

# Psalm 66

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well today is a great day isn't it? A really encouraging day. Not only is it the day before I go on sabbatical.

! But it is a real privilege, brothers, to have seen you baptised and this afternoon for Mitch Coe to be baptised. God is building his church isn't he? Growing people from all over the world, bringing people into his church.

And that is a really thrilling, thrilling thing. And we must never take that for granted. John Stott was the rector of All Souls Church in the centre of London.

And he went on sabbatical, he went on study leave to read and to pray and to think and reflect. And on one occasion John Stott went into a little church in England, in an English village on the Lord's Day.

And he joined the village church. He was there a number of weeks. And at the end of those weeks, John Stott was profoundly disturbed. Because he said in this little village, every time the people gathered, every time the church got together, all the announcements had to do with the village.

[ 1 : 16 ] All the sermon applications had to do with something going on in the village. All the prayers were about the village.

And of course God cares about the village. But God cares about lots of other things as well, doesn't he? John Stott said, The only conclusion one could draw is that in that little church is the danger of every one of us to worship family gods.

Which of course become family idols. Or local church gods. When in reality, the God who is, is the God of all the earth.

And that's the reason I want us to turn to Psalm 66 this morning. I wanted to preach on Psalm 67, but someone told me this week I'd preach on that too much.

And so, and we're going to look at Psalm 66. It's tucked away in this range of Psalms, from Psalm 51 to Psalm 70. And they both have to do with God blessing the entire world through his people.

[ 2 : 25 ] Both have to do with, if you want to call it, missions. This is a missionary psalm. It's meant to be put to music. You see that right at the start, inscription, to the choir master.

We're meant to sing it. There are five stanzas. Five kind of divisions. One to four. And then five to seven, where the psalmist says, come and see.

And verse eight to twelve is the third stanza. He talks about God leading us through our sufferings into an abundant place. Verses 13 to 14 is the fourth kind of stanza, where it speaks about the sacrifice the psalmist wants to make.

And the fifth one is in verses 16 to 20, where he says, I want to tell you what the Lord has done for me. But we're not going to look at it in those five divisions.

We're going to look at it under three divisions, partly because of time. There's three movements, I think. The first movement is in verses one to four. And the second movement in five to twelve.

[ 3 : 24 ] And the third in 13 to 20. And so what's the psalm teaching us? In verses one to four, it's telling us what is in his heart. And he's singing about it.

Here is what is in the psalmist's heart. We're not told who he is. What is in his heart is this. I want the whole world to worship God.

I want the whole world to worship God. Can you say it with me? I want the whole world to worship God.

Now why? There's two perspectives, I think, to that. You can look at our world, can't you? You can see the desperate, desperate need of people.

People living without hope and without God. You can see the tragedy of poverty. The tragedy of broken relationships and broken hearts.

[ 4 : 28 ] The tragedy of unbelief. Unbelief. You can look at the sheer need and say, I want the whole world to worship God. But the psalmist takes a different approach.

He looks at God. Who is God? He is the God who does, doesn't he, verse two, awesome deeds. He does marvelous things. He does terrible things. As in fearsome. He creates something out of nothing.

He speaks a world into being. And then he orders it. And he sustains it. What an amazing God. And not only that, but he is the God over all the earth.

And the psalmist looks at him and sees what he has done. The psalmist says, I not only shout for joy, but I call upon the entire world to shout for joy.

[ 5 : 29 ] In worship of him. Because I can't stop at his sanctuary, at his temple. My voice must go further than the church.

And so it seems as you look at this psalm, and many other psalms, the one who truly worships the Lord, and adores the Lord, is inevitably a world missionary.

The one who loves him, is a missionary, because he gets involved with God and his purposes. If we love him, and we worship him, we will want him to be exalted.

That is the main thing. The one thing that we can't stand as God's people in this universe, is that his world would not honour him.

That there would be rebellion against him. And we would do anything to turn that around. That is the heart of worship. So in these first four verses, he says, shout with joy to God.

[ 6 : 36 ] People of Israel? That's not what he says, is it? Look at what he says, right in the start. First line. Shout with joy to God, all the earth.

And in verse four, he tells us, all the earth worships you. They sing praise to you. They sing praise to your name. It's got a future sense.

That's the way it's written. One day, all the nations will praise you. That's the heart of the singer. That's the heart of the worshipper.

That is the heart of the one who loves God. I want the whole world to worship God. That's the first movement.

The second movement is in verses five to 12. And here he tells us why he wants the whole world to worship God. So I want the whole world to worship God because of what he's done.

[ 7 : 37 ] I want the whole world to worship God because of what he's done. Say it with me. I want the whole world to worship God because of what he's done.

