

TBC – 1/5/03 p.m.

## SEEING GOD'S MERCY EVERYWHERE

Psalm 136

**Intro:** This is a most unusual Psalm because the statement, “for His mercy endureth forever” is repeated in every verse. And it therefore is the reason for responding to the first verse of the Psalm, as well as the last verse, to “give thanks unto the Lord.” And there is an interesting contrast between what the people of God are called upon to do, as compared with the thought of God’s mercy. In the thought of God’s mercy is the idea of zeal to express that mercy. Evidence of God’s mercy is to be seen everywhere, in all of creation, and in all of God’s dealings with men. But people need to be prompted, need to be told to “give thanks to the Lord.” There is never any question as to God’s mercies, but there are doubts as to how faithful people will be in giving thanks to the Lord. He doesn’t want our money, nor is He dependent upon our service, but He desires our praise, our thanksgiving, our worship. And this is what even the people of God have always been negligent about giving to Him. It does not cost us anything to do it. We don’t have to go to any particular place to give Him thanks. It is actually not just an act or what a person may do only at specified times, but it is the way the people of God should live – praising the Lord continuously because we recognize the evidence of His mercy, His grace, His lovingkindness toward us.

One other thing about this Psalm that is important to notice is that thanksgiving is not just the expression of gratitude, but it is gratitude toward God. Even unbelievers will say that they are thankful for this or that, but never mention the Lord. They do not recognize His goodness and His blessings in their lives. They are just thankful. If anything goes wrong, they are liable to blame God, but they do not recognize that all of the things they enjoy, all of the blessings of life, come from God, and from Him alone.

This is the emphasis in the first three verses of the Psalm, and the Psalmist returns to this emphasis in the last of the Psalm. But you see it also in the words “to Him” in vv. 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 13, 16, 17, and then in the word “who” which is in v. 23, implied in v. 24, and appearing again in v. 25.

Verses 1 and 26 give us the theme of the Psalm, and then we are given in the verses between truths which are intended to motivate us to give thanks to the Lord.

First, in verses 2 and 3 because of Who He is.

In verse 1 the Lord is recognized as Jehovah. In verse 2, as Elohim. And in verse 3 as Adonai.

Then in the second section there is an emphasis upon the world of which God is the Creator (vv. 4-9), and the beginning of verse 4 indicates that only God could have created the world in which we live.

The third section has to do with what God has done as the Redeemer of His people, Israel. Nothing is said about the repeated rebellion of the people as they sinned against the Lord in that long journey, but only about the faithfulness of God in meeting their every need.

The fourth section speaks of the mercy of God in any generation. We read those verses and we say "us." Our parents read it, and they said, "us." And as long as time last the Lord's people will be reading this, and saying "us."

Then the Psalm closes with the same exhortation with which it began.

Now it must be said that only those who are truly the people of God will find it in their hearts to be responsive to this Word of God, or any Word from God.

Now we start with the Lord Himself.

As I have mentioned there are three titles, or names, if you like, for Deity. He is Jehovah, the ever-living, unchanging God. He is without any beginning, without ending, and immutable. Thus, His faithfulness is in view here, His consistent support of His purposes and His promises.

But He is also Elohim, the mighty God, the God of creation. He is God over all. There is none mightier than He is. And there is the definite indication in this title that there is more than one Person in the Godhead, which Scripture reveals. And so the thanks that God's people are to give includes not only God, the Father, but also God, the Son, and God, the Holy Spirit.

And He is Adonai, the Master, the Owner, and the Ruler. We see in Him the One Who cares for His creation, the One Who controls, the Sovereign

One. In all of the confusion that exists in the world today, the Lord is still in charge, and He is working out His purposes. His will is going to prevail.

Now this first part of the Psalm suggests very clearly that in order for us to render due thanks to the Lord we need to think about the Godhead and our relationship to each Member of the Godhead. We need to think about God. We need to know God. We need to love Him, and give thanks for Him and His mercy which is what it means to worship Him. We need to be concerned with the Lord first, and then to become acquainted from the Word with all that He is, and all that He has done, and all that He continues to do. This is what prepares our hearts for worship.

But let us move on to the second section, verses 4 through 9. Here we are told about God as the Creator.

