

Quarter one: The Book of Psalms

Lesson 7—“Your Mercy Reaches Unto the Heavens”

Sunday: His Mercy Endures Forever

February 11, 2024

- **Last Week:** “I Will Arise”
 - Injustice & oppression in this world & God’s divine judgment bringing deliverance to the oppressed & destruction to the wicked

- **This Week:** “Your Mercy Reaches Unto the Heavens”
- 3 points to this week:
 - 1. We are sinful and spiritually bereft
 - Poor & needy
 - In need of forgiveness & grace

 - 2. Our God is faithful
 - His mercy (*hesed* = lovingkindness) endures forever
 - He is faithful to His covenant with us, His people
 - He forgives
 - He cleanses & restores
 - He keeps covenant with His people
 - He is good and greatly to be praised

 - 3. We respond to His love & forgiveness
 - Repentance & confession of sin
 - Praise & adoration for who is He and what He’s done for us
 - Worship Him
 - Commitment to serve this God who has been so faithful to us
 - We serve Him out of love

Memory Text: “I will praise You, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing to You among the nations. For Your mercy reaches unto the heavens, and Your truth unto the clouds.” (Ps 57:9, 10, NKJV)

The week in brief:

- 1. **Sunday:** His Mercy Endures Forever (Jill)
 - Ps 136 – God’s mercy in creation & history & to the world inspires faith & trust & faithfulness in His people
- 2. **Monday:** Create in Me a Clean Heart (SQ)
 - Ps 51 – God’s forgiveness & cleansing & recreation of our hearts
- 3. **Tuesday:** If You, Lord, Should Mark Iniquities (Daniel)
 - Ps 130 – God’s forgiveness for personal & corporate sin which leads to worship
- 4. **Wednesday:** Praise to the Majestic & Merciful God (John D)
 - Ps 113 & 123 – God’s majesty & transcendence contrasted with his mercy & immanence
- 5. **Thursday:** Forget Not All His Benefits (James)
 - Ps 103 – Praise & thanksgiving to God for who He is & what He’s done for us

Sunday: His Mercy Endures Forever

Ps 136

- Book 5 of the Psalms = Psalms 107 – 150
 - Compositional theme = the restoration of Israel during the postexilic period
- Psalm 135 & 136 = twin Psalms
 - Like Ps 56 & 57 / 111 & 112
 - Both Psalms review the history of Israel & God’s divine kingship
 - Both Psalms constitute the “Great Hallel” (Hallel = “praise”) / means “great praise”
 - Ps 136 = concluding hymn of the Great Hallel
 - Ps 113 – 118 = Passover Hallel
 - Ps 146 – 150 = Final Hallel
- Psalm 136
 - Literary structure
 - Antiphonal refrain line = “For His **mercy** endures forever”
 - Mercy = *hesed* = loving kindness; mercy; steadfast love; God’s covenant love
 - 26 verses in Ps 136
 - Phrase occurs once per verse – 26 times in the chapter
 - Antiphonal means alternate singing by two choirs or singers
 - Outline:
 - Introduction = Vs 1 – 3
 - 3-fold summons to praise the Lord
 - Conclusion = Vs 26
 - Middle = 22 verses, similar to the acrostic structure, yet is not alphabetic
- **Introduction** (Vs 1 – 3)
 - Vs 1 – “Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is **good**; for His mercy endures forever.”
 - **We praise Him for who He is**
 - (He is good)
 - Not just what we want – or what we’ve received
 - Praise is for **who** He is
 - Vs 2 – “Oh, give thanks to the God of gods! For His mercy endures forever.”
 - **We praise Him because He is above all**
 - Our God is omnipotent (all powerful) – sees all
 - Omniscient (all knowing) – knows all
 - Omnipresent (everywhere at once) –? all
 - Eternal (from everlasting to everlasting) –? all
 - Creator /Recreator (*bara* = something from nothing) – creates all
 - Sustainer – sustains all
 - Vs 3 – “Oh, give thanks to the Lord of lords! For His mercy endures forever.”
 - God of gods & Lord of lords = Hebrew idiom that means “the greatest God”