What has he done? The psalmist is blown away, isn't he? Look at verse five. He says, come and see. You have to see this. You're not going to believe this.

He says to the world, come and see what God has done. How awesome his works on man's behalf. He's talking there when he talks about the children of men of all humanity.

The entire world. Look at what God has done for all the world. And he's going to show us. Verse six, what has he done? He's taken a people and he has delivered them.

He's given them a mighty inheritance that they might be messengers of deliverance and inheritance to the entire world. Why do I say that?

[ 8 : 37 ] Well, he's going to tell us about the mighty deeds of God. And he's not primarily talking about creation. He's not primarily talking about providence, God's plan working out in general.

He's talking specifically about redemption. How God saved a people for himself. And this is the chief gratitude of this psalmist.

The God who had delivered them from slavery. The God who in verse three had his enemies come in cringing before him. That's what he's referring to in verse six in part.

That he turned the sea into dry land. That is who God is. And for the psalmist, it brought back memories, didn't it? It brought back the history of God's people when they, by God's providence, he allowed people to run over their heads, he says later on in the psalm.

He allowed people to put burdens on his people's backs. And we don't know all the reasons why God allowed his people to go through that. We don't understand all the reasons for God permitting evil in this world.

[ 9 : 59 ] But one thing we know is that through those burdens that were laid on Israel's back, through that slavery in their lives and being trampled upon by their enemies, God glorified his love and his redemption in their deliverance.

It's exactly what happened, isn't it? You go to the book of Exodus and God sees and hears the Israelites cry for deliverance. They'd been in Egypt for 430 years and God goes to an old man in the wilderness, to Moses, he's 80 years of age, minding his own business, tending his sheep, enjoying his wife with the Midianites and God appears to Moses in a bush and he tells Moses, go back to Pharaoh, Pharaoh the violent, terrifying, despotic king of Egypt and tell him, God says, let my people go.

Moses says to him, how am I to do that? And God tells him, you go. And then Moses says to him, who are you to ask me to do that? And God says, tell him that I am who I am.

Moses makes all kinds of excuses and God sends him on his way because it's not about Moses, it is about God. It's about God and his awesome deeds and you know the story that eventually the children of Israel, they're delivered from Egypt and they make their way out into the wilderness but there's a little problem, isn't there?

There's water. There's the Red Sea, they've been wandering around for a little while and they hit water in front of them but then behind them, Pharaoh in Egypt changes his mind and Pharaoh pursues them and Pharaoh thinks, I'm losing my labour force and I want to get them back so he loads up 600 of his elite chariots, he gets them all arrayed, he gets other chariots with him from his other lieutenants and so there are hundreds and hundreds of chariots chasing down Israel and the Red Sea is in front of them, the Egyptians are behind them, caught between the devil and the deep blue sea and they're in a bad fix and they've got a question for Moses.

[12:22] They say, Moses, were there not enough graves in Egypt to bury us? Why have you brought us out here? Life was fine in Egypt. We had leeks and onions. We had jobs but here we're thirsty and hungry and death is before us and death is behind us.

And Moses says to the Lord, what is going on? And the Lord has some words for Moses. He says, tell my people to stand still for they are going to see the deliverance of their God.

And the very Egyptians who they see pursuing them, they will never see again. So do not be afraid. The battle is the Lord. Just be still. Just for a moment.

And Moses tells the people they see the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire going from in front of them where it was leading them to going in between them and the Egyptians.

And then God calls Moses to raise up his hands and the Red Sea is miraculously divided and they walk through it.

[13:33] All the way through the Red Sea. And they get to the other side and they can still see the Egyptians hotly pursuing them. And they nervously, slightly, start to make their way through the divided sea and lo and behold, God has another plan.

And suddenly, the people of God's enemies cringe before him as the water pours over them.

And they're never seen again. And Israel are delivered from their bondage. And so you see verse 6 where it says they pass through the waters.

Most scholars think he's talking there about the crossing of the River Jordan. And so 40 years after the events I've described, they've been fed manna and quail and water from a rock in the wilderness.

And now they come to another river, the River Jordan, to pass through. And on the other side of the river is the promised land. It's a land flowing with milk and honey which is a picture of abundance of good.

[14:36] But there's only one problem. Moses is dead. And there's another giant river in front of them. And they don't remember their grandparents.

They don't remember their parents and God's faithfulness to them. And so they're all het up again. And God says to Joshua, the new leader, Joshua, this is your first charge.

Moses, the big cheese is left. You are the little cheese and I'm going to make you into the big cheese. And here's what's going to happen. You get your priests.

You put the Ark of the Covenant on their shoulders. We're at flood stage. And the reason that we're at flood stage is because I want this people to know who I am.

