



THE COSMIC CAUSE OF CHRIST

Psalm 66

If you have a Bible, and I hope you do, let me invite you to open with me to Psalm 66. I cannot express in words how excited I am about the journey we are going to take in God's Word today...all day long. As many of you know, this is week 3 in our immersion in the Psalms as a faith family...in which over a period of six weeks, we are looking at different psalms in different worship gatherings...oftentimes with different preachers.

So last week I preached Psalm 51 at 9:00, Pastor Jim preached Psalm 52 at 11:00, and Pastor Matt preached Psalm 57 at 6:00. And...if you haven't had a chance to do so, I would encourage you to go back and to listen to the sermons that you didn't hear. I've had numerous people from different worship gatherings say, "Oh, I wish everybody in the church could have heard that." And...it was really cool just to see how they all fit together...Psalm 51 (God's mercy that covers over our sin) in the morning, Psalm 57 (God's mercy that comforts us in suffering) in the evening, and right in the middle, Psalm 52 (which emphasizes the faithful, steadfast love of God). So let me encourage you to potentially go back and listen to those different psalms.

And then, this week happens to be the week when Jim and Matt are both out of town, so...I've got all three worship gatherings...with three different psalms. And the plan is to walk through Psalm 66 here at 9:00, then Psalm 67 at 11:00, and then Psalm 68 tonight at 6:00. And what I'm so excited about is how these psalms just fit together with each other so well...and not just with each other, but with what we just prayed for—it is no accident that we would be in Psalm 66, 67, and 68 on the day when we commission about 30 missionaries from our faith family to go to the nations with the gospel. And these psalms just so happen to be what we're reading together on this week! So...we're going to look at Psalm 66 now, and pray for the Lord to teach us about what it means to worship Him in this psalm, and then...if you want to stay around at 11:00 or come back at 6:00, you're free to do so as we dive into Psalm 67 and 68.

Alright, here we go...Psalm 66...let's read it together, and then let's pray for God to teach us and transform us through it – I'll start reading in verse 1...

*Shout for joy to God, all the earth;
sing the glory of his name;
give to him glorious praise!
Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds!
So great is your power that your enemies come cringing to you.
All the earth worships you
and sings praises to you;
they sing praises to your name."* *Selah*

*Come and see what God has done:
he is awesome in his deeds toward the children of man.
He turned the sea into dry land;*

*they passed through the river on foot.
There did we rejoice in him,
who rules by his might forever,
whose eyes keep watch on the nations—
let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah*

*Bless our God, O peoples;
let the sound of his praise be heard,
who has kept our soul among the living
and has not let our feet slip.
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.*

*I will come into your house with burnt offerings;
I will perform my vows to you,
that which my lips uttered
and my mouth promised when I was in trouble.
I will offer to you burnt offerings of fattened animals,
with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams;
I will make an offering of bulls and goats. Selah*

*Come and hear, all you who fear God,
and I will tell what he has done for my soul.
I cried to him with my mouth,
and high praise was on my tongue.
If I had cherished iniquity in my heart,
the Lord would not have listened.
But truly God has listened;
he has attended to the voice of my prayer.*

*Blessed be God,
because he has not rejected my prayer
or removed his steadfast love from me! (Psalm 66)*

Let's pray. O God, we're sitting in this room right now with Your Word open before us...with this song that is inspired by You to teach us what it means to worship You. And so we pray that You would do exactly that. In this room over the next few moments, God we pray that You would teach us and transform our worship. Teach us about who You are, what it means to praise You, and how that affects our lives. We pray that You do that now and all day long as we study these Psalms. We don't enter into this time lightly. We trust that You are speaking right now. So help us to listen, guard us from distractions. Guard me from distractions in what I am saying, that I might speak only what Your Word is saying, and that You would do a supernatural work through Your Word over the next few moments. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Oh...there is so much in this psalm...and I have struggled with how to best walk us through it. These psalms don't always follow a progression like one of Paul's letters might...where

this truth leads to that truth which leads to this conclusion. Instead, there are interlocking themes all throughout these psalms that come together poetically in powerful ways.

Eleven Couplets ...

