



Bring an Offering of Thanks

Sermon for November 21 2021

Psalm 66:1–20

Sermon Introduction

This week we will continue a three-week series on Food and Family.

I am going to read our scripture passage now.

Please listen and open your hearts to God speaking to us in His Word.

Psalm 66:1–20

1 Shout joyful praises to God, all the earth!

2 Sing about the glory of his name! Tell the world how glorious he is.

3 Say to God, “How awesome are your deeds! Your enemies cringe before your mighty power.

4 Everything on earth will worship you; they will sing your praises, shouting your name in glorious songs.”

Selah

5 Come and see what our God has done, what awesome miracles he performs for people!

6 He made a dry path through the Red Sea, and his people went across on foot. There we rejoiced in him.

7 For by his great power he rules forever. He watches every movement of the nations; let no rebel rise in defiance.

Selah

8 Let the whole world bless our God and loudly sing his praises.

9 Our lives are in his hands, and he keeps our feet from stumbling.

10 You have tested us, O God; you have purified us like silver.

11 You captured us in your net and laid the burden of slavery on our backs.

12 Then you put a leader over us. We went through fire and flood, but you brought us to a place of great abundance.

13 Now I come to your Temple with burnt offerings to fulfill the vows I made to you--

14 yes, the sacred vows that I made when I was in deep trouble.

15 That is why I am sacrificing burnt offerings to you--the best of my rams as a pleasing aroma, and a sacrifice of bulls and male goats.

Selah

16 Come and listen, all you who fear God, and I will tell you what he did for me.

17 For I cried out to him for help, praising him as I spoke.

18 If I had not confessed the sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.

19 But God did listen! He paid attention to my prayer.

20 Praise God, who did not ignore my prayer or withdraw his unfailing love from me.

Together we read Isaiah 40:8:

The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

Please pray with me.

Father in Heaven, thank you for speaking to us in your Word.

Thank you for the authors of the Bible who teach us how to pray and how to worship in Spirit and in truth.

Holy Spirit please open our hearts now, that we may learn from you.

We pray in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

Here is the main point, or big idea, of today's sermon.

Big Idea: We thank God with our praise and our offerings

Verses 1 to 3 remind us that worship is a conversation.

Did you know that?

In worship, God speaks to us in His Word.

And we speak back to God.

In verse 3 we say together to God, "How awesome are your deeds."

Why do we tell God that?

God knows he is awesome.

But we say it because it is good for our hearts.

There are many things in the world that demand our praise.

Movie stars, nice cars, money, and fashion.

Our hearts praise the things we value.

But nothing deserves our praise the way that God does.

This is why Christians are people who sing.

Verses 1 and 4 invite us to shout, to sing loudly and with passion.

When we do this on Sunday, we are focusing our hearts and minds on the source of all blessing.

All week long we are tempted to focus our hearts on other things.

That's why we need to come to church every week.

That's why we read God's Word and pray every day.
We need to have our hearts oriented to the only one worthy of our praise.

Verse 3 invites us to speak to God.
And verse 2 says we should "tell the world how glorious He is."
This is a conversation that goes up and goes out.
When we sing and worship together, we speak to God, to the world, and to each other.

After verse 4 we see this Hebrew word "Selah."
No one is sure what it means.
It might be a pause in the music.
It is there for the musicians leading the worship service.
This little word is a reminder to us that worship is a community activity.
It is true that we can praise God alone.
We can pray alone, and we should.
But the best way to learn how to pray and how to worship is to be together.
The psalms remind us that we need one another.
Now let's look at verses 7 and 8.

Psalm 66:7 For by his great power he rules forever. He watches every movement of the nations; let no rebel rise in defiance.

8 Let the whole world bless our God and loudly sing his praises.

People around the world worship many different false gods.
Like rebels they give loyalty to the wrong things.
They reject the only true God and King.
Instead of submitting to God as King, rebels try to control the world and control other people.

