

# THANKSGIVING DAY

NOVEMBER 28, 2013

## HIS STEADFAST LOVE ENDURES FOREVER

Pastor Jim Dunn

### Psalm 136

#### His Steadfast Love Endures Forever

#### 136

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.

**2** Give thanks to the God of gods, for his steadfast love endures forever.

**3** Give thanks to the Lord of lords, for his steadfast love endures forever;

**4** to him who alone does great wonders, for his steadfast love endures forever;

**5** to him who by understanding made the heavens, for his steadfast love endures forever;

**6** to him who spread out the earth above the waters, for his steadfast love endures forever;

**7** to him who made the great lights, for his steadfast love endures forever;

**8** the sun to rule over the day, for his steadfast love endures forever;

**9** the moon and stars to rule over the night, for his steadfast love endures forever;

**10** to him who struck down the firstborn of Egypt, for his steadfast love endures forever;

**11** and brought Israel out from among them, for his steadfast love endures forever;

**12** with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, for his steadfast love endures forever;

**13** to him who divided the Red Sea in two, for his steadfast love endures forever;

**14** and made Israel pass through the midst of it, for his steadfast love endures forever;

**15** but overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea, for his steadfast love endures forever;

**16** to him who led his people through the wilderness, for his steadfast love endures forever;

**17** to him who struck down great kings, for his steadfast love endures forever;

**18** and killed mighty kings, for his steadfast love endures forever;

**19** Sihon, king of the Amorites, for his steadfast love endures forever;

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- 20** and Og, king of Bashan, for his steadfast love endures forever;  
**21** and gave their land as a heritage, for his steadfast love endures forever;  
**22** a heritage to Israel his servant, for his steadfast love endures forever.  
**23** It is he who remembered us in our low estate, for his steadfast love endures forever;  
**24** and rescued us from our foes, for his steadfast love endures forever;  
**25** he who gives food to all flesh, for his steadfast love endures forever.  
**26** Give thanks to the God of heaven, for his steadfast love endures forever.
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“Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever.”

Notice where this hymn of thanksgiving begins. The writer of Psalm 136 begins this hymn of thanksgiving with God. Not with a lecture on gratitude. Nor with a musical number on how we would sleep better at night by counting our blessings. The writer begins with God, taking us back to the very beginning of God's miracles, the creation of the universe.

With carefully chosen lyrics, the writer paints for us the creation story. The creation of the heavens, the spreading out of the earth above the waters, filling the skies with great lights, like the sun to rule by day and the moon to rule over the night. Then, the writer fasts forward to the history of Israel, God's chosen people. The writer highlights those events in which God acted to miraculously bring Israel out of its slavery in Egypt, through the desert wilderness, defeating those kings who had refused to let Israel pass through their lands, and finally giving into Israel's hands The Land.

Then, notice where this hymn of thanksgiving ends. It ends with today's dinner. “He gives (present tense) food to every creature.” Literally, it says: “Giving food to every creature.” The writer does not intend to only reminisce about some long lost time when God still performed great signs and wonders. The writer of this Psalm does not merely intend to sing nostalgically about a golden era now past and gone. The writer brings the story right up to the here and now, right to our next meal.

Because God's power and love did not run out when He brought His people into the Promised Land. God's love did not stop. God's love did not become a weak, powerless, merely well-intentioned sentiment.

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However, that's how it looks to us if our anxious, sleepless nights are any indication. Fretting, discontent, troubled, quick to list our wishes, offering thanksgiving only because we're supposed to. These actions say we think God means well, but He can't deliver.

But the lyrics of this Psalm bring God's story right up to the here and now, right to our next meal. These words say that God continues to miraculously display His love for us from providing Israel the victory over King Og of Bashan right up to providing you the Whole Nut Cheerios you had for breakfast this morning. "He gives food to every creature."

At some point, the writer of this Psalm ate his last meal. Then, he died. He passed on to the eternal rest of heaven. But the story continued. God's love did not stop. His love endures. His love endures forever. It has continued to this very moment.

The final verse of Psalm 136 serves as an invitation to continue singing this hymn of thanksgiving. "Give thanks to the God of heaven," the writer concludes, for there is one God, the God of gods, and one Lord, the Lord of lords; there is one Worker of Wonders. And there have been many other wonders that God has performed since the Psalm writer's day. Now we take up the refrain. Please join me in adding our own verses to this hymn of thanksgiving to the God whose steadfast love endures forever. Each time I say a line, respond with the words "**for His steadfast love endures forever.**"

It was the Lord who remembered the low estate of His servant, Mary, **for His steadfast love endures forever.**

It was the Lord who preserved the life of our Infant Redeemer through dreams and warnings to Joseph, **for...**

He became flesh and dwelled among us, **for...**

He took up our illnesses and carried our sorrows, **for...**

He died for us, the Righteous One for sinners, **for...**

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He rose victorious, conquering death and the grave forever, **for...**

He sent forth witnesses to bring the Gospel to every nation, including the first members in your family tree to hear about Jesus, **for...**

He preserved the Message from generation to generation till at last you were made His own in the waters of Baptism, **for...**

He feeds you with His own body and blood at His Table, for... He healed Carl Hepting of his cancer, **for...**

He continues to provide for this congregation so that we may proclaim the Gospel and administer the means of grace, **for...**

He will return to this earth so that you will live in His presence forever, for... Give thanks to the God of heaven, **for...**

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.