

DEVOTED
“God Hears” Psalm 66
February 23, 2025

INTRO.: Good morning! Welcome to our ongoing sermon series, “Devoted.” Our theme this morning is “God Hears.” Who does God hear and how do we get His attention? As was mentioned earlier there is a Celebration of Life Service for Brenda Gay Shumaker today at 3 pm. Brenda Gay and Doug are a very special couple to our family. We have stayed at Shepherd’s Gate, their home, on Smith Mountain Lake, several times. One of the popular things with our family is finding the ice cream boat. It’s like the ice cream truck only, it’s a boat on the lake. So, Doug and Brenda Gay would take us on a boat ride trying to find the ice cream boat. It was an adventure to see if we could find it. Doug now has an app on his phone which makes it much easier to find. Some people think God is like the ice cream boat. Some wonder if God actually hears their prayers. Some think they have to hunt for Him and they’re never quite sure if they found Him. Does God really hear our prayers? What does the Bible have to say about that? We’re going to begin by reading Psalm 66 in unison. There are 4 things in particular we will look at: **GOD’S AWESOMENESS, OUR ADORATION, OUR APPROACH, and GOD’S ASSURANCE.** As with many Psalms this was a song.

Psalm 66:1-20 Shout with joy to God, all the earth! Sing the glory of his name; make his praise glorious! Say to God, “How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies cringe before you. All the earth bows down to you; they sing praise to you, they sing praise to your name.” Selah Come and see what God has done, how awesome his works in man’s behalf! He turned the sea into dry land, they passed through the waters on foot— come, let us rejoice in him. He rules forever by his power, his eyes watch the nations— let not the rebellious rise up against him. Selah Praise our God, O peoples, let the sound of his praise be heard; he has preserved our lives and kept our feet from slipping. For you, O God, tested us; you refined us like silver. You brought us into prison and laid burdens on our backs. You let men ride over our heads; we went through fire and water, but you brought us to a place of abundance. I will come to your temple with burnt offerings and fulfill my vows to you— vows my lips promised and my mouth spoke when I was in trouble. I will sacrifice fat animals to you and an offering of rams; I will offer bulls and goats. Selah Come and listen, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me. I cried out to him with my mouth; his praise was on my tongue. If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; but God has surely listened and heard my voice in prayer. Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer or withheld his love from me!

GOD’S AWESOMENESS

v. 1-7

This is whole-hearted praise to God! The last two verses of the previous psalm lead into this one.

Psalm 65:12–13 The grasslands of the desert overflow; the hills are clothed with gladness. The meadows are covered with flocks and the valleys are mantled with grain; they shout for joy and sing.

Psalm 66:1 Shout with joy to God, all the earth!

David is inviting all the people to recognize the awesomeness of Almighty God. Later in this psalm he is going to speak of some of the mighty deeds of God.

Psalm 47:1 Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy.

Psalm 98:4 Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music;

Psalm 100:1 Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.

Psalm 66:2 Sing the glory of his name; make his praise glorious!

Names were a big deal in the Old Testament. The name represented something about the person.

Abraham: father of many

David: beloved

Elijah: my God is Yahweh

Daniel: God is my judge

Immanuel: God with us

Jesus: Jehovah saves

When certain names are mentioned there is an automatic reaction. The very name of God elicits praise.

Philippians 2:5–11 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: **6** Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, **7** but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant,

being made in human likeness. **8** And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross! **9** Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, **10** that at the **name of Jesus** every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **11** and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Psalms 66:3-4 Say to God, “How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies cringe before you. All the earth bows down to you; they sing praise to you, they sing praise to your name.”

How often do you and I come to God and say to Him that His deeds are awesome? We throw the word “awesome” around so much that it has lost some of its meaning and emphasis. How many times do we read in the Old Testament that those fighting against God’s people cringed at the very mention of Yahweh?

After the Israelites had crossed the Red Sea on dry ground and Pharaoh’s army had drowned attempting to pursue them Miriam gives a song of praise to God.

Exodus 15:11-16 “Who among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you— majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders? **12** You stretched out your right hand and the earth swallowed them. **13** “In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling. **14** The nations will hear and tremble; anguish will grip the people of Philistia. **15** The chiefs of Edom will be terrified, the leaders of Moab will be seized with trembling, the people of Canaan will melt away; **16** terror and dread will fall upon them. By the power of your arm they will be as still as a stone— until your people pass by, O LORD, until the people you bought pass by.

David then invites the people to “Come and see.”

Psalms 66:5-7 Come and see what God has done, how awesome his works in man’s behalf! He turned the sea into dry land, they passed through the waters on foot— come, let us rejoice in him.

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

This past week in staff meeting Pastor John shared a similar invitation Jesus gave in John 1.

John 1:35-39 The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. **36** When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!” **37** When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. **38** Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, “What do you want?” They said, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?” **39** “Come,” he replied, “and you will see.” So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour.

Jesus knew they were sincerely seeking, so when He said, “Come, and you will see,” it wasn’t just inviting them to see where He was staying. Those who are truly seeking God will find Him, as the Holy Spirit works in their lives. Check out the story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10.

John 1:43-46 The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, “Follow me.” **44** Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. **45** Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” **46** “Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Nathanael asked. “Come and see,” said Philip.

It is important that we know the Word of God and the great things that God did as recorded in His Word. What great things has God been doing in your life? Are we inviting people to come and see what great things God is doing in our lives and in His church?

Testimonies from the young people about what God is doing: Ineso, Lia, and Anna.

We see God’s awesomeness described which leads to:

OUR ADORATION

v. 8-12

God is to be praised for what He has done and what He is doing!

