

“Come and See”  
Psalm 66  
Rev. Bruce Stallings  
March 26, 2017 • Evening Sermon

In this study we will be looking at Psalm 66 and it is a beautiful Psalm. It is a call to worship Psalm. It is about worship and has insight about worship. It is laid out in four different sections and the word Selah is at the end of each section. Selah is a unique word and there’s not a great definition for what this word means. It could be simply a musical instruction because this Psalm is a song. It could also be interpreted as a pause, to think about, to take it in, or to digest it in a sense. In this study we will use that word as a pause to separate the four sections.

Psalm 66:1–20 says, *[1] Shout for joy to God, all the earth; [2] sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise! [3] Say to God, “How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies come cringing to you. [4] All the earth worships you and sings praises to you; they sing praises to your name.” Selah*

*[5] Come and see what God has done: he is awesome in his deeds toward the children of man. [6] He turned the sea into dry land; they passed through the river on foot. There did we rejoice in him, [7] who rules by his might forever, whose eyes keep watch on the nations— let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah*

*[8] Bless our God, O peoples; let the sound of his praise be heard, [9] who has kept our soul among the living and has not let our feet slip. [10] For you, O God, have tested us; you have tried us as silver is tried. [11] You brought us into the net; you laid a crushing burden on our backs; [12] 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. [13] I will come into your house with burnt offerings; I will perform my vows to you, [14] that which my lips uttered and my mouth promised when I was in trouble. [15] 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*

*[16] Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for my soul. [17] I cried to him with my mouth, and high praise was on my tongue. [18] If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. [19] But truly God has listened; he has attended to the voice of my prayer. [20] Blessed be God, because he has not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me!*

What a beautiful Psalm! The Psalmist gives us this call to worship with insights and understandings of worship. He makes this universal call for all of the world to worship God and that is his heart’s desire. Isn’t that what we want? He calls for us to sing glory to His Name and give Him praise. It says he instructs them in worship and charges them to declare to God. As he calls the whole world to worship Him he says in Psalm 66:3 ‘Say to God...’ In other words, God is the focal point of our worship. When we gather together the focal point is not what we do together with each other but we focus upon God. We have fellowship with one another but we do that before God. We are here to praise God. He wants us to turn our face, your heart, your mind to the Lord. Fix your eyes on God.

I think that is easy to miss. Our culture misses that. We can miss that easily. I miss it all the time. I can miss that my focus needs to be on God and so at times my focus may be on myself, about someone else or just about stuff or the way things are supposed to go and completely go through all of the motions of worship and having never really worshipped. Then I miss the focal point of turning my face and heart to the Lord.

Several years ago my wife, Sonya, wanted to do something special for me, something I would enjoy and remember, because it was my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. In her first phase of planning the family was talking all about this without including me in on their conversations. They came up with some really terrible ideas. When they told me later what the ideas were I accurately guessed every single time who suggested that. How was I able to do that? It was because I know them so all the ideas had to do with what they would have loved to do. Finally someone suggested asking me what I wanted to do. They came to me and asked me what I wanted to do for my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday and told me I could do anything I wanted to do. I certainly wasn't thinking as a father and a husband when I said 'rent me a motorcycle and give me five days and I'll be back.' Their response was 'you don't want to do that' as if they knew better what I wanted.

So we can easily come to worship thinking we know what God likes and then we proceed to show Him what we think He ought to like because if He's the God we have pictured in our head then He certainly wouldn't like this or that but He would like what I would come to bring to Him. That is the way we tend to worship God. So the Psalmist turns their focus to Him by saying this is what you should say to God. We are to declare to God how awesome His deeds and power are that His enemies come cringing to Him. He calls for us to declare to God what He already knows. He understands the deeds He does much better than we do but He wants us to give testimony to the Lord. We are to glorify and acknowledge Him as we recognize His deeds and power to be awesome.

We realize that all the earth will worship God. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. A much smaller portion of those people will worship God, bowing their knee, and confessing Christ and they will do it as redeemed people. In other words, they are going to own it. Not only is He Lord but He is their Lord and they are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. That will be praise and worship unto Him. Others will acknowledge Him as Lord but they will do it in a *cringing* way. That is a very odd word in Scripture. A better way to understand what this means is that it is *hollow* submission, hollow subjection. It is still submission but it didn't have the saving power in their life. No one in hell is confused as to who God is or as to whether or not Jesus Christ is Lord. They know that Jesus Christ is Lord but it's hollow to them.

