

OKOTOKS EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

THANKFUL PRAISE

PSALM 66:1-20

OCTOBER 13, 2019



SERMON OUTLINE

Sacrifice of Praise

Hebrews 13:15-16

What do I need to do with what I have heard today?

MAIN POINT

Like the psalmist, we should offer thanks to God for His great work in our lives and invite others into this praise.

THINKING THINGS THROUGH

Connect the sermon to the study.

Leader: As we focus on Thankfulness, we want to make sure and leave sufficient time to answer questions 11 and 12 to share the way God has answered prayers in our lives. If you are running short on time, consider skipping ahead to these questions for the last portion of your time together.

1. Is it easy or difficult to find things to be thankful for? Explain.

2. How does gratitude affect your life on a daily basis?

Leader: More than any other people, Christ followers have a reason to be thankful. We have been given much in Christ and have much to be thankful for. Gratitude comes from a heart that has acknowledged dependence. We are needy people who depend on Christ for

SERMON BASED GROWTH GROUP

everything we have. The life we lead in response to this truth should be one of gratitude. We see all that God has done in the past and in the present and invite others to know Him and find the gratitude that comes from knowing Him.

DIGGING DEEPER

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PSALM 66:1-7.

3. These verses focus on worshiping God for His deeds. What did God do that led the psalmist to praise Him? Why is it important to remember God's past deeds in our lives?

4. The psalmist's call to praise was not limited to the people of Israel, but included all the earth (v. 1). How do people see the work of God?

5. Knowing that there are people who do not recognize the glory of God, the psalmist invited others to observe the glory of the Lord with him (v. 5). What would it look like for you to point out God's work to people who don't know Him? How could you do this in your regular conversations without forcing the issue?

Leader: Psalm 66 opens with two calls for all people to praise God. The psalmist called for people to "shout for joy to God, all the earth" (v. 1) and to "come and see what God has done" (v. 5). He recognized that what God did was so wonderful and praiseworthy that it needed to be shared. To support his claim, the psalmist pointed to God's awesome deeds, His sovereign control, His worthiness to receive worship, and His miraculous deliverance of His people from captivity.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PSALM 66:8-12.

6. God's work wasn't just lost in the past; it was near to the psalmist in the present (vv. 8-9). Why must we also look for what God is doing right now and make sure our praise isn't solely focused on what He did in the past?

7. These verses describe times of crisis and trial for the people of Israel. Why is God still worthy of praise in our moments of crisis and trial (see James 1:2-4)?

8. What have you learned about God through trying times that you would not have learned about Him if things were going well?

Leader: The psalmist focused on what God was doing in the present, which may seem odd to us when we see all the seemingly difficult experiences that he described in these verses. The Scriptures do not ignore trying circumstances, but they do show us how to look to God and appreciate His work in trials. Because God is sovereign over every trial, we can be sure that He is with us and is working the outcome of the trial for His good and our glory (Rom. 8:28). God uses the trials of life to bring about His work in our lives. Through our trials, we are made more into His image, and we can praise Him for His work in any circumstance. We experience God's grace in all circumstances.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PSALM 66:13-20.

9. The psalmist sacrificed to God to thank Him for deliverance (vv. 13-15). Though we don't offer the same kind of sacrifices to God today, what do we sacrifice to show God our gratitude?

10. How are our entire lives meant to be a sacrifice of worship before God (see Romans 12:1-2)?

Leader: For the follower of Jesus, we don't give occasional sacrifices. Instead, our whole life is to be an ongoing sacrifice. This is why Paul called it a "living sacrifice." We give all that we have to Christ and declare His praises in the community of the church. What He has done for us is far more than we could ever ask, think, or imagine, so our spiritual worship means that we lay down our lives.

DOING LIFE TOGETHER

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

SERMON BASED GROWTH GROUP

11. How can you practice an outwardly thankful attitude for all that God has done for you? If someone observed your life, would he or she believe that you are thankful to know God?

