

“The God Who Hears”  
Psalm 116  
(Preached at Trinity, September 16, 2012)

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. One of the greatest privileges for the people of God is the grace of prayer. We take it so much for granted. Can you imagine that the infinite God who spoke all things into existence, whose presence knows no boundaries, whose power is unsurpassable, who governs everything in the universe—that this God would turn His ear towards you when you speak?
2. Does this amaze you? Do you make it a high priority to be a student of prayer—to learn how to pray, to become better at prayer, to prioritize time to pray?
  - A. Out greatest example is Christ in His humanity.  
**Matthew 14:23 KJV** - "And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone."  
**Luke 6:12 KJV** - "And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God."  
**Luke 9:28 KJV** - "And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray."
  - B. His disciples watched Him pray and wanted Him to teach them:  
**Luke 11:1 KJV** - "And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray . . ."
3. The psalmist had confidence that God heard his prayers and this led him to pray all the more:  
**Psalm 116:1-2 KJV** - "I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice *and* my supplications. <sup>2</sup> Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon *him* as long as I live."
4. As we've seen the series of six psalms beginning with **Psalm 113** were sung annually at the Passover. They were known as the Egyptian Hallel. They celebrated God's mercy upon the downtrodden. His abiding presence when His people called upon Him. They mark God's redemption that was demonstrated in Egypt but would spread to the nations. So far we've looked at the first three:
  - A. **Psalm 113** is simply a glorious demonstration of praise. It begins and ends with praise. God is without equal.  
**Psalm 113:4-5 KJV** - "The LORD *is* high above all nations, *and* his glory above the heavens. <sup>5</sup> Who *is* like unto the LORD our God"
  - B. **Psalm 114** rises up to exalt God's power and dominion. Everything falls beneath His infinite sovereignty. There is only one response to such majesty:  
**Psalm 114:7 KJV** - "Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord"

- C. **Psalm 115** declares the unsurpassable greatness of God.  
**Psalm 115:3 KJV** - "our God *is* in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased."
5. **Psalm 116** can be divided into four parts; the first two with a focus upon God and the last two upon the psalmist's response.
- I. The God who hears – **Verses 1-4**
  - II. The God who helps – **Verses 5-8**
  - III. The saint's hope – **Verses 9-15**
  - IV. The saint's homage – **Verses 16-19**
- I. The God who hears – **Verses 1-4**
- A. Psalm 116 begins with an expression of the Psalmist's love
    1. In the psalms love is expressed as a response to God's goodness and care of His people  
**Psalm 18:1-2 KJV** - "I will love thee, O LORD, my strength. <sup>2</sup> The LORD *is* my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, *and* my high tower."  
**Psalm 31:23 KJV** - "O love the LORD, all ye his saints: *for* the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer."
    2. God's goodness enlivens our love for Him just as His goodness causes us to overflow with praise.
    3. In **Psalm 116** the focus of the Psalmist's love is directed to one aspect of God's goodness – He hears prayer
  - B. God is a God who hears  
**Psalm 116:1 KJV** - "because he hath heard my voice *and* my supplications."  
    1. **Verses 1-2** are in the form of typical Hebrew poetical form – parallelism: "he hath heard" "he hath inclined his ear"
    2. Because the psalmist had confidence that God heard he prayed.
      - a. But it isn't just that God hears in a general sense. It is true that God hears the acorn fall in the forest when no one is around. He hears the wind on Mount Everest or the waves on the deserted island. God is all knowing, all seeing, and all hearing
      - b. This isn't what the psalmist is speaking of. He is speaking of the gracious turning of God's ear towards His own people.  
"he hath heard my voice *and* my supplications."  
"he hath inclined his ear unto me"
      - c. It's like a mother regarding the voice of her baby. She recognizes it immediately.
    3. God hears us when we call out to Him--always. The conclusion is we should pray – always.  
**Psalm 116:2 KJV** - "therefore will I call upon *him* as long as I live."  
**Luke 18:1 KJV** - "And he spake a parable unto them *to this end*, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;"  
**1 Thessalonians 5:17 KJV** - "Pray without ceasing."

- C. The psalmist had one response to trial and adversity – pray
1. He described severe adversity in **Verse 3**  
“sorrows of death” “pains of hell” (literally the terrors of Sheol-the abode of the dead). In other words death was at the door.  
"I found trouble and sorrow."
  2. In the face of such adversity he prayed – **Verse 4**
  3. May God grant this to be our first response. God hears us. He turns His ear towards us. But there’s more—He heeds us.

