



still waters

home church studies

Psalm 66. 8-20

[Worship]

8 Bless our God, O peoples, let the sound of his praise be heard, 9 who has kept us 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 burdens on our backs; 12 you let people ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water; yet you have brought us out to a spacious place. 13 I will come into your house with burnt offerings; I will pay you my vows, 14 those that my lips uttered and my mouth promised when I was in trouble. 15 I will offer to you burnt offerings of fatlings, with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams; I will make an offering of bulls and goats. 16 Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for me. 17 I cried aloud to him, and he was extolled with 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 given heed to the words of my prayer. 20 Blessed be God, because he has not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me.

Consider:

[Think & Pray...]

To speak of the love of God for the poor and yet to act otherwise is to take God's name in vain. To love people as God loves them is to provoke a reaction, because such love destroys all the barriers, definitions, and stereotypes that keep us captive and enslaved to the old world order.

Being loved is the most powerful motivation in the world. Our experience to love is often shaped by our experience of love. We usually love others as we have been loved.

In John 14:21, Jesus said that his followers show their love by obeying him. Love, however, is more than lovely words. It is commitment and conduct. The demand that we love is more than a call for charity or sloppy sentimentalism. It is to care so deeply that there are things we are simply not willing to live with.

This is a boundless love that reaches out to all. It is an active love—not from a distance, but close at hand. It means opening ourselves up to each other, to be touched and to become vulnerable. It is weeping together, walking together, and witnessing together.

To speak to those living in poverty about the love of God, one must embody the words in action that give answers to the questions arising out of the life they are living now. To speak of the love of God and to act otherwise is to take God's name in vain. To preach good news to the poor is to say by word and deed that God will not leave them in the condition of poverty. Charity is not sufficient; the demand is for justice-based love in which the "first" are to take last place in our consideration, and the "last" first.

In the fourth gospel, when Jesus finishes instructing his disciples, he doesn't give them a law; he gives them a gift of new space, rooted in relationship and covenants. He says, "Love one another." Then he says that when you do so, you had better know that the world is going to hate you. The world cannot tolerate people freely loving each other, because it destroys all the barriers, definitions, and stereotypes that keep us captive and enslaved to the old world order.

Reflection Questions: What do you need to let go of in order to proclaim God's love? To risk loving is to experience vulnerability at deep levels. How can this vulnerability be celebrated rather than feared? --Yvonne V. Delk

[The Scripture]

John 14.15-21

15 "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. 17 This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you. 18 I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. 19 In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. 20 On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. 21 They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them."