



Five Psalms of Summer

Psalm 66:1-20

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2/1/22 8am/10am, 30/1/22 8:30am/6pm

1 Corinthians 10:1-13, Luke 19:45-48

Introduction:

It's 2022! Happy New Year!

Are you busy making plans for the year ahead?

Going by our COVID experiences hopefully we have learnt to add, 'God Willing' to any plans we make, acknowledging our dependence on God.

Psalm 66 is a song of praise, not for a tragedy that has occurred, such as this current COVID tragedy, but for the unseen work of God in a crisis. It clearly illustrates that in all of life, as well as in a crisis, we must remain dependent on God.

I was deeply moved when re watching the documentary about the Boxing Day tsunami from 2004. I was struck by the two wave impact in which countless numbers of people lost their lives.

It took me to *Psalm 66*. This is a two wave Psalm - the impact on the individuals in this event and the corporate

coming together; grappling with loss and yet the selfless, coming together of people as they sought to help.

(V16) calls 'all you who fear God' to (v5) "Come and see what God has done".

Whether we are in a good place or an excruciating challenge, this Psalm instructs us how to respond. God is always right here with us now.

I've divided *Psalm 66* into these three sections:

Place of Praise: (v1-7) where our response is to 'shout or sing praises to God.'

Place of Purification: (v8-15) times when life is tough and we are being refined; we are being put into the furnace to have our impurities removed.

Place of new Perceptions: (v 16-20) where we realise something more of our humanity and God's grace.

Let's read *Psalm 66:1-7*:

For the director of music. A song. A psalm.

¹ *Shout for joy to God, all the earth!*

² *Sing the glory of his name;
make his praise glorious.*

³ *Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds!
So great is your power
that your enemies cringe before you.*

⁴ *All the earth bows down to you;*

*they sing praise to you,
they sing the praises of your name."*

*⁵ Come and see what God has done,
his awesome deeds for mankind!*

*⁶ He turned the sea into dry land,
they passed through the waters on foot—
come, let us rejoice in him.*

*⁷ He rules forever by his power,
his eyes watch the nations—
let not the rebellious rise up against him.*

Place of Praise: The corporate praise of God

These verses unite all people in their praise of God. Corporately we sing his praise. We make his deeds known. We do this because we trust that the rule of God is proven by rescue. God will redeem his people, exemplified by this story of the Exodus.

- **Firstly - Music**

One way we praise God is through music. *Psalm 66* is from the Director of Music. *Psalm 66* is a song itself.

Do some songs lift you in praise? How great thou art; 10,000 Reasons; How great is our God? Or perhaps Handel's *Messiah*?

What music turns your heart to praise? This is what the Psalmist is experiencing. Sing! Make his praise glorious!

- The second place of praise the Psalm mentions is
Miracles

When you have an amazing answer to prayer, do you praise God? Are your spiritual eyes open to seeing the work of God in your life? Like the ten lepers who were healed and only one thanked Jesus, do you have gratitude in your heart for all God does?

- The Third place of praise is Memories

The Israelites were told to keep telling the stories of God's care throughout their journey. Crossing the Red Sea was one example when they were led out of Egypt, away from their oppression, and the Egyptians were drowned. What a confirmation that God was protecting them and leading them. This built up their faith.

Do you record special experiences of God's blessings? Journaling or even looking through old photos can remind us of past blessings.

In Deuteronomy 6:6-7 we are told to repeat these stories of God's blessings and tell them to future generations:

⁶ These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts.

⁷ Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

God loves nothing more than hearing our praise so when we are in a good place, a victorious place, don't forget to acknowledge his goodness and thank him.

These are the victorious times!

*Psalm 66:8-15: ⁸ Praise our God, all peoples,
let the sound of his praise be heard;*

*⁹ he has preserved our lives
and kept our feet from slipping.*

*¹⁰ For you, God, tested us;
you refined us like silver.*

*¹¹ You brought us into prison
and laid burdens on our backs.*

*¹² You let people ride over our heads;
we went through fire and water,
but you brought us to a place of abundance.*

*¹³ I will come to your temple with burnt offerings
and fulfill my vows to you—*

*¹⁴ vows my lips promised and my mouth spoke
when I was in trouble.*

*¹⁵ I will sacrifice fat animals to you
and an offering of rams;
I will offer bulls and goats.*

Place of Purification

We would like the pathway of faith to always be one of rejoicing and victory but is that your experience?

- The Psalm speaks of God's Protection

God does keep us from falling over and protects us from stumbling. As Psalm 37:23-24 says:

*²³ The LORD makes firm the steps
of the one who delights in him;*

*²⁴ though he may stumble, he will not fall,
for the LORD upholds him with his hand.*

But God also tests us and disciplines us. If you have been on this journey of faith for a while you will have noticed this. After the euphoria of coming into a relationship with Jesus settles, we begin to learn his way of transforming us.

This is an integral part of our KAC Vision statement. We are intentionally and prayerfully seeking the work of the Spirit to individually transform us in holiness, so that corporately we are connected and can express our spiritual gifts for God's purposes.

The Mission for our next five years is to individually and corporately (together) glorify God, making Jesus known as we love and serve together.

