

“Give Thanks”

Psalm 136

Welcome...

Good morning! If you are new here, my name is Dan Burleson. I am one of the Associate Pastors here at Cornerstone. And we always tell our guests three things. First, we are really grateful that you are with us. You are God’s gift to us in this time we that we have together. So thank you again for worshipping with us. Second, you are in a place where the ground is level. Which means no one is any higher, better or more significant than anyone else. The ground at the foot of the cross is level ground and we are sinners who need a Savior and Jesus is that Savior. And while your salvation is a personal matter, God never designed for it to be a private matter. He wants us to live as brothers and sisters in the family of God. Which leads to the Third, thing we need to tell you... we love you enough to speak the truth to you. That’s truth with a capital “T”. The truth from God’s Word. The truth about Jesus. His Person. His Works. And His Words. How He can transform your life from the inside out. He is the Cornerstone of our faith.

John Marc asked me a while to preach today. When he asks me to preach, I typically choose a Psalm. It seems like nearly every time I am asked to preach, I find myself going through some unique circumstance. Well, on October 19, I found myself in one of those unique circumstances. I finished leading our community group and stood up to stomach pain. I then realized I had a slight fever. The pain shifted to my side. I went to bed early. I woke up the next day still with pain (not unbearable). I called my doctor and he told me to come in the next day. He pressed on my side and saw that I was in pain. He sent me over to the ER. They admitted me because my appendix had ruptured. I was in the hospital for 3 or 4 days. They decided to delay the removal of my appendix and I continue to wait this morning for a surgery date. Thank you to all of you who have prayed for me and for the kind notes that many of you sent. Cole McDaniel was on backup just in case I was not able to preach this morning. But here I am. I don’t have any pain. God is good. I have so much to be thankful for.

Since we would be approaching Thanksgiving, I wanted to look at a Psalm that focuses on giving thanks. I chose Psalm 136. There are many passages and verses in the Bible that talk about Thanksgiving. I love Philippians 4:6–7— *6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* Or 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 — *16 Rejoice always; 17 pray without ceasing; 18 in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.* Or even Psalm 100:4— *4 Enter His gates with thanksgiving And His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name.*

As I continued to survey those verses, I kept coming back to this Psalm. It is a unique Psalm in that each verse ends with the same phrase—“*For His lovingkindness is everlasting*”. Twenty-six

times is this phrase used—“*For His lovingkindness is everlasting*”. This Psalm has been called “The Great Hallel” or “Great Psalm of Praise”. It was a hymn that most likely started with the first line of each verse being sung by a temple soloist or choir and the second line of each verse was sung as a response by the congregation. It is a Psalm that reminded the people of Israel about the ways in which God demonstrated His power in their history. This is not a song that was sung to God but instead about God. Derek Kidner tells us of this passage that “Give thanks is not the whole meaning of this word...it basically means ‘confess’ or ‘acknowledge’, and therefore calls us to thoughtful, grateful worship, spelling out what we know or have found of God’s glory and His deeds”.

Let’s read Psalm 136. But we are going to do it a little bit different than we usually do. I am going to read the first line of each verse and I want all of you to respond with the second line “*for His lovingkindness is everlasting.*” Please say that with me “*for His lovingkindness is everlasting.*”

As we read this, I want you to picture the congregation of Israelites singing this hymn in the temple. I’m sure it was sung out loud. I’m sure it was sung from the heart, a heart of thanksgiving. It was them confessing and acknowledging all that a loving and merciful God has done for his chosen people.