I want to show us eleven couplets in this psalm, meaning pairs that go together all throughout the psalm...that together paint a picture of what I want to call "The Cosmic Cause of Christ." So if you're taking notes, that would be the title here in Psalm 66 – "The Cosmic Cause of Christ." And you might say, "Well, Jesus isn't even mentioned in this psalm," and if that's what you think...well, just hang with me. Eleven couplets, eleven pairs of themes that poetically come together in Psalm 66.

Singing and Shouting

One, singing and shouting. So here's the first couplet I want us to see...I want us to see the interplay between "singing" and "shouting" in this psalm.

"Shout for joy to God, all the earth; sing the glory of his name." Verse 3 – "Say to God, 'How awesome are your deeds!'" Verse 4 – "All the earth worships you and sings praises to you; they sing praises to your name."

So you've got singing here, which informs why we do what we do in this room. So to an outsider who is not familiar with the church or with a worship gathering, this scene in this room might look somewhat funny. What is this, a bunch of adults gathering together for a sing-along? And the answer is, "Yes, and there's a reason we sing." There's a reason every week we come into this room, and we sing.

And there's a reason why you should not come into this room just for the sermon, as if that's the main event and everything else is just lagniappe. No, singing is a vital, pivotal, biblical part of worship. To be the church is to be a singing people; we're a community that can't help but to sing praises to our God. This is one of the primary ways we give Him worship; we sing the glory of His name.

And we shout. Now this is something I think we as a church need to work on. *"Shout for joy to God, all the earth"* – the word here is used in other places in Scripture as a war cry or a triumphant celebration of victory over one's enemies. Psalm 47:1-2 – *"Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy! For the Lord, the Most High, is to be feared, a great king over all the earth."* It's the kind of loud cry that strengthens the army and strikes fear in the enemy.

And this needs to be a part of our worship. One of my prayers in this immersion in the psalms is that the Lord would (through His Word) teach us more about how to worship...and this is one instruction I believe He's giving to us. I don't just believe He's giving it to us...He's giving it to us. His Word is saying, *"Shout for joy to God!"*

So, as you and I sing in this room, I want you to have the freedom to shout at the same time. You say, "What does that look like?" Three applications come to my mind...and these are likely not all, but...

One: There are times when we're singing, and the band gets going, and the voices are raised in worship...and I'm standing over here singing...and somewhere along the way my singing becomes shouting. I feel like I'm yelling in worship...just loudly giving God praise...

Which often leads to a second application to, during a song, or between verses of a song that we're singing, shout out praise to God. While we're singing, just to shout, "Yes, God, yes...You are all these things." While we're singing "How Great Thou Art," just to shout, "Yes, God, You are great...and greatly to be praised. You're holy, holy, holy...the whole earth is full of Your glory! We praise You for Your greatness, O God!"

And then, the third application, not just in our singing, but in the preaching of God's Word...as God's glory is being revealed in His Word, I want you to have the freedom to shout! An "Amen" here or there wouldn't hurt us in this house! It'd probably help us...it'd help us get out of the spectator mentality where I'm just talking and you're just listening. You guys can join in the talking too. If I happen to say something that you think is true, or that your heart resonates with, then shout out an "Amen" or "Praise the Lord" or "That's right." And when somebody does that, don't everybody look at that person and think, "Man...settle down." No...we shout for joy to God! We shout and we sing...both present in Psalm 66.

Worshiping and Witnessing

Second couplet we see: worshiping and witnessing. This is one of the things I love most about this psalm...it is a constant back and forth between worship and witness. Let me show it to you.

Verses 1-4 talks about worship. "*Shout for joy to God*" (verse 1). "*Sing the glory of his name*" (verse 2). "*All the earth worships you,*" (verse 4). But then, in verse 5, listen to this: "*Come and see.*" And notice the way the Psalm poetically is broken up. Verse five is a new section. "*Come and see what God has done.*" So that's witness. "*He is awesome in his deeds toward the children of man*" (verse 5).

And then in verse 8, you go back to worship. "*Bless our God, O peoples; let the sound of his praise be heard.*" But when you go all the way to verse 16, it's witness again: "*Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for my soul.*" And you get to the end, verse 20, "*Blessed be God, because he has not rejected my prayer.*" So that is worship there. So you've got worship – shouting and singing and blessing and offering; and you've got witness – "*Come and see what God has done*" (verse 5) – "*Come and hear, all you who fear God*" (verse 16).