We know that Lord will bring about all of the world worshipping Him and Paul reflects that in his letter to the Romans. Romans 15:8–12 says [8] *For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, [9] and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name." [10] And again it is said, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people." [11] And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him." [12] And again Isaiah says, "The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope."* Again all the nations will worship God and it will come to fruition.

We also know this from Revelation 7:9–12 which says [9] *After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, [10] and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" [11] And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, [12] saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."*

This is the desire of our heart. We live for that day and wait for great anticipation for that day. That Day fixes everything. Come quickly Lord Jesus that we could participate in that wonderful ceremony of all the nations glorifying God, shouting and singing to the glory of God and declaring ‘How awesome are Your deeds’ with our eyes fixed on Jesus. How amazing is Your power looking at the Lamb who was slain! It is the depiction of the power of God that saves us from our sins.

The second section in Psalm 66:5–7 says [5] *Come and see what God has done: he is awesome in his deeds toward the children of man.* [6] *He turned the sea into dry land; they passed through the river on foot. There did we rejoice in him,* [7] *who rules by his might forever, whose eyes keep watch on the nations— let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah*

So God calls all the nations to worship Him and then as we see in this section that He invites them personally to worship Him. I have declared to Him that His deeds are awesome but now the Psalmist says we are to declare it to His people so He wants us to hear testimonies from His people of the deeds of God, the way He has acted toward the children of man. As I was thinking my way through this I see that this is also an invitation to others to worship God.

As a dad, raising children, when they were younger I became frustrated after worship because it seemed like I was having to answer technical questions about a sermon or something that was done and not really grasping the worship of God. Then I realized it was because I wasn’t inviting them or preparing them for what is to come. What are they looking for? I had to back up and recalibrate to invite them to come and see God in worship and what were they coming to expect to experience as they worshipped God. We invite people to worship when we give testimony of God’s power and what He has done. This can be in gathered worship or private worship or in just our conversations with others so that they can come and see what God has done.

The Psalmist gives two examples. One is that God dried up the sea and two that they walked across the river. That is referring to the parting of the Red Sea and the parting of the Jordan River. So he is giving them two examples of what God has done in their life. In Psalm 55:6b it says ‘There did we rejoice in him.’ Where is there in this statement? They rejoiced in Him on the other side of the parted Red Sea. They didn’t really rejoice in Him on *this* side of the Red Sea. On *this* side of the Red Sea they basically told God that He didn’t know what He was doing and He messed up. He got them out of slavery and they get to the Red Sea thinking ‘God is about to get them all killed’ because the army that is chasing after them as they get to the Red Sea. They are saying they wouldn’t have come that way and they know better.

Then God parts the Red Sea, they go to the other side and now having gone through this difficulty/tribulation they turn back to see that their enemy has been devoured/destroyed. Then they rejoice on the other side of the Red Sea, of course. On the other side of the catastrophe they then rejoice as they survived that. Then they get to the Jordan River and it is parted for them to walk through to go into the Promised Land. God ushers them into the Promised Land. God You are awesome in Your deeds and the deeds You do to the children of man. They rejoice in Him whose ‘eyes keep watch on the nations.’ Yes, He is sovereign. He is controlling all of this. God, how did You know that they would follow us into the parted Red Sea? How did You know that Jericho wasn’t going to fight us and kill us with their big army right then and there on the plains of Jericho? He knows all this because He keeps His eyes watching on all nations. The heart of the enemy is in the hand of the Lord. Do you know how many times I have to tell myself that? Bruce, God is in control. He controls not just me and the church but He controls ALL things.

He goes on to say in this second section in Psalm 55:7b, *[7b] let not the rebellious exalt themselves*. In other words, they did not get to the other side of the sea and say ‘look what we did!’ or ‘I told you if we yelled real loud to the walls of Jericho it would fall to pieces.’ Don’t let the rebellious exalt in themselves. Don’t take glory for what God did. Clearly we look and say ‘look at what God did!’ That is praise and worship we give unto Him to acknowledge and declare what the Lord has done.