Read Psalm 136 —

*1 Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, **For His lovingkindness is everlasting.** 2 Give thanks to the God of gods, **For His lovingkindness is everlasting.** 3 Give thanks to the Lord of lords, **For His lovingkindness is everlasting.** 4 To Him who alone does great wonders, **For His lovingkindness is everlasting;** 5 To Him who made the heavens with skill, **For His lovingkindness is everlasting;** 6 To Him who spread out the earth above the waters, **For His lovingkindness is everlasting;** 7 To Him who made the great lights, **For His lovingkindness is everlasting:** 8 The sun to rule by day, **For His lovingkindness is everlasting,** 9 The moon and stars to rule by night, **For His lovingkindness is everlasting.** 10 To Him who smote the Egyptians in their firstborn, **For His lovingkindness is everlasting,** 11 And brought Israel out from their midst, **For His lovingkindness is everlasting,** 12 With a strong hand and an outstretched arm, **For His lovingkindness is everlasting.** 13 To Him who divided the Red Sea asunder, **For His lovingkindness is everlasting,** 14 And made Israel pass through the midst of it, **For His lovingkindness is everlasting;** 15 But He overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea, **For His lovingkindness is everlasting.** 16 To Him who led His people through the wilderness, **For His lovingkindness is everlasting;** 17 To Him who smote great kings, **For His lovingkindness is everlasting,** 18 And slew mighty kings, **For His lovingkindness is everlasting:** 19 Sihon, king of the Amorites, **For His lovingkindness is everlasting,** 20 And Og, king of Bashan, **For His lovingkindness is everlasting,** 21 And gave their land as a heritage, **For His lovingkindness is everlasting,** 22 Even a heritage to Israel His servant, **For His lovingkindness is everlasting.** 23 Who remembered us in our low estate, **For His lovingkindness is everlasting,***

*24 And has rescued us from our adversaries, **For His lovingkindness is everlasting**; 25 Who gives food to all flesh, **For His lovingkindness is everlasting**. 26 Give thanks to the God of heaven, **For His lovingkindness is everlasting**.*

A couple of weeks ago John Marc taught from Revelation 5. In that message he talked about worship. He said, “We talked last week about how desperately we need to see God for who He is, in His glory and greatness. We need the ‘opening scene’ from Revelation chapter 4 to be the ‘opening scene’ of our every day and our everyday experiences; of our every conversation, of our every deliberation when tempted. But in the same way, we desperately need to see Jesus for who He is. We need to worship Jesus! And what we see here is that the fullness of our worship of Jesus is directly linked to how well we understand the fullness of His worthiness.” My prayer this morning is that as we approach the Thanksgiving holiday, that we will praise God for who He is, what He has done and for his everlasting love. We are going to look at five reasons to give thanks from Psalm 136: 1) Because of God’s person; 2) Because of God’s creation; 3) Because of God’s Conquests; 4) Because of God’s Provision; 5) Because of God’s everlasting lovingkindness.

I. Give Thanks because of God’s person verse 1-3, 26

A. He is good vs 1

Jesus made it clear that “*No one is good except God alone*” in Mark 10:18 and Luke 18:19.

Psalm 34:8 says to “*taste and see that the Lord is good...*”

Our passage this morning says to “*give thanks to the Lord, for He is good.*”

What does this mean that “He is good”?

Charles Spurgeon says, “Essentially he is goodness itself, practically all that he does is good, relatively he is good to his creatures. Let us thank him that we have seen, proved, and tasted that he is good. He is good beyond all others; indeed, he alone is good in the highest sense; he is the source of good, the good of all good, the sustainer of good, the perfecter of good, and the rewarder of good. For this he deserves the constant gratitude of his people.”

Adrian read this morning from Psalm 111. It is amazing how many Psalms point out the goodness of God. I want to encourage you to look at the Psalms this Thanksgiving season and just look for God’s goodness. You will see it.

God’s goodness should lead to thankfulness on our part.

God is the absolute good. Have you seen that in God’s Word? In your own life? Do you regularly give thanks to God for His goodness?

The rest of our passage this morning shows how good God is.

B. He is the God of gods vs 2

Not only is God good, but He is the God of gods. Look at verse 2. He is the only true God. Deuteronomy 10:17 says, “*For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God...*” He is sovereign and worthy of our praise. He alone is to be thanked for who He is and what He has done.