These twin realities both come together in this psalm...the psalmist sings worship to God and then gives witness about God. When he sees God's greatness, he can't help but to call other people to see what he sees. This is it, isn't it? This is the way it works. When you or I see something (or someone) great, we say to people around us, "You've got to see this!" We do that naturally. It's the overflow of a heart that sees something great. We say, "Oh, you've got to watch this!"

O God, that all across this room, would we be like this psalmist. That we would gather together in this room, beholding our God...the God who reigns over all nature and all nations...the God who saves us from sin and damnation...that we would see Him in all of His beauty and majesty and love and mercy, and then that we would run out of this room, saying, "Come and see who God is!" "Come and see what God has done!" "Come and hear what God has done for my soul!"

Passionate worship always leads to personal witness. Always. And what that means is...if we're not witnessing, there's a problem with our worship. We're not seeing God for who He is! We're not realizing what He's done! We're not realizing the magnitude of what He's done for our souls!

Invitation and Admonition

More on that to come in Psalm 67 and 68. But see it, both are here. Worship and witness go together, which leads right to the third couplet. In Psalm 66, we see invitation and admonition. Now here's what I mean by that. Invitation is basically what we just talked about. The psalmist here is inviting the people of Israel and the peoples of the world to give glory and honor and praise to God. So this is not just a personal expression of worship (which we'll talk about more in a minute) – it's certainly that, but it's so much more than that. The psalmist is inviting people to see the awesome deeds of God, the great power of God. He's reaching back into biblical history to recount reasons for blessing God, and he's inviting people to respond.

So you've got invitation alongside admonition...because there's also a note of warning that this psalm sounds. Verse 7 says, "*Let not the rebellious exalt themselves.*" That's a warning. It's a warning to people when the psalmist wrote it however many centuries ago, and it's a warning to people all across this room today: "Don't exalt yourself before this God." He is watching you...He knows everything you do. Don't rebel against Him. Don't set yourself up as His enemy. For if you do, you will end up coming cringing to him.

Oh, this couplet is a reality in this room this morning. There is an invitation to all who are here to worship God. An invitation to see His greatness, sing His greatness, shout His greatness. And there is an admonition here that I want to sound loud and clear...to every man, woman, and child within the sound of my voice: Don't rebel against this God. Don't turn away from this God. Turn to this God. Turn to Him. Trust in Him.

Non-Christian friend here today, this is the particular invitation and admonition to you. We invite you to trust in God...to look to Him and His love for you...humble yourself before Him, and He will lift you up. But don't—we urge you—don't exalt yourself before Him. For He will bring you down.

Now you might say, "How do I know He loves me? How do I know I can trust Him? Why is He worthy of my praise?" And those are good questions.

General Revelation and Special Revelation

This leads to the fourth couplet in Psalm 66: general revelation and special revelation. And here's what I mean by that. General revelation is a term that refers to the general ways that God reveals Himself to all people everywhere. Two times in the beginning of Psalm 66 – verse 1 and verse 4 – you see "all the earth." "*All the earth worships [God]*" (verse 4). And this is a truth that is echoed throughout the rest of the Bible. Romans 1 teaches that all of creation shouts the glory of God: "*Since the creation of the world, the invisible qualities of God, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen from what has been made.*"

So all people everywhere, all over the world, whether in America or Africa or Asia or Antarctica for that matter – see the glory of God revealed in creation. That's general revelation.

But then there's special revelation, and this is a term that refers to the special, or more specific, ways that God reveals His glory to those who trust in Him and have a relationship with Him. And the example here in Psalm 66 is the special ways God had revealed His glory to the people of Israel.

Verse 6 says, "*He turned the sea into dry land,*" which is a clear reference to when God revealed His glory at the edge of the Red Sea. The people of God were fleeing Egypt, and

the Egyptians were about to overtake them, and all of a sudden, God split the sea in half and led His people through the middle of the sea on dry land. That was special revelation...a specific revelation of God to His people that was beyond the bounds of God's general revelation to all people. And this special revelation specifically focused on how God saves His people from pursuing armies. And then the next phrase of verse 6 – *"they passed through the river on foot."* That's a reference to when the people of God passed through the Jordan River on their way to the Promised Land...how God not only saved His people, but restored them in a new land.

