



WEEK FIVE: Psalm 66,

Eastertide The Resurrection Life: A Brief Introduction

In the church calendar, Easter (or Eastertide) continues until Pentecost (seven weeks after Easter, May 24). It is a period in which Christians are encouraged to reflect on the joy, transformation, and celebration of the resurrection.

During this series we will be following the lectionary readings (The lectionary is a three-year cycle of readings with four readings assigned to each Sunday; one from the gospels, one from the epistles, one from the psalms, and, usually, one from another part of the Old Testament.). The preachers each week will choose one or more of the texts as the basis of the reflections on the resurrection life.

The lectionary readings for this series are in the table below. If you would like more information you can use the following link to learn more: <https://uniting.church/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/2025-6-YearA-UCA-Lectionary.pdf>

Date	First Reading	Psalm	Second Reading	Gospel
April 12	Acts 2:14a, 22-32	Psalm 16	1 Peter 1:3-9	John 20:19-31
April 19	Acts 2:14a, 36-41	Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19	1 Peter 1:17-23	Luke 24:13-35
April 26	Acts 2:42-47	Psalm 23	1 Peter 2:19-25	John 10:1-10
May 3	Acts 7:55-60	Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16	1 Peter 2:1-10	John 14:1-14
May 10	Acts 17:22-31	Psalm 66:8-20	1 Peter 3:13-22	John 14:15-21
May 17	Acts 1:6-14	Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35	1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11	John 17:1-11
May 24	Acts 2:1-21 OR Numbers 11:24-30	Psalm 104:24-34, 35b	1 Corinthians 12:3b-13 OR Acts 2:1-21	John 20:19-23 OR 7:37-39

Sermon Outline:

A Brief Overview of This Week's Sermon

Key Text(s): Psalm 66, 73

The Old Testament reading this week is taken from Psalm 66; a psalm with a curious structure that invites us into a very important conversation about the life of faith. Essentially, the psalm falls into two quite distinct sections. The first (vv. 1-12) is a universal call to praise the God of Israel and the second (vv. 13-20) is a personal declaration of praise. While these are not unusual in and of themselves, the combination is curious because there is no transition or obvious link between the two. They might be two distinct psalms! Curious.

The first three stanzas (vv. 1-4, 5-7, 8-12) move through the BIG story of God's power on Israel's behalf. It is filled with allusive material (words, phrases, and imagery that recalls other texts) and typical descriptions of the world.

For example, the second stanza (vv. 5-7) uses language that is reminiscent of creation (Genesis 1:9-10), exodus (Exodus 14:21-22), and conquest (Joshua 3:14-17) to describe God's awesome deeds, but also describes the world in terms that reflect Psalm 2 where there are two groups of people in the world; those who submit to the Lord's rule and those who, in rebellion, vainly oppose him.

The sudden shift to the personal declaration of praise is somewhat unexpected, in part, because it makes no connection with the BIG story of Israel but only refers to the psalmist's own experience of God's attention to their prayer (in two stanzas).

By its very arrangement we are invited to ask, "What is the connection between the BIG story of God and our personal experiences of God?" There are three observations that offer beneficial starting points for further reflection.

First, while the connection might not be immediately obvious to us, the life of faith includes both an individual experience of God and a recognition of the BIG story of God. It is not enough to have one without the other. If all I have is an experience of God I risk subtly undermining God's purposes and plans with my own. If all I have is an understanding of God's purposes with no personal experience of him I risk a faith that is disembodied and largely theoretical. We must have both.

Second, the seam between these two pillars of a life of faith is the third stanza; the mid-point of the psalm. The theme of that section is God's faithfulness in the discipline and correction of his people in the exile. What is striking is that – unlike the demonstrations of God's saving power in stanza 2 – the experience of God's people is one of suffering. They passed through fire and water, were ridden roughshod over, were burdened, and imprisoned – all at the hand of God!

Suffering is one of the most critical catalysts for faith. It is where our experience of God and his BIG story in the world interact most directly.

There are, in fact, several thematic connections with Psalm 73 and Psalm 66:8-12. In the former, the psalmist grapples with suffering while the wicked succeed. The description of the psalmist's anguish over this and how shaky his faith had become is timeless and leads to the final observation.

Third, the location of the resolution is in the temple (Pss. 73:17; 66:13). In the presence of God the BIG story and personal experience are brought together in a way that leads to a strengthened faith. For those who have placed their faith in Jesus we believe that the temple is no longer a place, but a people. We are the temple of God, built on Jesus (as we were reminded last week). It is among the people of God that we are enabled to journey through suffering to deep faith. When we gather with God's people we hear the BIG story repeated, but we also hear the individual experience of the faithful. We need both to navigate the complexities of suffering and hardship.

Psalm 66 is a reminder that the resurrection life is one that we must do together, one that keeps both the BIG story of God and our individual experiences of God together, and that suffering is the way to life – just like Jesus!

Questions to Ask

1. Psalm 66 moves from an "all the earth" call to praise (vv. 1–12) to a personal testimony (vv. 13–20). Where do you find it easier to connect with God—through the BIG story of what God has done, or through personal experience and testimony? Why?

2. The sermon noted that faith needs both personal experience of God and a recognition of God's BIG story and purposes. Which of these feels stronger for you right now, and what's one practical step you could take this week to strengthen the other?
3. In vv. 8–12, God's people describe being brought through "fire and water" and even disciplined by God. How do you react to the idea that suffering can be part of God's forming work (not only something God rescues us from)?
4. The overview suggested suffering is a key place where the BIG story and personal experience meet. Can you share a time hardship clarified, challenged, or deepened your faith? What did you learn about God (or yourself)?
5. Psalm 73 and Psalm 66 both wrestle with confusing realities (e.g., the wicked prospering). What questions about God's justice, goodness, or timing do you find hardest to hold onto in seasons of suffering?
6. Resolution in these psalms comes in God's presence—formerly the temple, now experienced among God's people in Christ. How has gathering with other Christians helped you connect God's BIG story with your personal story—and what might our group do to make that support more intentional?

A Prayer to Pray

Commit to pray for each other this week (whenever the Spirit prompts you) that we might connect our experiences of God to the BIG story of His plans and purposes in the world.

Also, pray for the beginning of Alpha. We have a small group of people who are exploring faith which is very exciting. Please pray for the facilitators and the group that the Spirit would be at work in their lives.

A Practice to Try

Select one of the things you identified in Question 6 above to intentionally practice this week.

Readings to Read This Week

Read the remaining texts from the lectionary and reflect on how they interact with each other on the themes of the resurrection life (see the Table above).

A Mission Commitment to Reflect on

As we enter into May Mission Month we have an opportunity to be Big-Hearted in our financial support of our projects. In uncertain times we can easily allow fear and anxiety to constrict our generosity. This year my prayer is that we will demonstrate our trust in the God who provides as we courageously respond to God's invitation to participate with him in the work he is doing through our partners.

A GBC Initiative to Promote/Celebrate

Each week we will provide you with a key aspect of our community news that we would encourage you to remind your Life Group about.

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This coming Sunday, May 10, we continue May Mission Month. This is an opportunity to financially support the work of God around the world. We encourage people to participate in this appeal – our target this year is a little over \$200,000 – and to give over and above other financial giving. Please encourage your group to begin to prayerfully consider how God may be inviting them to participate in His work around the world.