Do you intentionally recognize God as the Supreme Godhead that He is? Do you give Him the thanks that he alone deserves?

C. He is the Lord of lords vs 3

He is the Ruler of rulers. God is greater than anyone who holds power. 1 Timothy 6:15 describes God as “....He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords,”. He is Lord of lords. Let’s thank Him for His greatness.

D. He is the God of Heaven vs 26

The idea of God as “the God of heaven” emphasizes God’s role as Divine King and disqualifies any human king’s claim to supremacy.

Spurgeon says, “The title is full of honour. The Lord is God in the highest realms, and among celestial beings. His throne is set in glory, above all, out of reach of foes, in the place of universal oversight.”

I’ve shared this before, but when I was on a mission’s trip to India back in 2007. The people from the church in India were often saying “Praise the Lord.” They said it as a greeting. They said it as a response. And they would just say it often throughout the day. One interpreter asked me, “In America, do you say, “praise the Lord?” I was convicted at the moment. I told the translator that we don’t say it as often as we should. Let us praise the Lord. Let us confess, acknowledge and thank God for His person. So that a lost world will know that there is a good, sovereign, powerful and supreme God that has done great things.

So we thank God for His person. He is good, He is the God of gods, the Lord of lords, and the God of heaven. Next the Psalmist thanks God because of His creation.

II. Give thanks because of God’s creation vs 4-9

In these verses we see God as “the great doer” and “the great maker”. He has done great wonders. He has made incredible things

Look at verse 4-6. “*To Him who alone does great wonders....To Him who made the heavens with skill...To Him who spread out the earth above the waters...*” Proverbs 3:19–20 says, “*The LORD by wisdom founded the earth, By understanding He established the heavens. By His knowledge*

the deeps were broken up And the skies drip with dew.” Jeremiah 10:12 says, *“It is He who made the earth by His power, Who established the world by His wisdom; And by His understanding He has stretched out the heavens.”* We thank Him alone for His great wonders. Steve Lawson writes “He created the heavens above by his understanding, divine genius, stunning wisdom and perfect insight. The planets and starry hosts decorate the sky above, manifesting God’s love. Further, God spread out the earth upon the waters, referring to the skillful way God made this planet.”

Verse 7-9 focuses on God’s creation in space: the great lights, the sun, the moon and stars. Genesis 1:14–19 says, *“Then God said, ‘Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth’; and it was so. God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; He made the stars also. God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, and to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good. There was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.*

We do need to be careful that we do not worship the creation. We are not to worship what God has made. We are to worship the Creator only and thank Him for what He has made.

God’s creation on earth reflects great glory, but His work in space is overwhelming to man in all ages. The sun and moon affect life on earth and is evidence of God’s goodness to all creatures on the earth. So we give thanks because of His creation.

III. Give thanks because of God’s conquests vs 10-24

Next we see the Psalmist turn to God’s demonstration of power against the Egyptians.

A. Deliverance from Egypt vs 10-15

Verse 10-15 says, *“To Him who smote the Egyptians in their firstborn...And brought Israel out from their midst...With a strong hand and an outstretched arm...To Him who divided the Red Sea asunder...And made Israel pass through the midst of it...But He overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea...”* God brought His people out of Egypt in the exodus (Exodus 12). He brought the plagues upon Egypt (Exodus 7-12). The last of the plagues was the death of the firstborn as mentioned in this Psalm. He brought them out of Egypt. He parted the Red Sea. He drowned Pharaoh and his army in the waters of the Red Sea. These were all acts of God. This was God delivering His people. He did this with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. This is a metaphor for God’s great and personal strength on behalf of His people. After delivering His people from Egypt, God guided them through the wilderness.

B. From the wilderness to the entrance of Canaan vs 16-24

During the wilderness journey, we see God demonstrating His power in defeating the kings who threatened Israel's entrance into the promised land.