Here we saw that the Psalmist gave two Biblical examples for them to come and see but we ought to be walking around with multiple examples. We need to give those testimonies in our life to others but telling them to come and see what the Lord has done in my life that man could not do. Recently, I have taken the time to say to others ‘Can you believe what God has done?’ God, gave our pastor cancer so He could reveal what was hidden to him, others or even doctors of what was an aortic aneurism. Can you believe God would love him that much to give Him cancer in order to show him he had this other problem going on his body? People tend to look at me with a perplexed look when I tell them this because it is an odd thing to say ‘Praise the Lord He gave our pastor cancer’ but praise the Lord! God knew what He was doing. Now God didn’t give our pastor the game plan when he did get the cancer as to what was coming down the road. God didn’t tell our pastor that He gave him prostate cancer to show Him what was coming. He showed him one step at a time and we look back and say ‘look what the Lord did!’ We are giving testimony to what God did and praise to Him for what He did in our life.

The next section kind of has two different pieces to it. The first piece is in Psalm 66:8–12 which says *[8] Bless our God, O peoples; let the sound of his praise be heard, [9] who has kept our soul among the living and has not let our feet slip. [10] For you, O God, have tested us; you have tried us as silver is tried. [11] You brought us into the net; you laid a crushing burden on our backs; [12] 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.*

This whole section is connected but I want to deal with this piece of it first. If this Psalm were to conclude after verse 9 I would conclude that this Psalm is an attack of the enemy, the enemy is messing with us in our life and we’re so grateful the Lord delivered us from the enemy and the enemy didn’t win but God won. So Lord we praise You that You won instead of the enemy. Yet that is the exact opposite of what the Psalmist is saying here.

The Psalmist is saying that God didn’t let his feet slip from the trials and tribulations that God brought to his life. Who brought this into his life? It was God who brought to life the trials and tribulation in his life. It wasn’t the enemy. It is the refining work He is doing in our life. We see that God tested them as silver is tested by fire and that the Lord brought the testing. It’s important that we recognize this.

I believe that when we get to heaven I will be surprised in a sense that I completely missed this on earth for when I go through trials and tribulations I almost without exception believe that it is the enemy attacking me and I need to ask God to deliver me from this. I think when I get to heaven there will be two categories that are a lot bigger than I thought. One is where I’ll say ‘God, that phase was tough. Why all that health, career, financial and relationship stuff?!’ I think God will say to me ‘That was just the consequence of your sin. You brought that on yourself. I had to allow you to experience the consequence of your sin or you else you would have kept doing that.’ ‘God, what about this stuff over here, was that the enemy?’ ‘No, that was Me.’ ‘So all that frustrating stuff was You, why would You do that?’

It is very important that we recognize what the Psalmist recognizes that God does test us and He does put things in our life. If we think that the testing of God is someone else doing it

then what is your prayer going to be like? It will be ‘God will you stop that person from doing this to me.’ If we think the testing of God is from God then what is our prayer? It will be ‘God, what are you trying to teach me?’ You see I’m not looking for a lesson when there is someone else doing it. I just want God to crush them because I know He can and He can free me. When God is doing it, I certainly want it to stop but I also want to know what He is trying to teach me. ‘Why would You do this in my life? What are You trying to refine in my life?’ The Psalmist understood that the Lord put a heavy burden on their back and took them through it. The Lord had a purpose in doing that. It wasn’t just God being a mean God. He had to bring them to the point of deeper trust and dependence upon Him.

One of my favorite Pat Dye quotes is ‘Hindsight is 50/50.’ I think he might have meant 20/20 but he didn’t get numbers right very often. It is for me. When I look back over my life I can see after the fact what God was doing in certain things and I say ‘Thank You God so much!’ If I had never gone through that I would have never learned to trust Him at that level. If I hadn’t gone through that I couldn’t have used it as a testimony when talking with someone else, to tell them ‘The Lord is going to be faithful to you in your life.’ Then I will say ‘Lord, could You teach me the rest without the difficulty? I value the lessons I’ve learned but could You tweak that down the line?’ I want to learn the future lessons without the difficulty.

This is also true in my children’s lives. My wife and I pray that our children would have a closer, more intimate walk with the Lord than she and I could ever fathom for ourselves and that they would be more faithful to Him than we are. We also pray they would trust and depend upon Him in all ways without any pain. We love them and we don’t want them to suffer. Perhaps sometimes I do but we want them to have deep, rich, depending walk with the Lord where they absolutely understand they can trust Him in any and every situation. It is not how that works. The Lord takes us through the testing, the fire, because He has to get us to a point of pure desperation, where we can trust Him at a much deeper level than we ever thought was possible.

