

# Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

**Date** : 30 Apr 2023

**Sermon Title** : Journeying in Praise

**Speaker** : Rev Shannon Chan

**Text** : Psalm 66

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## INTRODUCTION

We all have moments when we feel discouraged by life's circumstances. We face battles within and battles without. The unknown writer of Psalm 66 is no stranger to this. His testimony in Psalm 66 reflects his movement from prayer to praise because of God's answer to his prayer. What does journeying in praise mean when life's challenges come our way and we face off with burdens and battles? Journeying in praise can be broken up into three movements.

### (I) It begins by recognizing God's power over all (Psalm 66:1-7)

- This is a psalm about God's awesome dominion the world over. In the first seven verses we are told:
  - of God's great power (v.3)
  - how God rules forever (v.7)

The psalmist gives us a much needed unclouded perspective from which we discover God's awesome deeds. We are reminded of Israel passing safely through the sea while this sea brought death upon Israel's pursuers, the Egyptians. (v.6)

- When the church lays hold of this psalm today, it claims the Exodus story as her own. We often lose heart listening to news about the world today - filled with confusion, chaos and violence. The God of Israel who ruled or had dominion generations back as mentioned in this psalm, is the same God who still rules over the nations today in our 21<sup>st</sup> century. Bishop Craig Satterlee asserts the "dominion of God has come near to us".

While the world may have made many advancements in science and technology, it is on a spiral downward in a host of other areas. Some of us question where the world is headed, why God is not intervening and whether God is powerless. When that happens, we need to remember what the psalmist wrote in Psalm 66:1-7 that God's dominion and great power will prevail over His enemies - those who are rebellious and the powers of this world.

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## **(II) It continues in remembering God's deliverance of His people (Psalm 66:8-12)**

- Sometimes what comes from God's hands (challenges/difficulties) comes as a test. Yet even God's testing is worthy of praise:
  - Verses 10-12 describe the nature of the trials the people had gone through - God refined them like silver, brought them into prison, laid burdens on their backs, let men ride over their heads and let them go through water and fire. The psalmist is describing tremendous burdens and severe trials of the people.
- Similarly, some of us may be going through severe trials. These trials constitute the testing of our trust in God and loyalty to Him. It is easy to trust God when everything is going well. It is when we are in a crisis and face real enemies that our trust in and loyalty to God is tested.
- Two reasons why the people should praise God in the midst of turmoil and distress:
  - despite all they had to endure, God had preserved their lives and kept them so they had not fallen away. (v.9) The psalmist reminds us that in the face of great trials, God does not allow our feet to slip even when sometimes we might feel that we are falling.
  - God had brought the people out into a place of abundance. (v.12) The Hebrew translation more accurately renders the verse "Yet you have brought us out into abundance". The word "abundance" here carries the sense "my cup overflows even in the face of my enemies". (Psalm 23:5)

The New Bible commentary puts it this way, "He (God) imposes purposeful sufferings in which His people are tested for qualities and refined for purity. He appoints all our experiences however dreadful. When life hems us in (prison), when pressures mount (burdens), when people are atrociously cruel (ride roughshod over us), when one threatening circumstance follows another (fire and water), it is all His personal act; the people of God are never elsewhere than in the Father's hand". (John 10:29; 1 Corinthians 10:13)

## **(III) It culminates in reframing God's personal work in our lives (Psalm 66:13-20)**

- Reframing is rethinking and changing the way we think about God or what God does. In the final movement of this psalm, the psalmist speaks of how he comes into the house of God with offerings and to fulfill his vows (vv.13–15). In the midst of his distress, the psalmist continues to revere and honour God with praise and thanksgiving.

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- Beyond this, the psalmist speaks of his personal responsibility to tell others about the blessings of God. Those who fear God are invited to hear his praise about God's gracious acts in his life. And here's the reframing of God's work in the life of the psalmist – the fear of God. Unfortunately, in the psalmist's time, just as it is in our time, people (individuals, communities or nations) increasingly do not fear God.
- Like the psalmist, we need to individually journey to reframe God's personal work in our lives. Often, not everything we think about God or the way He does things is right in the first place. Reframing our thinking about God leads us to give true testimony of God's work in our lives and praise Him.
- The psalmist also reframed in the form of a caveat, his thinking about prayer. (v.18) He said if he had cherished sin in his heart, the Lord would not have listened to his prayer. A pure heart is vitally important to God. This does not mean that we should not pray if our hearts are not pure. Instead, we need to think about what steps to take to repent, be cleansed and forgiven. So, our prayers can then be prayed in a worthy manner.