So you've got both general revelation and specific revelation in this psalm. Now the reason this is so important relates to what we're sending out 30 missionaries today to do around the world. Most (if not all) of these missionaries are going to places and peoples in the world where there is an abundance of general revelation, but an absence of special revelation. They're going to places where people can see the glory of God in creation around them...but they've never heard the good news about how this glorious God saves His people.

We talk about this all the time...about 6,000 people groups in the world...comprising over two billion people...who can see the glory of God in creation around them...but they've never heard – not just about God saving His people at the Red Sea or bringing them across the Jordan River – they've never heard about how God can (and will) save them from their sins and bring them into eternal life with Him.

This is what I saw in Nepal a couple of months ago...24 Tibetan Buddhist people groups who see and behold the glory of God in the mountains of Nepal day after day after day – so much general revelation. But it was 4 or 5 days before we met anyone who had even heard about Jesus. How is this possible? This is not tolerable! And the psalmist in Psalm 66 knows this is not tolerable, and so he says to the peoples, to the nations, "See what God has done for us!" And this is what these brothers and sisters are going out from among us to do over the coming months and years: to say to people who've never heard, "See what God has done for us! See what God has done for you!" And it's the same thing we want to say to our non-Christian friends who are here today. "See what God has done for us! See what God has done for you!"

Yes, He's created the world, and yes, He's sovereign over every star in the universe...but listen to what else He's done! God has come to us in Jesus – God in the flesh – to pay the price for our rebellion against Him. He has died on a cross in order to pay the penalty of sin in our place, and He has risen from the dead in victory over sin and death so that you and I can be saved from sin and restored to eternal life with God forever! Anyone want to shout about that? So worship involves both general revelation and special revelation.

Deliverance from Death

Which leads right to the next couplet. Number five, Psalm 66 rejoices in deliverance from death. Deliverance and death. "Bless our God, O peoples," verse 8 says, *"let the sound of his praise be heard, who has kept our soul among the living and has not let our feet slip."* This is the primary testimony of the psalmist – "Praise God, because He has given us life. He has delivered us from death." God gives life.

Trust amidst Trial

In Psalm 66, we see trust amidst trial. Verses 10, 11, and 12 recount how God has tested and tried His people... *"For you, O God, have tested us; you have tried us as silver is tried"* (verse 10). The picture is the refining process, recounting how God, whether it was in Egypt before He brought them to the Red Sea, or in the wilderness before He brought them to the Promised Land, walked His people through trial.

Verse 11 says, *"You brought us into the net; you laid a crushing burden on our backs."* See the high view of God's sovereignty in the psalmist. He knows God is in control of all things...that He is ultimately sovereign over all things...that even amidst difficulty, God has ultimate authority over that difficulty...that He *"let men ride over heads"* (verse 12) as they *"went through fire and through water."* But listen to the psalmist's conclusion: *"Yet you have brought us out to a place of abundance."*

Did you hear that? There's trial here—hard trial—like silver in the fire, like being caught in a net, with a crushing burden on your back, men riding over your head, going through fire and water. There's trial here, and in the midst of trial...specifically on the other end of trial...there's trust. Not just trust, but abundance. Oh, this is not some trite faith that the psalmist is speaking about that knows nothing of pain or difficulty. No, the psalmist, along with the people of God, knows pain and knows difficulty and knows what it's like to hurt...what it's like to feel heavy with the burdens of life. But at the same time, the psalmist knows what it's like for God to bring you through trial to a place of abundance...and **that** is cause for worship. Trust amidst trial.

You can't help but to think about God's words to His people later in Isaiah 43:1 – oh, hear this, suffering brother or sister, scores of whom I know are in this room right now walking through trial – hear the word of God to you: *"Fear not..."*

May that Word give you what you need to praise Him until He brings you into a place of abundance.

Past and Present

Which leads right to the next couplet in Psalm 66: past and present. See how this psalm recounts God's past work among His people in order to inspire present worship in His people. In verse 13, the psalmist says, *"I will come into your house with burnt offerings; I will perform my vows to you,"* and then he starts talking about vows he made when he was in the midst of trouble and trial.