The second piece to this section is where he gives his acknowledgment. It’s the personal part. Psalm 66:13–15 says [13] *I will come into your house with burnt offerings; I will perform my vows to you, [14] that **which my lips uttered and my mouth promised when I was in trouble.** [15] 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*

I love that bold part because it is in the midst of those difficulties where the Lord has brought me to the end of myself. Here I will come into Your house and I will worship You. I will give what You have given to me and I will keep those promises, even the ones I made in despair. That’s when God recalibrates us.

When all four of our children were born, they all had a fairly significant reason shortly after their birth to all be brought back to the hospital. They each had some health issue that came up shortly after they were born and we had already gone home from the hospital. I have since told each of them why and it was because their dad was too stubborn to really learn that these were the Lord’s children and that He was going to take care of them. The blessing is that none of them will remember those health issues they had and many times I’ve prayed ‘Lord, let me make my biggest mistakes in parenting before their memory kicks in.’ So that they will rebound and bounce back. I really believe it was the Lord’s way of having to remind me each time that He was in control there. This is My child, Bruce. You have a role Bruce but this is My child. I’m in control of their life and the calling that is put before them.

The Lord does that intentionally and I made a lot of promises during that time in my children's lives. At those times I'm thinking they may not survive something and I start making a lot of promises to the Lord. They weren't disingenuous promises but they were beyond my ability to perform. The Lord tricked me. He put me in this situation and got me completely desperate with no other way to turn and I made a promise that only He could fulfill in my life which meant I had to submit to Him at even a deeper level. That is the whole point He is doing that. He does it in my life and your life all the time. Those vows I made at the point of desperation are not frivolous vows. Yes, Lord I want to remember the trust in You at that deep level. I want to continue keeping them. The Psalmist says 'I will give You the best that I have, the fattened animals, the first that he gets.' We all need that recalibration. So the Lord does this in our lives in order for us to be recalibrated and to trust Him at that deeper level.

Now we get to the last section of Psalm 66. Psalm 66:16–20 says *[16] Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for my soul. [17] I cried to him with my mouth, and high praise was on my tongue. [18] If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. [19] But truly God has listened; he has attended to the voice of my prayer. [20] Blessed be God, because he has not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me!*

Now the Psalmist says 'Come and hear' whereas before it was come and see. We see the net or the burden that is too heavy for us to carry that God has put in life through tests and trials and they were not just put in our life for us to readjust our priorities or for us to simply know we could live on less than we thought we could. You see His construction zone is my soul. It's not that we just come and praise the Lord and give testimony for what He has brought us through but it's come and hear the testimony of what He has done in my soul. For me to tell you what the Lord has done in my soul I will have to back up all the way to where Christ came to this earth because that is where that work began. It is when He came to pay the penalty for my sins.

What has the Lord done for my soul? The Lord put me into a house and family where Bible stories were told, scripture was opened, and I was taken to church. The Lord put me in evangelical churches that stood on the Word of God and this happened long before I knew the Lord but I heard His Word spoken and taught. I didn't digest every word that was said or even understood everything that was being taught to me for I wasn't a believer at that point but it was being given to me. It was part of the work that God was doing in my life. To tell you what God was doing in my soul He gave me Scriptures, teachers and people who had an interest in me and I have absolutely no idea why. They spent time with me and challenged me with the Word of God. They shared with me what the Lord had done in their soul.

The Lord got me to a point where He used an interesting thing in my life to get me to finally have a saving desire of a relationship with Him and that was through my brother. We grew up in a Baptist church and one night my brother walked down the middle aisle to talk to the pastor at the time we sang the closing hymn and I didn't like it when he did stuff I didn't get to do. He is eighteen months older than me. We all sat down after the hymn and the pastor said my brother's name to the whole church and I thought probably about half the people went down to hug him to tell him what a great kid he was. I said 'Hey Dad when do we do this again?' 'Do what?' 'When does the pastor do that thing where he tells us when we can walk down and talk to him at the end?' I obviously didn't know what I was talking about. My dad said 'son, we do that every Sunday so the next time will be next Sunday.'

I knew I probably couldn't wait that long but I literally waited for seven days. I was bound and determined that I was going to be the best little Baptist kid and go down there on the

first note of the hymn. I think I might have even started out before the invitation was started and I made my way down the aisle. I got down the aisle to talk to the pastor and the pastor sat me on the front pew and then he closed the service in prayer. I thought I was cheated. I thought, 'my brother is not that great of a guy and this pastor told the whole church he was a great kid.' My dad came down and we all went to the pastor's office. Somehow they insightfully discerned my heart might not have been in exactly the right place which I thought was an unfair determination at that time. So they kept wanting to lay the Gospel out for me and every Sunday I wanted to go back down to the front at the invitation. I had this insatiable desire for everyone to see what a great kid I was and I was at least if not better, if you really get to know me, than my brother.