It takes me back to the power of the two waves of the tsunami - a tragedy - but the image gave me an insight into our Mission and Vision. We are called to come in together, as we are now, but also to go out, making Jesus known.

Two waves, two ways to live!

- Secondly, the process of Purging (v10-12)

*¹⁰ For you, God, tested us;
you refined us like silver.*

*¹¹ You brought us into prison
and laid burdens on our backs.*

*¹² You let people ride over our heads;
we went through fire and water,
but you brought us to a place of abundance.*

Why do we have to go through burdens and fire and flood? David experienced massive physical, emotional, and social challenges, as have all the faithful servants of God - Daniel, Joseph, Paul and all the disciples.

Let me read you a story called 'The Refiner of Silver'.

"A person observed that there is something remarkable in the expression of the prophet Malachi,

"He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver" Malachi (3:3)

It was agreed that a silversmith should be called in to give his opinion on the subject. Without disclosing the direct object, he was asked the process of refining silver, which he described in detail.

"But do you SIT watching whilst the work of refining is going on?"

"Oh, yes " answered the silversmith, "I must sit with my eyes constantly fixed on the furnace, for if the necessary time be extended on the slightest degree, the silver will be injured"

At once the beauty and truth of the expression, "he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver", is apparent.

Christ **sees** it needful to put his children into the furnace, BUT He is seated by the side of it, his eye is steadily fixed on the work of refining and purifying; his wisdom and his love are both engaged in the best manner for them; their trials do not come at random; their hairs are counted.

The silversmith said he had still to mention that he only knew when the process of purifying was completed **BY SEEING HIS OWN IMAGE IN THE SILVER** - a beautiful figure. When our Lord shall **see** his own image in his children his work of purifying shall be - **ACCOMPLISHED!**

It is not about punishing us but about teaching us and refining us and making us into the image of Christ."

This is the process of becoming holy.

- Thirdly, our Pledges to depend on God

Notice at verse 13 the language changes from corporate to individual. "I" must be responsible to personally come before God.

Read v13-15

*I will come to your temple with burnt offerings
and fulfill my vows to you—*

*14 vows my lips promised and my mouth spoke
when I was in trouble.*

*15 I will sacrifice fat animals to you
and an offering of rams;
I will offer bulls and goats.*

Sometimes we only call on God when we are out of our depth - "when I was in trouble" (v14). When we are in the victorious places, we tend to become self-sufficient and even a bit proud, but when we are struggling, we can come back to God and renew our 'pledges' and commitment to him.

While we don't sacrifice animals as the Israelites did, maybe we get indifferent with our spiritual disciplines and forget to give him the priority we had determined at another time?

*Psalm 66:16-20: 16 Come and hear, all you who fear
God; let me tell you what he has done for me.*

*17 I cried out to him with my mouth;
his praise was on my tongue.*

*18 If I had cherished sin in my heart,
the Lord would not have listened;*

*19 but God has surely listened
and has heard my prayer.*

*20 Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer
or withheld his love from me!*

Place of Prayer:

- *Our Personal stories or testimonies are important to share*

*v16-17: Come and hear, all you who fear God;
let me tell you what he has done for me.*

*¹⁷ I cried out to him with my mouth;
his praise was on my tongue.*

Sometimes we underestimate the power of our testimony. People can often relate better to our brokenness than to our successes. Henri Nouwen talks about us as 'Wounded Healers', and in our vulnerability God can speak to others going through similar situations. Have you noticed that? Rather than hide our wounds for fear of embarrassment, we stop seeing them as a source of shame, and use them as a source of healing for others.

- *Secondly, we Protect ourselves rather than 'humble ourselves under God's mighty hand'?*

Something innate in us wants to justify the way we see things and do things, and we resist admitting we have made a mistake or there is another perspective.

It's part of our humanity. We are better at blame than looking at ourselves and recognising God wants us to be accountable for our attitude, actions and words.

This prayer of confession asks God to forgive and heal us; then we can move forward.

*v18-19: If I had cherished sin in my heart,
the Lord would not have listened;*

*¹⁹ but God has surely listened
and has heard my prayer.*

- Finally, Praise restored

The bottom line of our faith is, 'Do we believe God is good?' Some see him as cruel, angry and full of vengeance, but his children see him and know him as a God of unfailing love.

*v20: Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer
or withheld his love from me!*

Conclusion

So as we begin 2022, what can we learn from Psalm 66?

Maybe we are in a place where things are going well. Let's sing and give thanks to God.

Maybe your life is rocky and difficult, then let's remember the purifying process and trust that we will be more Christlike after the process. He will be with us through it. We can depend on God. Praise God for his character.

Maybe there is some issue we are baulking at. We need to bring it to God and sort it through so we can be forgiven and move forward, giving thanks to God.

Maybe we need to commit ourselves afresh to prayer and spiritual disciplines? Or remember stories of his faithfulness in our past and give thanks to God.

Whatever place in your life you are at, may I encourage you to keep trusting God. He is unchanging, good, merciful, gracious, compassionate, and absolutely sovereign in the universe.

And in everything, give **him** thanks and praise...

**...in Psalm 66 for our lives,
God's mission and vision at KAC,
individually and corporately,
and beyond in 2022!
AMEN!**