Verse 7 should be a comfort to you who come from countries where there is violence and oppression.
God's power is greater than any dictator, president, or prime minister.
God sees all their actions.
He watches every movement of the nations.
He knows about the civil war in Ethiopia and about the oppression of Christians in Pakistan.
God knows how people are being treated in China.
He sees the activities of the Taliban in Afghanistan.
He knows about the gang violence in El Salvador.
I cannot name all of the pain and persecution in the world today.
But God sees it all.
He is King of kings and Lord of lords.

That's why we come to him with our prayers.
The events in the world are too terrible for us to understand.
We know we cannot do anything about it.
But God sees the pain.
He can do something about it.
That's why we pray.
We pray that one day verse 8 will be true:
"Let the whole world bless our God and loudly sing his praises."
Now we will look at verses 9-12.
The words of the author become more personal here.

Psalm 66:9 Our lives are in his hands, and he keeps our feet from stumbling.
10 You have tested us, O God; you have purified us like silver.
11 You captured us in your net and laid the burden of slavery on our backs.
12 Then you put a leader over us. We went through fire and flood, but you brought us to a place of great abundance.

Verses 9-12 remind us that God loves us enough to discipline us.
Parents, do you love your children?
I know you do.
Do you let them do anything they want?
I know you don't.
Our God is a loving Father, and our lives are in his hands.
Because He loves us, he keeps our feet from stumbling.
When we fail to obey him, and when we try to do things our own way, he corrects us.
He purifies us like silver, as verse 10 says.

Do you know how silver or gold is purified?
My children who play Minecraft can tell you about this.
You put ore in a furnace where it is heated to a very high temperature.
Why?
To melt the gold, and separate it from the waste.

This is copper ore.
Thousands of years ago, copper ore like this was heated in a furnace like this.
The waste material flowed out of the furnace.
Inside the furnace, only the pure copper remained.
Then it could be hammered and shaped into beautiful things like this.

God does the same thing with his children.

God uses difficult circumstances to purify our faith.

He wants to remove the waste and sin from our hearts.

The waste from copper ore looks like this.

God sometimes applies heat to separate us from our sin and our temptation to trust in the wrong things.

When we don't have enough money, we are reminded that God is the provider of all our needs.

When we are sick, we are reminded that God is the source of our strength.

When our sin hurts us and other people, we are reminded that God takes sin seriously.

We also remember that Jesus died to wash away our sin and shame.

The author of Psalm 66 thanks God even for the painful times in his life.

Being heated in a furnace is painful.

But the author knows that God used those experiences to purify his faith.

The purification process makes it shine like pure silver.

Do you remember what the apostle Paul said about the painful thorn that God put in his life?

2 Corinthians 12:8-10.

8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me.

9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

10 For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

I hope you are learning to look to God in hope and faith in hard times.

I hope you will ask him to use times of fire and flood to focus your heart on him and nothing else.

Now let's look at verses 13-15 together.

In these verses, the author remembers the deep trouble he experienced.

He also thanks God for rescuing and helping him.

Psalm 66:13 Now I come to your Temple with burnt offerings to fulfill the vows I made to you--

14 yes, the sacred vows that I made when I was in deep trouble.

15 That is why I am sacrificing burnt offerings to you--the best of my rams as a pleasing aroma, and a sacrifice of bulls and male goats.

When someone gives you a nice gift, do you send them a thank you note?

That is a polite thing to do.

Verses 13-15 describe how the author said thank you to God for rescuing him from deep trouble.

The author didn't write a note to God.
What did he do?
He sacrificed sheep, bulls, and goats.
Multiple animals were sacrificed and burned at the Temple.
This was an expensive way to say thank you!
We don't know what kind of trouble the author was in.
But he said it was "deep trouble."
That's why he is deeply thankful to God.
We see again that worship is a conversation.
God speaks to us in his Word and in the sacraments.
We speak back to God in prayer.
He answers our prayers, so we respond with songs of praise.
And we bring our offerings of thanks.

I want to look with you at a few verses from Deuteronomy about the tithe and offering.

Deuteronomy 12:17–19

17 “But you may not eat your offerings in your hometown--neither the tithe of your grain and new wine and olive oil, nor the firstborn of your flocks and herds, nor any offering to fulfill a vow, nor your voluntary offerings, nor your sacred offerings.