## II. The God who helps – **Verses 5-8**

- A. **Verse 5** describes the character of God – He is gracious and merciful
1. Grace and mercy are two twins from the same cup of God’s goodness  
Grace is God giving us what we do not deserve  
Mercy is God not giving us what we do deserve
  2. God is gracious and merciful to even His enemies  
**Matthew 5:45 KJV** - "for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."
  3. But His grace and mercy upon the lost is temporary  
**Numbers 14:18 KJV** - "The LORD *is* longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing *the guilty*,"  
**Nahum 1:3 KJV** - "The LORD *is* slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit *the wicked*"
- B. He comes to the aid of those who trust in Him
1. The psalmist describes them as “the simple” in **Verse 6** – the worldly wise trust in their worldly devices. The simple simply trust God.
  2. We find another example of self-talk – **Verse 7**  
**Psalms 42:5 KJV** - "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and *why* art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him *for* the help of his countenance."  
**Psalms 103:1 KJV** - "Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, *bless* his holy name."  
**Psalms 116:7 KJV** - "Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee."  
    - a. Be at rest, be at peace. God has heard you. God has dealt bountifully with you.
    - b. This is the peace granted to those who look to God  
**Philippians 4:6-7 KJV** - "Be careful (anxious) for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. <sup>7</sup>  
And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."
  3. He was in danger of death – **Verse 3**  
God delivered him from death – **Verse 8**

### III. The saint's hope – Verses 9-15

In **Ver. 1-8** the psalmist describes the God who hears and comes to the aid of his people. Now the focus turns to the confidence in response to such a God – the response of faith and hope

- A. I will walk before the LORD – **Verse 9**
  - 1. He will deliver me. He will come to me
  - 2. “In the land of the living” - In other words – I will live
- B. He describes his great faith in God
  - Psalm 116:10 KJV** - "I believed, therefore have I spoken"
  - 1. He had no other source of confidence
  - 2. Confidence in man is but a vain hope
    - Psalm 116:11 KJV** - "I said in my haste, All men *are* liars."
    - In other words, they can't be trusted. If you depend upon man to deliver you you will be disappointed.
  - 3. God is very present. He is not uninvolved. He is not uncaring
    - Even in our death God is there
    - Psalm 116:15 KJV** - "Precious in the sight of the LORD *is* the death of his saints."

### IV. The saint's homage – Verses 12-19

- A. Such love and care from God causes us to ask the question:
  - Psalm 116:12 KJV** - "What shall I render unto the LORD *for* all his benefits toward me?"
  - 1. This is what distinguishes us from those who do not glory in God's grace
    - a. We continually ponder – what more can I do? How can I repay Him?
    - b. We aren't trying to merit anything from God. We simply want to glorify Him. Our hearts overflow with a desire to return to Him of the rich blessings He has bestowed.
  - 2. The words of the previous psalm are continually on our hearts:
    - Psalm 115:1 KJV** - " Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory"
- B. The Psalmist begins to list several conclusions from his question
  - 1. **Verse 13** - "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD." (see also **Verse 17**)
    - a. It seems strange to answer a question, “What shall I render” with the answer, “I will take.” But this is one of the greatest things a person can do. To receive from God of His gift of salvation.
    - b. Perhaps this is alluding to a drink offering or to the cup drank at the Passover. No matter, for us it is filled with Christ! It is a cup filled to the brim and running over.
    - c. To call upon the name of the LORD is to receive Him, to own Him as your own.
      - Romans 10:13 KJV** - "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."
      - Acts 4:12 KJV** - "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

- d. What is the proper response of a sinful human being towards God's graciousness? To repent and trust Him.
2. **Verse 14, 18** - "I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people."
  - a. What vow is this? It is the pledge to follow God. It is vows of commitment. Vows in the OT were important. They were acts of worship. They are important to us as well. Perhaps the psalmist pledged his absolute commitment during his affliction. How he gives himself to fulfilling his vow.
  - b. Our highest vow is the vow of commitment to Christ and His church. This is the essence of calling upon His name.  
3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment - "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."
  - c. How many people make a sham of their vows by their lack of faithfulness and commitment? Often it's because they never truly met Christ.
3. **Verse 16** - "O LORD, truly I *am* thy servant; I *am* thy servant"
  - a. This is a pledge to bow before God as Master
  - b. Jesus is referred to as Lord often. It is at the heart of salvation  
**Romans 10:9 NAU** - "that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;"
  - c. At the very beginning of Paul's Epistle to the Romans he established his relationship to Christ.  
**Romans 1:1** – "Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,"  
δοῦλος - The Holman Christian Standard Version is one of the few that properly translates this word: "Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus"
  - d. It is the end of self-will. Jesus is Lord of everything.
  - e. But He is a gracious Master  
**Psalms 116:16 KJV** - "thou hast loosed my bonds."  
**Matthew 11:29** - "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light. "
4. **Verse 17** - "I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving"
  - a. Our lives are a continued expression of thanksgiving. This word implies an act of worship.
  - b. Which brings the exclamation at the close:  
**Psalms 116:19 KJV** - "Praise ye the LORD."

#### Conclusion:

1. All of this flows forth from prayer; the knowledge that God hears, that He turns His ear towards us.
2. That God comes to our aid; that we can trust Him; that we can live confidently before Him.
3. This changes everything in our lives. We praise Him, we worship Him, we submit to His Lordship. It causes us to be God-centered.