spirit Okay.

Well, welcome all. Looks like there may be some new faces here. I won't single you out. I ask you to stand. But if you don't know me, I'm James Wagner, one of the ministers here.

And it's my delight to be with you this morning, and especially to look at Psalm 66. Maybe you felt a little bit confused with the readings that didn't follow what were printed there, and maybe even, yeah, the Luke 19 passage, and you're thinking, oh my goodness.

That's the Palm Sunday passage. What are we doing reading that this morning? And I'll just let you know that the Psalm, sorry, not the Psalm, but the Palm Sunday reading in the prayer book for communion is the first Sunday of the Christian year and the first Sunday of Advent.

So, and it's not even actually the text for Palm Sunday in here. So I figured we could hear that yet again, and mostly because it talks about even the stones will cry out.

[1 : 4 6] And the theme of this sermon, which kind of launches a sermon series from the Psalms, is about praise. And the word Psalm, there's two literal words for it in the original language, and one means melody, and the other one means praise.

So that's literally what the word Psalm means. And the Psalms in the book is the largest book in the Bible. Now, I don't know that it has the most words or the most verses, but it certainly has the most chapters.

And you probably know that it has 150 chapters, and there's no other book in the Bible that has that many chapters to it. And maybe that's the case because there's more to praising God than we can imagine.

Maybe because we're slow at learning how to praise God. I certainly know that I am. It probably isn't true of you. But we're going to start with Psalm 66, which is actually in the second book of the five books of the Psalms.

And it's a noisy, clashing, exuberant call on the community to praise the Lord. This community that, maybe it was David who wrote this, certainly his name isn't actually in the superscript.

[3 : 0 1] It's above the Psalm. And you can turn there now if you want to page 480, though we read it from the prayer book. But they don't look very Anglican to me.

They're not very well behaved. But it shows us that it's very difficult to praise God, I think, with closed lips, tight hands, little soles.

And Psalm 66 is the opposite, an antidote to a kind of a casual, merely habitual, or a kind of detached worship. It shows us that heaven is full of music, joy, and community.

And all of us find the laments in the Psalms to be really precious in time of trouble, tribulation, sorrow, and suffering. Because they give us hope in God in whom we place our trust.

Who we know whose love is unquenchable, whose power is unstoppable, whose purposes are unshakable, and whose glory is indestructible. And because of who God is, the Psalms call us to apply ourselves to praise.

[4 : 12] Since the Christian life is about many things, but chiefly, it's about adoration, wholehearted gratitude, unreserved worship.

And when we do so, God draws us into heaven through the praise of him. So this morning, we'll look at four aspects of praise. Four-point sermon, sorry.

It's not three, it's not two, but it's four. But I'll make them short and succinct. But I've only done this because we didn't see this in the translation in our prayer book, but if you look down at Psalm 66 on page 480, you'll notice there's this kind of a liturgical rubric called Selah.

And there are four of them. And it's actually kind of a pause. So after each of my four points, I may make just a kind of a ten-second pause for you to just think about the theme that I've introduced you to.

So first, then, the four things are going to be about sound, sight, sacrifice, and soul. So first, the sound of praise. You've heard and many seen the movie, the sound of music.

[5 : 24] The start of this psalm is the sound of praise, though. Praise sounds like shouting, singing, speaking. It's all there in those first four verses.

And the sound of praise is not minimalist, but manifold and majestic. Praise not only takes those forms, but it also has a lot of feeling and emotion to it.

And some of us may sing without feeling and emotion, but in verse 1, and the psalm begins with an invitation and an invocation to shout for joy to God.

All the earth. Now try to shout with deep feelings and detached emotions. It's nearly impossible not to do that.

As manifold and majestic are the forms of praise, so are the emotions. And the psalmist isn't comprehensive, but the emotions have breath. And the emotions, which is emotions, conveys movement and energy and range from joy, in this psalm, to terror.

[6 : 32] Do you see that when you look down? You may see or even hear the joy in verse 1, but did you notice the terror in verse 3? Awesome here, in the way it's translated there, doesn't mean neat or cool, but it means terrible and terrifying, which is why God's enemies in the translation there is cringe.

The church's praise can make the adversary, that's Satan, God's enemy, and his angels and followers cringe. Interesting. Translators can't agree on how to render this word.

Some call, say, bow down, others submit. Maybe even surrender. Eugene Peterson says, slink off like scolded dogs.

In our BCP morning prayer service, we pray, and we show forth your praise, not only with our lives, but with our lips. And that's what the psalmist is inviting us to do.

And when we do it, it is music to God's ears, and ours too, but not so to Jesus' enemies. They cringe.

[7 : 51] Well, praise has a sound, that's the sound of praise, but it also has a look. There is a sight of praise. The look of praise comes to us in verse 5. And like verse 1, it's an invitation and an invocation.

And so the psalmist says, come and see what God has done. Come and see. That's the look of praise. The invitation isn't to see what God is doing or will do, though he is doing something now and he will continue to do things.

There's no doubt that God is active right now and forever. But the invitation is to see what God has done in the past. And a lot of faith is remembering, though not just remembering, but praising God for that.

And that's how we actually remember. And when you praise God, do you only praise him for what he's done in your life? Sometimes I do that, and that's a good thing to do.

The psalmist implores God's people to praise the Lord for his past deeds for his people. And the deed worthy of praise here in this psalm is God's deliverance, where they're on dry ground through the Red Sea or through the Jordan River.