18 You must eat these in the presence of the Lord your God at the place he will choose. Eat them there with your children, your servants, and the Levites who live in your towns, celebrating in the presence of the Lord your God in all you do.

19 And be very careful never to neglect the Levites as long as you live in your land.

My friends, our tithes and offerings are gifts to God.

They also provide for the people of God.

In Deuteronomy 12:19 Moses reminded God's people to take care of the Levites who worked at the Temple.

The Levites led the worship services and took care of the Temple property.

Your tithes and offerings pay for us to rent this building.

You helped pay for the new sound equipment we have here.

Your offerings also pay me and Andrew so we can work hard to plan worship services every week, just as the Levites did thousands of years ago.

When we give our tithes in this bowl every week during worship, we are telling God that we are thankful for his many blessings.

We are responding to his blessings with an act of worship and trust.

And we are providing for the ministry of One Voice Fellowship.

Did you notice what the people brought as an offering in Deuteronomy 12?

Not money.

Verse 17 says that the offerings to God were all food items.

Grain, wine, olive oil, and meat.

The offerings of the people to God provided a feast for the people of God.

In verse 18 Moses tells the people they should eat the offerings "in the presence of the Lord your God" and "with your children, your servants, and the Levites."

When the people ate the offerings, they were tasting the blessings of God.

They feasted together and thanked God together.

We are going to do something like this next week.

We won't have a team provide the dinner next week.

I am asking everyone to bring something for the meal.

Bring an offering of food as a gift to God for his blessings in your life.

From 5-6pm we will all feast together on the offerings of God's people.

And then at 6pm, we will come in here and we will do what we see in Psalm 66 verse 16:

Psalm 66:16 Come and listen, all you who fear God, and I will tell you what he did for me.

17 For I cried out to him for help, praising him as I spoke.

Next week I want you to bring two things.

Bring a food item for dinner, and bring a testimony.

We will do the same thing we read in verse 16:

"I will tell you what God did for me."

Anyone who wants to share a testimony will have the opportunity.

Please don't bring a 15-minute story or we won't hear from everyone.

But if you are willing, please bring a short story you can tell us, as an offering of thanks and praise to God.

I think it will be a special way to finish our month of focusing on Food and Family.

Now let's look at the last three verses of today's text. Let's see why God listens to sinners.

Psalm 66:18 If I had not confessed the sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.

19 But God did listen! He paid attention to my prayer.

20 Praise God, who did not ignore my prayer or withdraw his unfailing love from me.

The author says in verse 18 that he confessed the sin in his heart.

That's why the Lord listened to the author.

Because the author was honest.

Are you afraid to be honest about your sin?
Are you afraid to speak the truth about your sin to yourself, or to others, or to God?
I know that feeling.
We don't like to feel shame.
We don't like to admit our failures.

But verse 19 promises that God will listen to us and not reject us.
God paid attention to the author's prayer because he was honest.
And verse 20 promises something even more precious.
The author says that God did not "withdraw his unfailing love from me."
How can God have unfailing love for a sinner like me?
How can God listen to my confession of sin, and still love me?
Because I don't pray in my name.
I pray in the name of Jesus.
Do you know why Christians always end our prayers by saying, "in Jesus' name?"
Because the name of Jesus has honor that we do not have by ourselves.

God hears your prayers and welcomes you as His child because you come to God in the name of Jesus.
On the cross, our sin and shame were transferred to Jesus.
And Jesus transferred to us his righteousness.
We receive his record of obedience to God's law.
It is a great exchange.
We give our sin and shame to Jesus.
Jesus gives us his good reputation, and he lets us pray in his good name.
That's why God hears and answers our prayers.
Because we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Let's pray together now.
Father, thank you that you hear our prayers.
We know that we are guilty of sin.
We fail to obey your commands every day.
But you welcome our prayers and you bless us because we do not come to you with our shameful record.
We have given our shame and failure to Jesus.
And he has given to us his honor and his good reputation.
So we come to with offerings of thanks and with prayers of trust.
We know you receive our offerings and you hear our prayers because we come to you in the name of your Son Jesus our Savior.
Amen.