

“God’s Unending Love”
Psalm 136
(Preached at Trinity, October 20, 2013)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. A common word we find over and over in the Hebrew Bible is מֵרַחֵם. I have pointed it out to you many times. It is used 255 times and translated in various ways – *love, loving kindness, steadfast love*. The KJV is famous for translating it “Mercy.”
Psalm 136:1 KJV - "his mercy *endureth* for ever."
2. I’ve pointed out often that it refers especially to God’s covenant love for His people. It reflects His love in the context of His redemptive purpose. This is at the heart of **Psalm 136**. It declares God’s mighty work in redemptive history continually reminding us that His covenant love endures forever. Each of the 26 verses of **Psalm 136** ends, "his mercy *endureth* for ever." Literally, “His love endures forever.”
 - A. For God’s elect people God’s love is unending. Throughout the long ages and into eternity God’s love will continue to flow upon His people. Nothing shall be able to separate us from this love. Paul asks the question: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Rom. 8:35).
Paul answers his own question – Nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.
Everything God does for us is motivated by His infinite love for us.
 - B. This is not true for the unbeliever. Although they experience God’s goodness and common grace they know nothing of God’s covenant love. When they die God’s common grace will no longer apply to them. The Gospel will no longer be offered.
As they are cast forever into hell it will not be an expression of God’s love but of His infinite wrath and perfect judgment.
They will be forever forsaken. God’s general love for His creation is not the same as God’s covenant love for His elect.
3. As His covenant love is displayed there is a high charge to gratitude, the expression of thanksgiving for what God has done. **Verses 1-3** command thanksgiving directly and then the command is implied throughout the remainder of the psalm.
4. Also, the word for thanksgiving in the Hebrew תְּהַלֵּל can also be translated “praise.”
Genuine thanksgiving expresses itself in praise.
 - A. Genuine worship is an expression of our gratitude towards God and the desire of our heart to exalt Him in His greatness.
 - B. The Psalter was Israel’s hymnbook.
Psalm 136 was probably sung in the temple, perhaps with the Levitical song leader singing the first words of each verse with the congregation responding, “His love endures forever.”
 - C. From this point forward the Psalter declares Israel’s praise of God. Almost all of Psalms 135-150 are psalms of praise.
5. **Psalm 136** can be divided into concise sections

- I. Praise to the goodness & greatness of God - **Verses 1-4**
- II. Praise to God as Creator – **Verses 5-9**
- III. Praise to God as Deliverer & Redeemer – **Verses 10-24**
- IV. Praise to God as Provider for all flesh – **Verses 25-26**

- I. Praise to the goodness & greatness of God - **Verses 1-4**
 - A. As the psalm opens with a declaration of God’s goodness.
 - 1. We also saw this in **Psalm 100**
Psalm 100:4-5 KJV - "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, *and* into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, *and* bless his name. ⁵ For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting"
 - 2. The goodness of God is abundant upon the earth. To meditate upon His goodness fills our heart with thanksgiving which in turn fills us with praise and worship.
 - a. God works infinite goodness in each of our lives—but we don’t praise Him just because of the goodness He works *in us*. We praise Him because He *is* good. God is worthy of praise because of His infinite worth.
 - b. Spurgeon: This is reason enough for giving him thanks; goodness is his essence and nature, and therefore he is always to be praised whether we are receiving anything from him or not. Those who only praise God because he *does* them good should rise to a higher note and give thanks to him because he *is good*.
 - c. God alone is good. Any goodness you see in man is a reflection of God’s goodness in them—it is His grace alone. It is because of God’s goodness that man isn’t as evil as he could be.
 - d. Jesus made this clear to the Rich Young Ruler
Matthew 19:17 KJV - "And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? *there is none good but one, that is, God*"
 “Why do you call me good and not call me God?”
 - 3. And then the psalmist points to the ultimate expression of God’s goodness upon His elect people, His particular love of His elect. His **אֱהָבָה** love is everlasting—enduring and unending.
 - a. Love is one of the attributes of God
1 John 4:8 – “He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.”
1 John 4:16 – “And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.”
 - b. God is the very embodiment of love. God’s love is boundless love
Ephesians 3:17-19 KJV - "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,
¹⁸ May be able to comprehend with all saints what *is* the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; ¹⁹ And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

- c. While God demonstrates his love upon all creation in general He reserves a particular love for His own. It is as a fatherly love to His children. It is for us that He sent forth Christ
1 John 4:9-10 – “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. ¹⁰ Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.”
 - C. God is beyond compare
 - 1. The psalmist describes God as the God of gods and the Lord of lords
 - a. Human beings have always fashioned gods of their own design. All are crushed beneath the greatness of God
 - b. There are powerful rulers upon this earth, but God overshadows them all. All power and authority begins with God. All authority bows before God
 - 2. This God, all powerful doing wonders loves us.
 “O give thanks unto the LORD”
- II. Praise to God as Creator – **Verses 5-9**
- A. God is the Almighty Creator of all things
 - 1. Creation is one of God’s greatest displays of Himself upon the earth
Psalm 19:1 KJV - "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork."
 - 2. Heaven and earth finds their source in God
Genesis 1:1 – “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”
 - 3. The sun, moon, and stars receive their light from God
 - a. They shine upon the earth giving light and establishing day and night
 - b. This is all by God’s sovereign reign. God ordered the 24 hour day governed by the rotation of the earth and the brightness of the sun. He ordered the seven day week and established the day of rest. He made the months governed by the orbit of the moon. He maintains the seasons
 - 4. Creation is amazing. Even the most convinced evolutionist has to admit that there is amazing order. God’s infinite wisdom and power is displayed. The more scientists discover the more amazing is God’s creation.
 - B. But why? What is the purpose?
 - 1. The chief end, the ultimate purpose of all things is God. He has created all things for Himself.
 - a. But why does the earth exist today? What is His purpose?
 It can be encapsulated into three words. He loves us.
 - b. Why didn’t God destroy the earth after Adam sinned?
 Because God loves His elect people.
 - c. Why didn’t God destroy everything in the flood?
 Because God loves His elect people.
 - d. Why does the earth still exist today?
 Because God loves His elect people?