God is far more interested in the quality of our hearts rather than the quantum or quantity of our words. The writer of Psalm 66 reveals a heart that is in right standing with God because God listened to his prayer and did not reject it. (vv.19-20)

## Praise and Thanksgiving

All prayer pursued far enough becomes praise and thanksgiving even when we pray about the challenges in our lives. A number of psalms start off with angst, cries, pain and even anger. But ultimately those prayers lead them to praise and thanksgiving. Patricia Attwood shares that "in the context of our relationship with God, praise is expressing our admiration for who God is and thanksgiving is being grateful for what God gives us". Praise and thanksgiving are both sides of a much-needed coin.

## CONCLUSION

Journeying in praise begins first by recognizing God's power and dominion over all (in all circumstances). It continues in remembering God's deliverance of His people (no matter what circumstances). God's deliverance of His people in the past is the same deliverance that is available for us in the present. Journeying in praise culminates in us learning to reframe who God is and how He works in our lives.

Beyond this, there is something that changes in the spiritual atmosphere when we move from prayer to praise and thanksgiving. God will always come through and undertakes for us. Psalm 66 is a psalm of praise for the victory that God gave the

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psalmist. Similarly, God gives us the victory so we can tell others of His excellent greatness and live in the overflow of His abundance and goodness.

## **A. Review Sermon Application**

***Purpose: Reflect on how you have been embodying God's truth.***

- 1a. How successful have you been in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do for the last FaithWalk?
- 1b. What were some challenges you faced and what would you like to celebrate?

2. Appoint someone to read Psalm 66 aloud slowly. Journeying in praise can be broken up into 3 movements:

- (I) Recognition of God's power over all
- (II) Remembering God's deliverance of His people
- (III) Reframing our thinking of God's work in our lives

Which of these need(s) to be worked on in your life right now?

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## **B. Relate Sermon Content**

***Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.***

- 3a. Psalm 66 reminds us of God's sovereignty and dominion over everything. How does this reminder encourage you when you are tempted to lose heart with the chaos and uncertainty in the world around you today?
- 3b. Psalm 66 describes severe trials and tests that the people of Israel had to go through.
- (i) Are you going through a trial or test now?
  - (ii) How can you persevere in prayer till it becomes praise and thanksgiving?
- 3c. How can the 2 reasons given for the people to praise God in the midst of turmoil and distress help you in your current trial/test?
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- 4a. What is one wrong way of thinking about God or His work that you need to reframe?
- 4b. What are some things you can do to reframe the wrong way of thinking in 4a. above so that you can experience and tell others about the blessings or gracious acts of God in your personal life?
- 4c. How can your group members help or encourage you to achieve 4b above, in the following week(s), until your next meeting?

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## **C. Testimonies, Prayers and Action**

***Purpose: Give glory to God, seek Him and embody His Word.***

5. Share your personal testimony of how the Holy Spirit helped you to journey from prayer of lament about a difficult situation to praise and thanksgiving.

OR

Give thanks to God for always having you in the palm of His hands even when He refines you for purity.

6. With a prayer partner, bring all that have been shared to God, asking for the Holy Spirit to help you reframe mistaken ideas about God and His work so you may journey from prayer to praise.

Pray for your group and our church to become a people of praise and thanksgiving so that the joy exhibited by God's people during challenges and difficult circumstances will be a testimony to the world that we have a God who is able to deliver us and bring us to a place of abundance.

### Optional items:

Suggested worship songs:

1. Glory – Hillsong <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4tMUo3TaRgU>
2. Thank You Jesus for the Blood – Charity Gayle  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nbCnh5Q2o1Y>
3. Goodness of God – Jenn Johnson <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mkc9X6X4rPY>

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