

May 17, 2020

Sunday Sermon, *Psalm 66:8-20 Praise the Lord*

Hi Everyone! How was your week? Are you feeling God's presence as you go through these difficult times? You deserve to have a great week. I pray that God will comfort you and give you peace in your heart this coming week.

When I feel worried and distressed, I imagine God lifting me from darkness and putting new energy into my heart. This helps me feel better and allows me to put a smile on my face. It is in this way that I keep trusting God's grace and love.

Psalm 66 delivers a message of how God's grace and love persist during difficult times. *"Come close and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for me."* Psalm 66:16.

Throughout the Old Testament, the Bible shows God's mighty power in redeeming His people. The armies of Pharaoh, the most powerful king on the earth at that time, were not a problem for God. God delivered his people from the land of Egypt. What a mighty God we have.

We give thanks for the message of the cross. How Jesus died on the cross to save us from our sins. How he rose from the dead to give us hope. How he ascended to heaven and gave us the Holy Spirit to guide us. How Jesus will return to take us back home.

The scripture invites all people to sing, *"Bless the Lord O My Soul, O my Soul, Worship His Holy Name."* We sing to God, for it is through his grace that we wake up in the morning, are alive and breathe.

In the difficult circumstances of our lives, one thing is certain: God walks with us through the fire and the water. God brings us to a place where we can breathe easy once again. **By faith** we remember that God guides us for our good because he loves us. Therefore, even in our difficult times, we praise God.

There are many ways we praise God.

1. We **sing to the Lord**. As Psalm 66:2 says, "Sing the glory of his name."
2. We **do private worship**. We do public worship, but we also take time to spend alone with God.
3. We **pray**. God's timing is not our timing. If we continue to pray, eventually God will answer to our prayers. Therefore, we praise

the Lord in our prayers, even in difficult times.

What has God done to us? God has listened and heard our prayers. Therefore, we praise the Lord. In our praise, we want to give full attention to God. When we focus on God, we know that He hears us and answers our prayers.

We praise God both as a church community and individually. We praise God in this church, The Community United Methodist Church. I pray that this church continues to live up to its name by existing for the community and serving the community.

Last week, we talked about how “I am the church, you are the church and we are the church together.” As a body of Christ, we want our church to do good for the community.

When we say this church is a church for the community, we want this church to be “the church.”

How can we be the church in our community? When most people think of church, what comes to mind?

Let us remind ourselves once more that church is not a location, building, or a religious organization. People in the community should feel like they all belong to this church.

I think of church as those people who follow Jesus. It might include buildings, programs, staff, and many other things. For me, it does not.

While it is important to gather to share the hope we have in Jesus, we do not limit the meaning of the church. We try to “be the church” in the community – every single day.

So, what does it look like to be the church in the community? As a church, we dream to care for the people in our community and share God’s love with each other. I want the people in our community to join us and help us live out our calling to follow Jesus. I want the people in our community to know that they are welcome to worship with us. I want our church to be the center of sharing and caring within our community.

A church that serves the community reaches out to those who are most in need. As we go through this Pandemic, let us seek to know what the community needs.

I have been so moved by those of you who are willing to do just that. To name a few, some of us reached out to the Food Pantry and sent checks to help feed people. Some reached out to nursing homes and rehab centers to deliver snacks. Some volunteered to go grocery shopping for those who are vulnerable. Many acts of kindness, big and small, have been displayed.

We've done so much for the community and there's so much more we can do. Which is why we need people from the community to help us build this church together. Let us know what we can do as a church in the community.

Let us be a church that people in the community can reach out to, either to offer support or let us know of anyone in need. We are not doing this because we have overflowing funds, but because we believe in God who provides. God will provide when we ask.

Some of you reached out to CUMC to offer monetary support for those who are struggling financially.

After much thought and prayer, our church has decided to start a "Love Fund." This fund will be used to help people who are struggling financially, emotionally and spiritually. Through people's generous hearts, we will reach out to locate people who are in need.

Due to COVID-19, we are limited in our church activities, but we can still reach out to people by inviting them to participate in our online worship, and join bible studies and devotion meetings.

Together we fight against this Pandemic and together we will overcome this virus until we have a vaccine and the right treatments.

Church is a place to worship. But that is not all a church is. The church serves its community. We want people in the community to help us achieve that mission.

I invite people in the community to reach out to us, suggest what we can do for the community and work together for the good of this community. We need people in

the community to help us go back to our roots and grow as Christians like in the early church times, to share God's love and help people in need.

It is time to be together. It is time for our church to be a church for the community.

I truly believe that it does not take big things to be a church that serves the community. Small things we do out of love for the people of God, with God's mighty power, we will be able to do so much for the community.

A church that serves the community is not about the pastor, the members of the church or what programs we have. A church that serves the community is all about caring for the people in the community.

To be a church for the community, let us keep our eyes and ears open to the people around us. It is our loving and attentive hearts that will make an impact.

When this pandemic is over, CUMC will be a different church. This church will be one that lets people know that we exist for the people in the community.

Remember, I am the church, you are the church, and WE are the church together. We want to build a church where Jesus is with us. Let this Church building, people in this church, have open hearts and open minds. We will open this church building, this beautiful church to be used for the community, for the people in the community we love.

Let us be a church for the community.

Let us together glorify God's name by loving God with all our hearts and loving our neighbors.

Psalm 66 calls upon the whole earth to praise God. God is the Creator and Lord of all the earth. We, the people of God living in the community, shall praise the Lord. Both as a church community and individually we make God's praise glorious. Let us love one another, for God is love.

Prayer: Merciful God, I thank you for your gracious attention to my life. Help me to speak with you as with a friend, knowing you are listening. Give me a spirit of

gratitude for your presence in the difficult circumstances of my life. And help me to face my struggles with patience and hope. Amen.