

## SERMON SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER MAY 10TH, 2026

### “The One who Loves Me” based on Psalm 66:8-20 and John 14:15-21

*Rev. Nehemia N.*

The psalm before us today is one of those passages that speaks honestly about the life of someone who try to hold onto their faith. On the one hand, Psalm 66 is a song of thanksgiving, a testimony of praise to God for deliverance. But, before the psalmist reaches praise, he first speaks openly about suffering. We do not know who is its author, but scholars see no reason to doubt that David wrote it so I will use masculine pronouns here. If you read this psalm as a whole, you would be able to sense that he, and his people has passed through a painful and difficult season, as it's written:

*“For you, God, tested us; you refined us like silver. You brought us into prison and laid burdens on our backs. You let people ride over our heads; we went through fire and water...” (Psalm 66: 10-12a)*

These are strong words. Notice how active the verbs are, and notice who the psalmist addresses as a reason or subject here. “You tested us.” “You brought us into prison.” “You laid burdens on our backs.” “You let people ride over our heads.” Here, the psalmist does not blame enemies alone, nor bad luck, nor the circumstances. Somehow, in ways difficult to fully understand, he brings his suffering before God and seems like having no doubt that God is The One who “responsible.”

And perhaps that honesty is one of the gifts of the Psalms. Here we learn that Scripture gives us permission to speak truthfully before God. It reminds us that faith is not pretending everything is fine. But faith is bringing our whole selves before God—our gratitude, our confusion, our fears, our anger, our questions.

If we look back on our own lives—from the day you said you believe in Jesus or proclaim yourself as Christian up until today—how many times have we questioned God? How many times have we cried out in the middle of hardship, grief, disappointment, or uncertainty? Friends, living in this beautiful yet broken world means we will all pass through different seasons, or in the words of psalm today, “seasons of fire and water.”

Some of us are comfortable bringing some questions directly to God. While others may hesitate, feeling that it may be disrespectful or inappropriate. But Psalm 66 here reminds us that God is not frightened by our honesty. The psalmist speaks openly about his suffering, yet he never stops speaking to God. And I think that is important.

Because even while the psalmist acknowledges his pain, he also believes that God is still the One who leads his people to what he called or imagine as “*a place of abundance.*” Here, the psalmist strongly believe that the suffering is not the end of the story. God’s faithfulness still holds the final word.

That is why, beginning in verse 13, the tone changes from lament to gratitude and worship. It said:

*“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. Come and hear, 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.”* (Psalm 66:13-17)

What is remarkable here is not simply that the psalmist able to praise God after deliverance. What is remarkable is that even in suffering, he never let go of the conviction that God was still listening. He continued praying. He continued trusting. He continued worshipping.

And then the psalm closes with these beautiful words that I called words of faith. *“But God has surely listened and has heard my prayer. Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer or withheld his love from me!”* (Psalm 66:19-20)

And that right there is the heart of this psalm. Whoever wrote this, he believes that God hears him. Despite everything that happened, despite the fire and water, despite the burdens and tears, he knows that God has not withheld His steadfast love. He knows he is still loved by God.

And perhaps that is what many of us need to hear today as well. That whatever our background, no matter how unworthy we think we are, God has not withheld God’s love from you. Because sometimes, to be honest with you, when suffering comes, one of the first things I and I believe

some other people also begin to question is love. Does God still care? Has God abandoned me? Does this hardship come because of God doesn't love me anymore?

The psalmist here answers those questions with confidence: *"God has not withheld his love from me."* Love.

We do speak about love often in the church. Yet perhaps we still need constant reminders—not only to receive God's love, but also to live in response to it. And that brings us to our Gospel reading from John 14, which actually the continuation of our lesson last Sunday. Here Jesus says:

*"If you love me, you will keep my commands."* (John 14:15) or in The Message translation, Eugene Peterson paraphrases it: *"If you love me, show it by doing what I've told you."*

At first, those words can sound heavy, almost like Jesus is handing us another list of rules. But here Jesus is speaking about something deeper than only keeping some rules. I believe that the "commands" of Jesus are not simply a checklist of moral obligations—as what some people might thought. I think it's fair for us to understand that commands here referring to Jesus' whole way of life—His teachings, His compassion, His mercy, His truth, His love.