Now I want you to notice the connection here. Part of what fuels God's worship in the present is God's work in the past. The psalmist can look back to clear manifestations of God's power on behalf of His people – of the way God brought His people through the Red Sea and across the Jordan River – the way God brought His people through fire and water before – and so the psalmist is confident that just as God was faithful to do that in the past, God will be faithful to do the same thing in the present.

And this is part of what we do every week when we gather in this room to worship, isn't it? We read in God's Word and we see the stories of God's faithfulness to His people, and notice its effect: it inspires worship in this room...all kinds of people facing all kinds of different life situations worship God. We read this Word about how God has always, always, always brought His people through trial to triumph, and so no matter what we're walking through in our lives, we worship. We worship God in the present as we look to God's work in the past.

Universal and Personal

Couplet number 8 in Psalm 66: universal and personal. I want you to notice with me the progression from the peoples in this psalm to the people of God all the way down to one person, the psalmist himself. So the psalm starts with all the earth shouting the praises of God. And verse 8 is a call to all the "peoples" of the world. So you've got a universal picture here – all the earth involved in the worship of God.

But then slowly, subtly, the psalmist begins talking about God's special revelation to His people, the people of Israel in the Bible, and you see a narrowing there. And then, for the first time, in verse 13, you see the first person pronoun "I." Notice how right before this (and all before this), the psalmist was speaking with plural pronouns. Verse 9 – God has *"kept our soul among the living"* – He *"has not let our feet slip."* Verses 10-12 – *"You, O God, have tested us...you have tried us...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...you have brought us out to a place of abundance."*

But then, verses 13-15, you might circle "I" and "my": *"I will come into your house with burnt offerings; I will perform my vows to you, that which my lips uttered and my mouth promised when I was in trouble. I will offer to you burnt offerings of fattened animals, with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams; I will make an offering of bulls and goats."* And it continues to the end of the psalm. Verse 16 – *"I will tell what he has done for my soul."* Verses 17-19 – *"I cried to him with my mouth, and high praise was on my tongue. If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. But truly God has listened; he has attended to the voice of my prayer."* Then the last verse, verse 20, *"Blessed be God, because he has not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me!"*

Oh, don't you love that? Not just "us," but "me." God has heard my prayer and has not removed His steadfast love from me! Now that's not to say that the "us" isn't important, because it is. Obviously, from the beginning, this psalm is calling on more and more and more people all throughout the earth to praise God. But amidst the universal worth of God, the psalmist doesn't lose sight of the personal nature of praise. So see it...in this room...right now...

We are a community of faith—a church—made up of men and women, brothers and sisters who together worship our God. And we are calling out for the nations to join us in His worship, in light of all He has done for us. But at the same time, amidst a room this size, never lose sight of the personal nature of praise, as well. When you sing and shout—yes, sing and shout—with others to our God, don't forget that at the same time, you are singing and shouting to your God...the God you know...the God you love...the God who has worked a miracle in your soul and my soul...the God who hears your prayer and my prayer...and the God who has not withheld His steadfast love from you or me. Just let that soak in, Christian. In Christ...right where you're sitting...right now...God has not withheld His steadfast love from you. Rejoice in your heart: *"God has not removed His steadfast love from me"* (Psalm 66:20).

Speaking with our Lips and Surrendering our Lives

This automatically leads to the next couplet: speaking with our lips and surrendering our lives. So when the psalmist starts speaking in the first person in verse 13, he begins describing the offerings he's going to bring before God...and he mentions *"burnt offerings of fattened animals, with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams"* and *"an offering of bulls and goats,"* and the picture here is an extravagant offering before God (Psalm 66:15). Fattened animals, rams, bulls, goats...that's a lot of animals...and this would have been an extreme sacrifice. Some commentators think this is an exaggeration for effect. Others think this means this was definitely a king who was writing this psalm in order to have so much wealth to be able to sacrifice this much. We don't know really know, but what we do know is this: The psalmist knows that worship is not just about singing and shouting. Yes, it's about singing and shouting, but it's about so much more. Worship is about sacrifice. Worship is about laying down before the Lord that which costs you. And this we must remember every single week when we gather together for worship. If all we do is sing and shout, but we don't lay our lives down in surrender before God...then we have not worshiped.