Who their God is. And so I'm not giving them a little trial. I'm not giving them a little stream that they'll have to cross or a creek that they'll walk over.

[15:39] This is flood stage. Take all your children and all your belongings and all your animals. And Moses, you tell those priests to put their feet into the water.

And you see what happens. Joshua, you tell them. And the waters pile up. And the waters in front of them dry up again.

And they walk through. And the Ark of the Covenant is held in the middle of the water. And after it was over, God says to Joshua, tell a representative from each of the 12 tribes, grab a massive stone and bring a stone from the riverbed and put it to the side as a memorial so that everyone remembers what God has done to bring you into the abundance of the land of milk and honey. That is the story of redemption for every Israelite, the people of God. And what happened to us is even greater.

The Bible, the New Testament, the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ teach you and teach me that by nature we are in bondage. We are in slavery to sin. That the whole world is in bondage.

[16:58] And that's not because of poverty. As terrible as poverty is, the reason for all the poverty, for all the lostness, for all the violence, for all the crime, for all the relationship breakdown and all the misery is that the evil one has his foot on our neck.

And what are we going to do? We are more helpless than the Israelites were in Egypt. We cannot save ourselves. What is to be done with us? And it's just at that point, the Bible says, at just the right time.

When the time had fully come, God sent his son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law.

And he died on the cross. And what happened when he died on the cross is he defeated our enemies. He destroyed them. So they have no power over us anymore. And God's people are set free for the first time in our lives.

We're liberated. And we keep looking back, don't we? We look back to that cross 2,000 years ago. That is the reason why we want the whole world to worship him.

[18:17] Because we have come to know freedom. And not only that, not only are we free now, but we have a future, we have a promised land to look forward to.

The apostles teach us that, don't they? There is a heavenly Jerusalem. There is a free city to which every Christian is journeying towards. That is where we're going, to the land of milk and honey, the land of abundant goodness, a land of perfection and radiant delight, a land where the son of David, the greatest son of David, the Lord Jesus Christ, is enthroned in radiant splendour.

And we are his brothers and sisters in the royal family. That is what is ours. Well, how are we going to get there?

We are facing death all day long. We find our bodies winding down and nothing can reverse it.

What are we going to do? We'll go back to that Good Friday.

And the disciples think that it's all over, don't they? Their hopes are dashed that God was through with his people, but that Easter Sunday morning, before it was light, the woman come to the tomb to honour him, but they didn't find a body, they found an angel.

[19:49] And the angel said these words, he is not here, he has risen. Come and see. Go and tell. Do you know what the risen, exalted Lord Jesus Christ has been doing since then?

He's been reigning at the right hand of the Father for you, interceding for you, preparing a place for you. And as verse 12 says, you are going to enter into a world of abundance.

And so do you think that the nations that surround us have something to come and see? It's why we want the whole world to come and worship and know him.

The psalmist goes on in verses 8 to 12 and he says, this was hard. They put burdens on our backs. But he has brought us into a land of abundance.

Now all the burdens suddenly seem to start to make sense to us. He was preparing us for this unbelievable inheritance that we will have.

[20:59] That is the second movement of this psalm. That is the reason why he rejoices in the awesome deeds of God in taking us to the promised land.

Now thirdly, the third movement is from verse 13 to 20. If the first movement is I want all the world to worship God because of what he's done. The third movement is I want the whole world to worship God because of what he's done and I plan to do something about it.

I want the whole world to worship God because of what he's done and I plan to do something about it. Now, can you remember that? Can you say that with me?

I want the whole world to worship God because of what he's done and I plan to do something about it. You see, once we've understood who God is and what he's done, we cannot sit still.

And this is not just for extroverts. It is not just for energetic people. These words are for people who want the whole world to worship God because of what he's done which is every Christian.

[ 22 : 24 ] And so the whole symphony is I want the whole world to worship God because of what he's done and I plan to do something about it. What did the psalmist plan to do? Two things. The first thing that he planned to do is he planned to offer sacrifice.

He couldn't help it. Look at the intentional language of verse 13 and verse 15. Can you see it?

Three times there's a phrase that comes up.

He says, I will. Verse 13, I will come into your house with burnt offerings. I will perform my vows to you.

Verse 15, I will offer to you burnt offerings of fattened animals and then I will make an offering of bulls and goats four times.

I will make an offering of bulls and goats and rams and lambs. I don't think I'd realised how expensive that was.

[ 23 : 28 ] How much is a bull? Any of you know? How much is a bull? According to the Aberdeen Angus Cattle Society, I've eaten at a couple of their restaurants, at the minimum that you will pay for a bull is £5,000.