And thankfully, Jesus does not ask us to do something He Himself has not already done. Jesus Himself has lived in perfect love and obedience to the Father. He showed us what faithfulness looks like, and he keep faithful to his mission all the way to the cross. So now, in response to that and to keep His commandments is simply to follow His example—to love as He loved, to forgive as He forgave, and to serve as He served.

Loving Jesus, friends, is not merely about feelings. It is an ongoing relationship of trust, devotion, and daily faithfulness. And oftentimes, true love is revealed not through dramatic gestures, but through ordinary acts of grace over and over again.

Yes, we live in a culture where people love grand displays of love. Such as dramatic proposal, expensive gift, or public declaration. But those of you who have or had spouse would be able to resonates when I say true love is usually quieter but more consistent. It might look like preparing coffee for your spouse every morning even though you might get complains more than

appreciates. Simple act of love might look like when you are helping a co-worker by covering their shift when they cannot make it. Or simply checking in on a lonely neighbor.

Some displays of love also might be as not appreciated as it should, like a mother saving the last piece of lasagna for their daughter who comes home late and missed dinner, or a mom-in-law who saved a mini cherry tart for their son-in-law because they know it is their favorite. As we celebrate Mother's day today, you would have plenty of times to remember and shares memories you hold dear in your heart about how your mom loves you in a way you might not understand as loving back then. Because it's not grand or fancier as you hoped it would.

And perhaps, the same is true in our relationship with God.

Love for God should have been shown in the daily rhythms of faithfulness. In prayer. In forgiveness. In kindness. In worship. In choosing compassion when bitterness would be easier. In praying for enemies, as Jesus taught us. In helping even the neighbor who irritates us. And in making time for Scripture, for community, for serving others with the gifts God has given us.

And if we are honest, we know these that I just named are not always easy. The idea sounds beautiful. The practice is much harder. There are days when loving others feels exhausting. Days when obedience feels costly. Days when suffering drains our strength and weakens our faith.

But the good news of this Gospel passage is that Jesus never intended us to do this alone. Immediately after saying, *"If you love me, you will keep my commandments,"* Jesus continues: *"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever."* (John 14:16)

Jesus knows the difficulty of discipleship in a broken world. He knows we cannot sustain faithful love by our own strength alone. So, He promises the Holy Spirit—the Advocate, the Comforter, the One who remains with us. The Spirit reminds us that we are not abandoned. The Spirit strengthens us when we are weary. The Spirit teaches us how to love when loving feels impossible.

And perhaps this is where Psalm 66 and John 14 meet. The psalmist in the book of Psalms could continue trusting because he believed God had not withheld His love. And Jesus assures His disciples that this love will remain with them through the presence of the Holy Spirit.

So, whether today you find yourself in a season of abundance or in a season of fire and water, hear this good news: God still hears your prayers. God has not withheld His love from you. And through the Holy Spirit, Christ is still with you, leading you, strengthening you, and teaching you how to love faithfully day by day.

So, I hope you can remember that today, and to end our reflection time, I would like to sing one contemporary song that I hope would speak to you and bring you deeper in reflection of experiencing and noticing God's love through tiny little simple things in life and to be able to proclaim our love of God through simplest thing we can do daily till God calls us home.

*Goodness of God by Bethel Music and Jenn Johnson*

*I love You, Lord for Your mercy never failed me  
And all my days, I've been held in Your hands  
From the moment that I wake up until I lay my head  
Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God  
All my life You have been faithful; All my life You have been so, so good  
With every breath that I am able; Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God*

*I love Your voice, You have led me through the fire  
In darkest night You are close like no other  
I've known You as a Father; I've known You as a Friend  
Oh, I have lived in the goodness of God,  
And all my life You have been faithful; All my life You have been so, so good  
With every breath that I am able; Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God*

Amen.