This is why we talk all the time about God having a blank check with our lives. Whatever He wants us to do, wherever He wants to go, whatever He wants us to give...this week...next week...at any point in our lives...our lives are surrendered to Him. Our possessions, our plans, our dreams, and our days are His to spend however He wants for the glory of His name. In worship, we speak with our lips as we surrender our lives.

Humble Dependence and Holy Desire

Number 10, humble dependence and holy desire. Listen to verse 16 – *"Come and, all you who fear God...all you who fear God..."* And then verse 17 – *"I cried to him with my mouth, and high praise was on my tongue."* Do you feel the sense of humility and dependence in the psalmist. He is humble before God. He fears God...he fears Him in a way that causes him to cry out to him...in humble dependence. This man knows he needs God.

Humble dependence...coupled with holy desire. So he cries out to God in prayer, and as he does, he knows that if he cherishes sin in his heart, his prayer will have no place before God. Now obviously he is not perfect...no one but Jesus is. But the psalmist realizes that it would make no sense to worship and pray while cherishing or desiring sin. No, to worship and to pray is to desire God. And to desire a life that honors Him in holiness. This is the kind of worship that pleases God. It's what's reflected at the end of Isaiah when God says in Isaiah 66:2: *"This is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word."* Humble dependence and holy desire. God, may both mark our worship.

Praise and Prayer

The last couplet in Psalm 66, number 11, praise and prayer. All throughout this psalm, you see praise and prayer...and it's encapsulated most here at the end. Verse 19 – *"Truly God has listened; he has attended to the voice of my prayer."* Then watch it – praise and prayer in the last verse, verse 20: *"Blessed be God,"* (so there's the praise), *"because he has not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me."*

We realize in one sense that praise is prayer. Praise to God is communication with God. So as we sing and shout, in a very real sense, we're praying...we're calling out to, communicating with God. That's why on our days of prayer and fasting, when we come together on those Wednesday nights, one of the things we do as we pray is we sing...and shout. And oh, let me just say how much I love those Wednesday nights...thank you to those of you who have made it a priority to be a part of those. And if you've not, please let me encourage you to make it a priority to be a part of those.

So praise is prayer in one sense...but also notice how praise relates to prayer, particularly when we call out for needs in our lives, as the psalmist is doing here at the end of the psalm, or for needs in others' lives. For when we do, when we call out to God for needs in our lives or others' lives, we know that God hears us – He listens to us. I love this phrase in verse 19 – He attends to our voice. What a thought! God...attending to my voice. He doesn't turn away from my voice...He hears it...and He responds to it according to His steadfast love. Oh, that's reason for praise! That's reason for praise!

I want you to hear an illustration of how prayer and praise come together, along with others of these couplets. I want to ask Jonathan B. to join me up here, our Global Disciple-Making Pastor. I have asked him to share a story that he recounted to me a few weeks ago...a story that goes back to something he shared many years ago at Brook Hills...and I just want you to see how all this comes together.

Pastor Jonathan B.: Yes, as we pray, we have the privilege to participate in the cause of Christ. This is one of those things that I began to learn about 15 years ago. I was backpacking through northern Vietnam. We'd flown into the capital and taken an all-night train, then ridden in an all-day bus, then spent three or four days bouncing around in a Jeep up in the mountains of northern Vietnam.

We came to this one village on the other side of a muddy river. We scrambled down and yelled across, trying to get somebody to hear us. Somebody came across in a dugout canoe and we teeter-tottered our way back across that river into this little village with thatched-roof huts on stilts. We were scurried into a home with sixty of our new best friends. All the kids were peeking their faces through the window and the doorway.

We began to ask questions about what these people believed and tried to understand what they worshipped. We said, "Do you believe in the Buddha?" which is common in that area. They said, "No. We don't believe anything like that." I said, "What about spirits in the forest?" They said, "No, nothing like that." "Well, what about your fathers and mothers when they die? Do you worship them?" They said, "No, nothing like that." So, out of desperation, I thought I'd be kind of smart and said, "Well, what makes your crops grow?" They said, "The rain!" I said, "Good answer. What makes the rains come?" "We just hope." "Well, what makes the sun come?" "We just hope." And out of desperation, we asked, "You don't believe anything about what happens to you after you die?" And back to the translator came the response, "No, no one has come and told us about that yet."