As my dad and pastor kept walking me through the Gospel I thought 'I've heard all this and I have done all the VBS stuff, Bible studies, getting badges and stuff. I have done it all.' I thought I know the answers to these questions and then he got to the point of Lordship. He said, "Bruce, do you understand what Lordship is?" I said "Yeah, Jesus is Lord, we sing that all the time." "Do you understand what it means for Him to be your Lord, that you submit to Him and do all that He says?" My dad and the pastor were sitting there and I said "Say that again" and he gave me an illustration and I said "Oh no, I don't want to do that." I believed when you graduated high school you could do anything you wanted to do. So I had from the 4<sup>th</sup> grade until a senior in high school to survive and at that point I could do whatever I wanted in life and I would be the Lord of my life.

I laid it out to them that I didn't want another Lord. I want Jesus because I didn't want to go to hell. I wasn't dumb. He used the illustration of my parents being my Lord and I already had two and didn't want more. I had to break my dad's heart. The Lord then put me through a series of situations where He gave me over to myself. He let me see what it would be like for me to be the lord of my life. Then I came to a point of desperation. I could have never gotten myself to that point of desperation. The fear that gripped me of knowing I would end up in hell as I sat on my dad's bed crying telling him I didn't even think God could fix me because I was such a sinner thinking there was no hope for me. The Lord did that in my life. He gave me that level of desperation. Then and only then did I really understand what it meant by grace.

So what the Lord did for my soul was give me over to myself, allowing me to see my desperate need for a Savior. He allowed me to understand even as a small boy that there was absolutely no way I could save myself. I could never be perfect yet. Dad, you don't understand all the bad stuff that I had done. Then the Lord opened my heart and eyes to the Gospel and then I acknowledged and confessed my sin to Him. I became a Christian when I was in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade and there is no comparison to the sin I had as a 4<sup>th</sup> grader than between then and now, my arms are not big enough. I do believe I gave my heart over to the Lord then but I didn't really realize how sinful I was.

The Psalmist says in Psalm 66:17, *[17] I cried to him with my mouth, and high praise was on my tongue.* He said this because the Lord had put him at the point of desperation. Then he goes on to say that if he had held onto even some of the sin in his heart at the point of salvation the Lord would not have listened but truly God has listened. God has given us Psalm 66:19–20 as a promise in Jesus Christ. There is absolutely nothing as Christians that we can bring before the Lord to acknowledge to Him as sin that He will not forgive us of and He will never leave us nor forsake us. He will put another net in our life though and He will put another heavy burden on our back. He will put people who will ride over us. He will take us through water and fire. And through all that He will prove to us that He will never leave us or turn His ear from our confession of sin. I do this to refine you, to test you, He says. The Lord doesn't

test us so that He would know how we would turn out because the Lord already knows how we turn out. The Lord tests us so that we would know, learn, grow and confess. So He calls us to worship Him.

I want to encourage you by asking you to take this Psalm to someone and say ‘Come and hear, let me tell you what the Lord has done for my soul.’ You may want to use a different introductory statement than that but share what God has done in your soul to someone else. Share with a believer. Share with an unbeliever. When was the last time you explained to someone what God did for your soul and what God did for you in a saving way? The result of that is worship unto the Lord. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, I thank You so much for Your Word. Lord, thank You for the Psalmist and guiding this Psalmist to write this song to You. It’s a song we can learn from and embrace in our lives for it focuses our worship upon you where we realize the true work that You are doing in our lives. It also realizes the hard work you are doing but it’s the work that produces fruit. The Psalmist declares that we don’t just survive but we’re brought to a point of abundance. We are brought to a point of blessing beyond blessing beyond blessing and that is spiritually in our relationship with You. I pray Lord, that You would allow each and every one reading this to fix their eyes upon You and that we would recognize Your testing in our lives. Help us to recognize Your hand upon us and that we would learn to trust You and step out in faith as we walk with You. And the result of that would be worship unto You. Lord give each of us the opportunity and remind us by Your Spirit to take time to share with others what You have done for our for our soul through that saving powerful work. May that be worshipful unto You. May that recalibrate us and may worship be used in their lives as well. I pray this in Jesus Christ’s Name, Amen.