[9 : 01] And this is that climactic event for God's people to remember and praise him, which is the Exodus. Though now, it's the crucifix.

The crucifixion. But all experiences of salvation, God saving you, saving me, saving us, over time, is the adoration of his works and his deeds.

And the reason for exuberant praise is the Lord's power and preservation of our lives. And that's why we can sing hymns like, which I don't think we're singing this morning, but, Oh God, our help in ages past.

His past deeds generate our praise of him. And God's power and preservation is the basis of this praise. It's in the face of nations who promise everything from prosperity to protection.

But it's the Lord's power that preserves our trust in him with his presence with us, even when we suffer in the face of disaster and death.

[10 : 12] However, it isn't enough to know the sound and the sight of praise. So now we move on to the sacrifice of praise. The substance of praise, I think, is sacrifice.

And while the psalmist shows us praise is both heard and seen, it isn't mere experience of the senses. Praise only makes sense if it has a purpose.

And the purpose and goal of praise is to direct our attention to the sacrifice that God has made. Verses 8 to 15 starts with an exhortation of the people to bless our God.

And that's our first purpose of praise. And while praise is good for us and it changes us, the goal of praise is the blessing of God. Not that he needs it, but he loves it when we do and it's good for us.

And it's not so that we are blessed, though, but that we bless God who is there and right here, right now. And so it shows us that God is not an absentee kind of father or parent.

[11 : 17] He's present with us through all circumstances and he's not afraid or aloof, but he's active in all experiences of our life. So look down with me to verse 10 if your Bible's open there.

Even read this out loud with me together. Verses 10 through 12 on page 480. Let's say this together. For you, O God, have tested us.

You have tried us as silver is tried. You brought us into the net. You laid a crushing burden on our backs. You let men ride over our heads.

We went through fire and through water. Yet you have brought us out to a place of abundance. Substance and motivation for praise is God's salvation of his people.

That's what these three verses kind of capture for us. He doesn't prevent us from suffering, but he provides whole life abundance. That's where the verses end.

[12 : 18] Through it. And the Israelites experience this and so do we. But personally and corporately, the Lord is the one who seeks to it that we shall not want or lack what it is that we need.

He gives us through salvation and meets our greatest need to be freed from sin, forgiven from that, to serve and praise him. Verse 11 and 12 show us the work of salvation with a picture of a net and abundance.

This explains what follows beginning in verses 13 to 15. I'm going to ask you to read this with me but I'll read it. It includes this sacrifice of praise. The psalmist says, I will come into your house with burnt offerings.

I will offer to you burnt offerings and fattened animals. With the smoke of the sacrifice of rams, I will make an offering of bulls and goats.

The sound and look of praise only makes sense with the sacrifice of praise. The psalmist vows himself and God's people to this sacrifice. And with Jesus Christ, God makes his sacrifice on our behalf.

[13 : 30] So there's a reversal that happens. their offering, their making sacrifices at this time but then God does for us what we couldn't do for ourselves because it was insufficient.

But now it's the sufficiency of God's grace through the sacrifice that he makes of his son on the cross. And this is core to Anglican worship. In the Anglican Lord's Supper, this phrase shows up in the great thanksgiving.

I don't expect you to remember that because there's a paragraph where we actually stop in the great thanksgiving. I'll use it today.

But in that paragraph we read, and we entirely desire thy fatherly goodness mercifully to accept this, our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.

So every time we gather here for Holy Communion, we're practicing a sacrifice of praise every single time.

[14 : 35] Well, it's one thing to have the sound, the sights, and the sacrifice of praise, which I think is the substance of it, but to praise the Lord we really need to give God our soul.

God holds nothing back in giving us his son and our savior Jesus Christ as a sacrifice for praise, but praise has to get really personal.

Look down with me at verse 16. We read, come and hear all you who fear God and I will tell what he has done for my soul.

It's not the only time the psalmist makes reference to the soul. Look down at verse 9 earlier. Who has kept our soul among the living and has not let our feet slip?

The soul of praise. Yep, sacrifice. Yep, sound. Yep, seeing it. But the soul, what is the soul? Friend Jim Packer said this about the soul.

[15 : 40] He said, it's the immaterial conscious selfhood of a person. I don't know if that's what you think about when you hear the word soul. Immaterial conscious selfhood of a person emphasizing its distinctness from the body and its capacity for self-awareness and spiritual life.

God's grace. So we praise God because of his grace from our soul that he inhabits, we've given over to him.

And if we don't do that, then we give it over to anything else. But from the soul we praise the Lord. And this is the soul of praise.

So this all then ends with a repetition of verse 8 with a blessing by the mercy of God and his forgiveness of our sins.

He hears our praise from our souls when we hear his word to us. And then we know that because as the psalm ends in verse 20, that is because he has not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me.

[16 : 50] That's the soul of praise. So very briefly then in ending, I'm going to end with another quote. Two quotes. I know they're pretty big ones.

But this one's from P.T. Forsyth's book on the soul of prayer. It could be the soul of praise. He says this, Praise is both a gift and a conquest, a grace and a duty.

But every call on us a blessing and that the task we often find a burden is really a boon.

When we look up from under it, it is a load. But those who look down on it from God's side see it as a blessing. Blessing is at the top of this psalm and it's at the end of it as well.

It's bracketed by blessing. And I know that praise isn't easy. But when we do it together as we are today, the load is lightened. Because together we love the Lord our God with one another from our souls.

[18 : 05] and I know that's the Lord and the Lord the Lord and the Lord!