Psalms 66:8-9 Praise our God, O peoples, let the sound of his praise be heard; he has preserved our lives and kept our feet from slipping.

What comes out of our mouths concerning God? Are we quick to praise God? In Exodus and Numbers, we read many times how the Israelites were quick to complain to Moses about God and what wasn't happening: the Red Sea, no food, no water, and wanting different food. They complained to Moses and Aaron about their leadership and accused them of setting themselves above everyone else. Yet, when God told Moses He was going to discipline them, Moses pleaded on their behalf.

What do you have to praise and thank God about today? Anybody want to stand up and praise God?

What does David praise God for next?

Psalm 66:10-12 For you, O God, tested us; you refined us like silver. You brought us into prison and laid burdens on our backs. You let men ride over our heads; we went through fire and water, but you brought us to a place of abundance.

He praises God for the trials (refined us like silver) and for God's discipline (brought us into prison, let men rule over our heads)! That certainly goes against my natural response. I need to remind myself that God has a purpose for the trials that come into my life. He wants to draw me closer to Him and not away from Him.

James 1:2-4 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, **3** because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. **4** Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

1 Peter 1:3-7 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, **4** and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, **5** who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. **6** In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. **7** These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Some of these verses from Psalm 66 refer to God's discipline. God allowed ungodly rulers to be over the Israelites when they wandered from God, when they became like the heathen nations. Why did God discipline His children? It was because He loved them, and He wanted His name to be glorified. Is it any different today?

Hebrews 12:4-8 In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. **5** And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, **6** because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." **7** Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? **8** If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons.

God's discipline is meant to get to our heart, to change us from the inside out. He is after far more than reforming our behavior for He is after our heart. That's a real lesson for parents to remember. Sometimes I was only interested in my sons' behavior instead of desiring them to obey out of a love for God.

God's Awesomeness is meant to inform our Adoration/Worship of God which in turn affects:

OUR APPROACH v. 13-18

Take note of how the psalmist approaches God.

Psalm 66:13-15 I will come to your temple with burnt offerings and fulfill my vows to you— vows my lips promised and my mouth spoke when I was in trouble. I will sacrifice fat animals to you and an offering of rams; I will offer bulls and goats. Selah

The psalmist brings offerings as a way of expressing thanks to God. Offerings of animal sacrifices were also given for sins. He is humbling himself before the awesome God that he has described earlier in this psalm.

"By its very nature a burnt offering was more serious, signifying something like complete dedication or consecration of himself to God by the worshiper. The psalmist is saying that what he intends to do is as serious as anything could possibly be." (James Montgomery Boice)

Look at what he is willing to offer: rams, bulls, and goats. Now remember that, in order to be offered to God, they had to be without blemish. He gave of the best which reminds us of what God the Father did for each of us in giving His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the sacrifice for our sins.

Because God delivered him, He also says he will pay the vows he promised to God. After speaking of what he is going to do in his approach of God he invites people to hear what God has done for him. Our personal walk with God before others provides opportunity to share our testimony with others. Our walk must line up with our talk if we want to be heard.

Psalm 66:16-17 Come and listen, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me. I cried out to him with my mouth; his praise was on my tongue.

God had answered his prayer, and he wants everyone to know. He cried out to God and in the midst of his crying out he also praised God. The next verse also highlights his walk with God.

Psalm 66:18 If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened;

“cherished sin:” this is unconfessed sin. This is sin we’re not willing to forsake. Sin breaks our communication with God.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

What are some things that will hinder God listening to our prayers?

*Not having a personal relationship with God (God can hear the unbeliever cry out but He isn’t obligated to answer)

*Unconfessed sin (Psalm 66:18))

*Unforgiveness

Matthew 6:14–15 For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

*Wrong motives

James 4:1–3 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? **2** You want something but don’t get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. **3** When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

*How you treat your wife

1 Peter 3:7 Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

*Not asking according to God’s will (1 John 5:13-15)

God’s awesomeness should lead to our adoration/ worship of God, affecting our approach to God and when that is right, we have:

GOD’S ASSURANCE

v. 19-20

Does God hear us when we pray? If we know Christ as Savior and Lord and are walking with Him:

Psalm 66:18-20 If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; but God has surely listened and heard my voice in prayer. Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer or withheld his love from me!

The psalmist was sure that God had heard his prayer. He had seen God answer. We can be sure that God answers the prayers of His children.

1 John 5:13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

“believe:” present tense participle

“know:” in the past and continuing on into the future

“have;” present tense

1 John 5:14 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

“have:” present tense

“hears:” present tense

1 John 5:15 And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

“know:” in the past with continuing action into the future

“hears:” present tense

“know:” same word for “know” as in the beginning of the verse

“have:” present tense

We must believe the truth of God’s Word over how we feel. Just because God doesn’t answer our prayers like we want them to be answered doesn’t mean He didn’t hear our prayers. God urges us to pour our hearts out to Him.

Psalm 62:8 Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge. Selah

SO WHAT???

*Come to know Christ as Savior and Lord

*Praise & worship God

Psalm 116:1–2 I love the LORD, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy. Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live.

*Make sure there is nothing to hinder my prayers

*I can take everything to God in prayer (nothing too small or too big)

*Draw near to God (spend time with Him in His word (the Bible) and prayer)

James 4:8 Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

When Brenda talks to me, do I always hear her? When Brenda is in the kitchen and I’m in the living room there is no guarantee that we will hear each other. If the refrigerator, the dishwasher, the furnace comes on we can’t hear each other. So, what should I do? I should get up and go out to the kitchen. Sometimes I talk louder instead of moving closer. How close am I to God?