That story had a profound impact on my life and set my life on a course to go, pray for, and participate in seeing villages—like this particular village—hear the gospel. I've shared that story now for fifteen years and every time I share that story, someone has come up afterwards and said, "Jonathan, what happened to that village?" And I've had to say, "I don't know." We shared the gospel and we later found out that this was an unreached people group with no known believers, previously unclassified. They didn't even know this people group existed. So that's all we knew. We didn't know what happened to that people group or that village until just recently. David always says God's got this whole thing rigged, and it's so true. Through a series of divinely ordained circumstances that we couldn't have brought about, I got an email from our original contact there in Vietnam.

Let me read to you what they said about what happened next. They said, "A believer stopped at that village sometime during the next year after you guys had been there. He was evidently on his way to the city to get medical treatment and he felt the Lord lead him to stop there. The good news was shared again and around twenty people believed and a church was born." Praise God! They went on to say, "I have no doubt that this was a result of the seeds that were planted and prayers that were raised and the pure grace and faithfulness of our God to bring the Mang to Himself. You see, the Mang are that people group in that village, and not only is there a church in that particular village, there are now a few hundred Mang believers spread across Northern Vietnam."

We don't always get to see what God is doing. We have to be faithful and obedient to obey and share the good news, but this is a picture—a window in—on what God is doing. He will bring all peoples to Himself. He will receive praise and glory from all nations. This is a guaranteed promise and we can and we must be confident in God to accomplish this.

One Challenge ...

Pastor David: Praise God! Oh, this is where I want us to see how all eleven of these couplets in this psalm lead to one challenge. Earlier, I mentioned how these eleven couplets come together to paint a picture of the “cosmic purpose of Christ,” and I recognized that Jesus’ name is nowhere to be found in this psalm. But that doesn’t mean this psalm doesn’t point us directly to Him.

For Jesus is the epitome of God’s special revelation. The height of our worship celebration in this room does not revolve around the Red Sea or the Jordan River; the height of our celebration revolves around the cross of Calvary. For this is the place where God dealt the decisive blow to sin and death. And through the sacrifice of His Son on the cross, He made it possible for you and I to be reconciled to Him both now and forever. And ladies and gentlemen, brothers and sisters, this is cause for singing and shouting. Christ is cause for singing and shouting. And Christ is cause for worshiping and witnessing. All who know that Christ has come must testify in places and to peoples where Christ is not known. We must invite people to come to Christ and admonish people not to turn from His gracious gift of salvation. He alone can deliver you and I and every person on the planet from death. He alone is grounds for trust amidst the worst trials this life brings. What He did on the cross 2000 years ago for us is a picture of His promise to be faithful to us today. And more personally...what He did on the cross 2000 years ago for you is a picture of His promise to be faithful to you today.

So sing and shout with your lips to Him, and surrender all of our lives to Him...in humble dependence...with holy desire...praising Him as you pray like He taught us to pray: *“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven”* (Matthew 6:9-10).

Do you see it? This is the cosmic cause of Christ. This is the purpose for which Christ came: He came to make worship like this possible in your life and in others’ lives. Ultimately, Christ came to make Psalm 66 a reality...Christ came to make God’s praise possible among all the peoples of the earth.

This is the cause for which Christ came...and this is the purpose of your life. So in view of the global glory of God and the cosmic cause of Christ, I challenge you: Spend your life spreading God’s praise among the peoples of the earth.

Church at Brook Hills...individual Christian...spend your life saying to the people you live around and the people you work with and the peoples of the world: *“Shout for joy to God, all the earth; sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise!”* (Psalm 66:1-2)

Say to your neighbors and say to the nations, *“Come and see what God has done; he is awesome in His deeds...”* (Psalm 66:5). Say to your neighbors and say to the nations, *“Come and hear...I will tell you what [God] has done for my soul”* (Psalm 66:16).

Oh, Church at Brook Hills...individual Christians all around this room...you and I are part of global family that spans generations going all the way back to psalmists like these. So let’s join with him and brothers and sisters like him to spend our lives, give our lives, lose our lives spreading God’s praise among the peoples of the earth until the day when, together with them, we will sing what Revelation 5 calls a “new song”: *“Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation”* (Revelation 5:9).

Yes! We'll shout in triumph: *"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!"* (Revelation 5:13). Amen!

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