12. This psalm ends with another cry to the collected community of God to praise Him. Most groups spend more time asking for prayer than they do talking about answered ones. Share some prayers of yours that God has answered.

PRAYER

Close in prayer expressing praise to God. Thank Him that He listens to and hears our prayers and that He has not rejected us or withheld His love (Ps. 66:19-20).

MEMORIZE

²⁰ Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer or withheld his love from me! –
Psalm 66:20

SPOTLIGHT ON THE PASSAGE

PSALM 66:1-20

66:1-3. The psalmist began by summoning all the earth to shout with joy to God with a cry of adoration (1 Sam. 10:24). He invited everyone to sing the glory (Heb. kabod, “greatness”) of his name. In the Bible a person’s name represents his personality. God’s name represents his awesome character and holy attributes. The people were to recognize and rejoice in the mighty acts through which God had made his enemies cringe before him.

66:4. Anticipating a favorable response to his invitation, the psalmist declared that all the earth bows down to God in humility and homage. They longed for a future time when great numbers from throughout the world would worship God.

66:5-7. The psalmist extended his invitation to all people: Come and see what God has done. This was an appeal to behold and consider the saving acts that God had performed for his people. Specifically, he urged all the earth to behold how God had turned the sea into dry land, recalling the time when God delivered Israel from the Egyptian army at the Red Sea (Exod. 14). In this mighty rescue, God’s people passed through the waters on foot in an extraordinary demonstration of God’s power. In response to this awesome deed, the psalmist invites the reader to come, let us rejoice in him because He rules forever, demonstrating his power over the nations who rise up against him. All peoples could see this mighty salvation by coming to the temple (cp. vv. 13-14), where his power was made known and celebrated through worship.

SERMON BASED GROWTH GROUP

66:8. With growing intensity the psalmist called for God's people to shout to the Lord. God should be praised by his peoples for what he had done in the past (vv. 5-7), as well as for what he was doing in the present (vv. 8-12). The sound of his praise was to be heard among worshipers in the temple (v. 13).

66:9-12. The psalmist declared that God had preserved our lives and kept our feet from slipping into the grave. Thus, God's people had every reason to praise him. Even in the midst of their distress, God was working for their good because he had tested them and refined them like silver. Like a metalsmith heating precious metals in a furnace to remove all impurities, so God worked in trials to refine his people. Thus, God worked for their good, even in their suffering. Israel's enemies meant it for evil, but God worked it for good (cp. Gen. 50:20). The phrase You brought us into prison is a reference to being taken as prisoners of war. Laid burdens on our backs pictures forced slavery by the foreign armies who rode over the heads of Israel's fallen soldiers. Through fire and water is a metaphor for severe troubles. But God brought his people to a place of abundance (literally, an overflowing, cf. Ps. 23:5) or prosperous circumstances.

66:13-14. The psalmist came to the temple to offer burnt offerings, serving as an example for the people to do likewise. Further, he would fulfill his vows which were promised to God when he was in trouble.

66:15. In this act of worship, he vowed to God, I will sacrifice fat animals to you. This included rams, bulls, and goats. The lavishness of these gifts presented to God could scarcely do the occasion justice. God had acted graciously on behalf of his people; only the best gifts should be brought to him.

66:16-20. Come and listen, the psalmist appealed to the gathered worshipers, and let me tell you what he has done for me. He indicated that he cried out to God with praise... on his tongue. But he knew that if he had unconfessed sin in his heart, the Lord would not have listened. He was aware that sin disqualifies the person who cries out to God from being heard (cp. Ps. 66:18). But a blameless heart gives assurance that God has surely listened and heard the psalmist's... prayer (cp. 1 John 3:21). This was an invitation to all worshipers to search their own hearts, knowing that unconfessed sin prevents God from hearing and honoring prayer. Because the psalmist's praise was offered from a pure heart, God did not withhold his love.