2. Peter spoke of unbelieving scoffers who presume in a world without purpose.
2 Peter 3:3-4 KJV - "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, ⁴ And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of the creation."
3. What is God doing? Why is the earth still here?
2 Peter 3:8-9 KJV - "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day *is* with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."
4. It is because of His covenant love.
Psalms 136:1 KJV - "O give thanks unto the LORD; for *he is good*: for his mercy *endureth* for ever."

III. Praise to God as Deliverer & Redeemer – **Verses 10-24**

- A. These verses give a chronicle of God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt and leading them into their rest in Canaan
 1. By a strong arm He defeated the Egyptians and led Israel safely across the Red Sea – **Verses 10-15**
 2. By His mercy He led Israel through the wilderness – **Verse 16**
 3. By His power He defeated the mighty kings in the wilderness and in Canaan – **Verses 18-20**
The psalmist refers to them as "great kings" and "famous kings"
 4. Finally, in fulfillment of His covenant promise God gave Israel the land **Verse 21**
 5. All of this was in spite of Israel's weakness, their small size, their unworthiness – **Verses 23-24**
- B. What a picture this is of our own redemption
 1. The cords of our rebellious hearts were strong. Satan had us bound in his blinding lies and deceptions. We were locked securely in our dungeon of sin.
 2. By a mighty outstretched arm God commanded light to shine into the darkness of our own heart.
*Long my imprisoned spirit lay fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray; I woke, the dungeon filled with light!
My chains fell off; my heart was free; I rose, went forth, and followed thee*
 3. Why did God do this? Why did He save us? Why would He send His own Son to suffer in order to accomplish our redemption? Was it not because of His amazing love?
Amazing love! How can it be that thou, my Lord, shouldst die for me.
 4. What a mighty God we serve, worthy of all praise and thanksgiving
Psalms 136:1 KJV - "O give thanks unto the LORD; for *he is good*: for his mercy *endureth* for ever."

IV. Praise to God as Provider for all flesh – **Verses 25-26**

- A Again we find the demonstration of God’s goodness and mercy upon all men
"Who giveth food to all flesh"
1. The richness of His provision in this God-hating world is amazing. It shouts of the greatness of God’s goodness. He provides far more than what we need to exist.
 2. Why close this psalm with a reminder again of God’s common grace – He “giveth food to all flesh.”
 - a. Because God’s common grace finds its source in God’s redeeming grace upon His elect.
 - b. This world is experiencing God’s common grace because of God’s love for His elect
 - c. It all finds its source in Christ whose covenant love is everlasting.
- B. God is worthy of all praise
Psalm 136:26 KJV - " O give thanks unto the God of heaven"
1. The psalmist closes with a reminder that God is high above His creation
 2. The lost man fails to recognize God’s glory. He fails to reverence God for His goodness. He is a consumer, taking of God’s goodness but denying its source.
 3. We must never forget His infinite majesty. The universe is vast beyond our comprehension, yet God’s presence is in every part. God oversees all, rules all.
 4. When we pray, “Our Father, which art in heaven” we are reminded that God is high and lifted up. We are reminded that He dwells in perfect holiness. He is transcendent.
And yet He is here and He keeps covenant with His people. His covenant love endures forever.

Conclusion:

1. Who today recognizes the goodness of God and lifts up their voice in praise? We live in a generation where God has been banished from public and private life. Yet, God continues to bless fallen humanity. They are blind that in their stubborn hatred of God they are heaping up to themselves wrath unto the day of wrath.
2. May we never forget the kindness of God. May we never forget the wonder of the Gospel. Does your salvation continually amaze you; that God chose to redeem you? That He has saved you even though you are most unworthy.
3. Do you ponder often how God’s salvation is completely by grace, that you did nothing to earn it?
Stephen Tyng (*Lectures on the Law and Gospel*, p 210) – “Your last breath will be as much dependent upon him as your first; and eternity will be spent, not in personal congratulations upon your own strength, or wisdom, or perseverance, but in raptured hallelujahs of thanksgiving, to him who has loved you, and given himself for you, and washed you from your sins in his own blood, and redeemed you from every kindred and tongue, and people and nation, to make you kings and priests forever.”
3. Does this not bring you to sing forth His praises.
"Give thanks to the God of heaven, for his love endures forever."