Look at verse 16. *"To Him who led His people through the wilderness..."* Who led His people? God did. God never abandoned His people. During this journey, God struck down great and mighty kings (verse 17-18). Particularly the Psalmist mentions Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan (verse 19-20). These two kings are representative of the long list of Canaanite kings who were subdued. In verses 21-22 we see that the conquered land became Israel's "heritage" or "inheritance". Spurgeon says, "As Lord of the whole earth he transferred his estate from one tenant to another. The land did not become the property of the Israelites by their own sword and bow, but by a grant from the throne. This was the great end which all along had been aimed at from Egypt to Jordan. He who brought his people out also brought them in. He who had promised the land to the seed of Abraham also saw to it that the deed of gift did not remain a dead letter. Both our temporal and our spiritual estates come to us by royal charter. What God gives us is ours by the best of titles. Inheritance by God's gift is a tenure which even Satan cannot dispute." Verse 23-24 is a recap of what God has done for Israel. God remembered them in their low estate and rescued them from their adversaries.

So we thank God because of His Person. We give thanks because of His creation. We give thanks because of His conquests. Fourth, we give thanks because of God's provision.

IV. Give thanks because of God's provision vs 25

In verse 25, the Psalmist returns to the theme of God's goodness and His creation. God continually cares for His creatures. Verse 25 says, *"Who gives food to all flesh."* Spurgeon says, "Common providence, which cares for all living things, deserves our devoutest thanks. If we think of heavenly food, by which all saints are supplied, our praises rise to a still greater height; but meanwhile the universal goodness of God in feeding all his creatures is as worthy of praise as his special favours to the elect nation. Because the Lord feeds all life therefore we expect him to take special care of his own family."

Are you thankful for all that God has provided? Do you intentionally praise Him for those things?

V. Give thanks because of God's everlasting lovingkindness vs 1-26

The final thing that we need to give thanks to God for is mentioned twenty-six times in this passage. We need to give thanks for His everlasting lovingkindness. The word for lovingkindness in Hebrew is *Hesed*. This word is used more than 246 times in the Old Testament. More than half of those occurrences appear in the Psalms. One commentary I read gives the meaning of *Hesed*, "When God appeared to Moses to give the Law a second time (Exodus 34:6-7), He described Himself as "abounding in" or "filled with" *hesed*, which is

translated “love and faithfulness,” “unfailing love,” “faithful love,” “steadfast love,” and “loyal love.” The core idea of this term communicates loyalty or faithfulness within a relationship. Thus, hesed is closely related to God’s covenant with His people, Israel. As it relates to the concept of love, hesed expresses God’s faithfulness to His people. In the Bible, hesed often describes the mercy and compassion of God. Hesed surpasses ordinary kindness and friendship. It is the inclination of the heart to show “amazing grace” to the one who is loved. Hesed runs deeper than social expectations, responsibilities, fluctuating emotions, or what is deserved or earned by the recipient. Hesed finds its home in committed, familial love, and it comes to life in actions. The message of the gospel—God’s act of forgiveness and salvation in Jesus—is rooted in hesed. Hesed describes the disposition of God’s heart not only toward His people but to all humanity. The love of God extends far beyond duty or expectation. His forgiveness of sin fulfills a need that is basic to all other needs in the relationship between human beings and God—the restoration and continuation of fellowship with God in Jesus Christ. God’s hesed manifested in forgiveness makes a relationship with Him possible. That forgiveness comes to us freely as a gift from God based on the sacrificial act of Christ.”

Psalm 136 repeats this word 26 times—“For His lovingkindness is everlasting.”

This morning, we have seen God’s everlasting lovingkindness in His person, in His creation, in His conquests and in His provision. You see.... God’s loyal love, His everlasting lovingkindness, His mercy, will never fail or falter towards His people.

As we come to God in singing, not just on Sundays, and not just during the Thanksgiving season. Let us remember to give thanks to God, because of who He is, for what He has done, and for His everlasting love.

Let’s pray.

Benediction

1 Timothy 6:15–16 (NASB95) — *15 ...He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16 who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen.*