Probably the reason that we are to think of God as the Creator, and then as the Redeemer of Israel, is because these are the two most outstanding and significant events in OT times. It is impossible for us to overstate the importance of believing that we live in a created universe, and that we are creatures created by God. This is the first truth that we find in Scripture. John MacArthur expressed his conviction that people are not going to see their need of salvation until they understand that they are creature made by God! And I believe He is right. This is where our world has gone crazy. Our light has become darkness, and we are reaping the harvest of ignoring God and of rejecting the truth of creation. In one of the recent murders that we have been hearing about, the mother was pregnant, but that unborn child has not to my knowledge ever been included as one of the murder victims. And that is a part of what we have come to because our country has rejected God and the truth of creation.

But notice how simply and wonderfully and clearly creation is spoken of in verses 5-9 especially. And every step in creation was an expression of the mercy of the Lord, mercies for which we need to be very thankful. It is nothing but blasphemy to attribute our weather do the doings of the fictitious "Mother Nature." God is the Lord and Master of the universe, and He controls the weather and everything else around us.

But then let us go on to the third section: vv. 10 through 22.

We have been through at least a part of this in our Sunday morning

services, and so it should be fresh in our minds. And what we haven't been through in our services, we all have been through in our reading.

Have you ever worshiped the Lord as you have read through the story of Israel's exodus from Egypt, and her conquest of the land of Canaan? His mercy is to be seen in every page if we only have eyes to see it. The Lord did everything that needed to be done in order to get His people out of Egypt, through the desert, and into the promised land. He was zealous for His people, constantly showing His mercy, His grace, His goodness, and His longsuffering with His people. They never would have gotten out of Egypt without the Lord! What a world of truth is in that expression in verse 10, "to Him Who struck Egypt in their firstborn. The story of God's deliverance of His people from Egypt is a story of the mercy of God. Did they deserve it? Absolutely not! Did they want it? They did until they got out, and then they wanted to go back. Why didn't they go back? It was only because God would not let them go back.

Now we come to the last part of the Psalm: vv. 23 to 26.

We have here an excellent illustration of what the stories of the OT, OT history, is to mean to us. We are to take the history of Israel and realize from that, that although our circumstances are altogether different, yet the LORD Who was faithful in fulfilling His purposes and keeping His promises with His people in the past, will be just as merciful and faithful to us today!

And, oh, how He has remembered us. That thought alone ought to humble us forever. What right do we have to expect that the God of heaven and earth, the Creator of the universe, our Creator, the Redeemer of Israel, would even give us a second thought. But do you know why He has remembered us? Because as Mat read in our Lord's Supper service this morning, it was because He loved us. And how has He remembered us? By saving us, not by the blood of bulls and goats, but by the precious blood of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And we are never out of His thoughts.

Only when we get to heaven will we know how often He has protected us, not just from terrorists, but from temptation, and from sin, and from the ways we would have ruined ourselves if it had not been for the mercies of the Lord. Even the food that you and I enjoyed today was evidence of the mercy of the Lord. That's why we give Him thanks.

So let us give thanks to the God of heaven, because His mercies endure forever.

**Concl:** This word *hesed* is the word that Jeremiah used in his book of Lamentations when he wrote these words:

22 It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed,  
because his compassions fail not.

23 They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness  
(Lam. 3:22-23).

And they are words which help us to define what God's mercies are – His compassion, and His faithfulness. And they can never be exhausted.

Now there is one word that I haven't explained yet, but I must turn to it now. It appears just once in the Psalm, in verse 1, and it is another word which helps us to know God. The Psalmist said, "for He is good." Give thanks to the Lord "for He is good," and one evidence of His goodness, a great evidence, is that "His mercy endureth forever."

To say that "He," God, "is good," has many different facets of truth. It means that He always does that which brings the greatest benefit to us. It means that He is always right in what He does. It means that He is always concerned about that which brings the greatest joy us, and that which we soon learn is what we really desire.

So let us go back to verse 1 to close. (Repeat.) The test as to whether or not you and I understand this Psalm will be seen in the way we are careful to worship Him with our praise as we become more and more aware that everywhere we look, we gaze upon evidence in our lives that God is really good, and that His mercy endures forever.