Graigoch Rambo was put up for auction in Carlisle by Gerwin Jones from Nebo Connoi in 2015.

Graigoch Rambo was sold for £189,000.

That's the most expensive bull ever in the UK. And this person was bringing the best in his flocks.

His bulls, his rams, his goats, his lambs. And they were offering burnt offerings, which is the highest offering that you could bring in Israel.

And what those verses are saying to you is saying this, I'm giving over myself completely lock, stock and barrel to the Lord, to the living God. So trace the symphony, the psalmist has said, based on what I've seen of God and his actions, not just in the world, but when I look at the face of God and his great acts on my behalf, I sacrifice to him.

[ 25 : 02 ] And so, of course, it's only logical, isn't it, because of what he has done for us, that we should show him our gratitude. I'm aware that times are tough, aren't there, and there would be many of us who've had to tighten our budgets.

Some here, maybe times aren't tough. But the truth is this, whether you're doing really well financially, or whether you're not doing well financially, be sure what your priorities are.

Whether you're doing really well financially, or whether you're not doing well financially, be sure what your priorities are, because they won't change. And so, let me beg of you, do not put God at the end of the list.

And do not put God in the middle of the list. And do not put God at number two. Make him number one above everything else.

And we must bring our offerings to the Lord, because we want the whole world to worship God because of what he's done for us. And that's what the psalmist does.

[ 26 : 28 ] I don't know whether you noticed, can you see where it starts in verse one, if you picture it, verse one, shout to God, all the earth. You know those pictures of Google Earth? You go into Google Earth and you see the globe, don't you see the space?

And the psalmist is at that point looking at all the globe and he's saying, all the earth worship God. God. But at the end of the psalm, can you see blessed be God because he's not rejected my prayer.

It goes from global to individual. Google Earth goes right down from seeing the planet, right down to the individual. And he's saying, this God of the whole earth is my God and so I will put him first.

But that's not all that the psalmist does. Look at verse 16 with me. He opens his mouth and he says, come in here.

Come and listen. I've got a story to tell you. And what is his story? Well, he's giving, isn't he?

[ 27 : 38 ] He's giving financially to the work of God and the worship of God and the training up of the Levite priests and so on. He builds up the ministry of the church and around the world. He gives but he speaks.

We know, don't we, there is a massive need in this city, in this country, in this continent, in this world for more churches. And we know, many of us, that we can't go and so we want to fund those churches.

And we want to pray for those churches. churches. So we give and we tell. What do we tell? Just notice back in verse 13, the person switches from the first person plural to the first person singular. It's no longer what God has done for us. I want to tell you what God has done for me. And that's the way it is for everyone who's come to know the Lord Jesus. He's done something for me.

And what does the psalmist say he's done for me? He says, he's heard my prayer and he's answered me. Some of you will know the name of John Bunyan.

[ 28 : 53 ] I talk about him often. He wrote Bill and His Progress back in the 17th century. But he also wrote another really well-known book called Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners. And by that he's referring himself to the Chief of Sinners.

It's a pretty hard read. But it tells the story of how he came to faith in the Lord Jesus. Very famous book. But the key verse for that book was verse 16 of Psalm 66.

The whole thesis of that book was based on that verse where the psalmist says, come and hear all you who fear God and I will tell you what he's done for my soul.

For many of us this morning wonderfully like our brothers have professed faith this morning you've come to know him and you've come to love him and you've given him all things and now you give him the praise of your lips.

praise. Not just in praise but in the sharing his story around the world. We're very grateful for the missionaries that have helped us in this church over the years but missionaries are just normal people some of them and missionaries are just normal aren't they?

[ 30 : 21 ] Missionaries are doing there what we are doing here. Missionaries don't have different job descriptions they just have different job locations and so I want to challenge you this morning maybe you thought I could never go to another place as a missionary I could never do that.

Remember missionaries do not have different job descriptions they just have different job locations and what do you do? You tell them what he has done for you and notice what kind of prayer this is verse 17 his praise was on my tongue I cried out it's a dependent prayer and it's an adoring prayer and in verse 18 it's a repentant prayer verse 18 is a brilliant verse to learn and hide in your heart if I had cherished iniquity in my heart the Lord would not have listened there's times when the Lord doesn't hear your prayers but I'm repentant and I'm trusting him and I'm continually turning from my sinful ways to his ways it's that kind of prayer the psalmist goes on and says but God has listened truly God has listened he's answered to the voice of my prayer blessed be

God because he's not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me and I think the Lord has been saying to me as I've thought about this passage this week as I prepared this sermon I know Paul that you love lots of things but do you really love me or am I a village God I love your village God says but I love the world and I want you to love what I love because when you love what I love I know that you love me let's pray I need