- Not that there are other gods, but that He is the only God
 - **We praise Him because He is everything to us**
 - Nobody else beside Him
 - Ps 73:25, 26 – “Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You. (26) My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”
- **Creation (Vs 4 – 9)**
 - Vs 4 – “To Him who alone does great wonders, For His mercy endures forever;”
 - **Our God can do anything**
 - Vs 5 – “To Him who by wisdom made the heavens, for His mercy endures forever;”
 - Vs 6 – “To Him who laid out the earth above the waters, for His mercy endures forever;”
 - **Our God is our Creator**
 - Vs 7 – “To Him who made great lights, for His mercy endures forever—”
 - Vs 8 – “The sun to rule by day, for His mercy endures forever;”
 - Vs 9 – “the moon and stars to rule by night, for His mercy endures forever.”
 - **Our God is our Sustainer**
 - He made the earth & filled it
 - He set it in motion and sustains it by His mighty hand
- **The Exodus (Vs 10 – 15)**
 - Vs 10 – “To Him who struck Egypt in their firstborn, for His mercy endures forever;”
 - **Our God is our Defender**
 - He defends His people
 - Vs 11 – “And brought out Israel from among them, For His mercy endures forever;”
 - **Our God is our Deliverer**
 - Brought Israel out of bondage
 - Us out of the bondage of sin
 - Vs 12 – “With a strong hand, and with an outstretched arm, for His mercy endures forever;”
 - Vs 13 – “To Him who divided the Red Sea in two, for His mercy endures forever;”
 - Vs 14 – “And made Israel pass through the midst of it, for His mercy endures forever;”
 - Vs 15 – “But overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea, for His mercy endures forever”
 - **Our God works miracles**
 - He can divide the Red Sea
 - He can cast out your enemy from before you
 - He can bring you to the other side on dry ground
- **The Conquest (Vs 16 – 22)**
 - Vs 16 – “To Him who led His people through the wilderness, for His mercy endures forever;”
 - **Our God is our Guide**
 - Take us through the wilderness – sin, sickness, doubt, confusion

- Vs 17 – “To Him who struck down great kings, for His mercy endures forever;
 - **Our God fights our battles**
 - 2 Chron 20:17 – “You shall not need to fight in this battle; set yourselves, stand still & see the salvation of the Lord with you...”
- Vs 18 – “And slew famous kings, for His mercy endures forever—”
- Vs 19 – “Sihon king of the Amorites, for His mercy endures forever;”
- Vs 20 – “And Og king of Bashan, for His mercy endures forever—”
 - **Our God judges the wicked**
 - Psalms lament: “How long, oh Lord?”
 - How long will the wicked prosper & the righteous be oppressed?
 - How long until wrongs are righted?
 - How long until you bring judgment?
 - Rom 12:19 – Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord
- Vs 21 – “And gave their land as a heritage, for His mercy endures forever;”
- Vs 22 – “A heritage to Israel His servant, for His mercy endures forever.”
 - **Our God blesses the righteous**
 - Received the land from the wicked, as an inheritance
 - Righteous receive inheritance from the wicked
 - Prov 13:22b – “...the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous.”
- **Care for the World / Everyone (Vs 23 – 25)**
 - Vs 23 – “Who remembered us in our lowly state, for His mercy endures forever;”
 - **Our God never forgets us**
 - Isa 49:16 – “See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands...”
 - We may feel forgotten
 - Left alone / neglected
 - **Never** forgotten by God
 - Vs 24 – “And rescued us from our enemies, for His mercy endures forever;”
 - **Our God delivers us**
 - Vs 25 – “Who gives food to all flesh, for His mercy endures forever.”
 - **Our God provides for us and feeds us**
 - Physical & spiritual food
- **Conclusion (Vs 26)**
 - Vs 26 – “Oh, give thanks to the God of heaven! For His mercy endures forever.”
- **3 takeaways**
 - **Takeaway #1: Our God never changes**
 - His *hesed* – lovingkindness / steadfast love / mercy endures forever
 - Nothing we can do to alter His covenant love toward us
 - **Takeaway #2: Praise Him, regardless of the circumstances**
 - Choose to praise, no matter
 - What’s happening
 - How you feel

- **Takeaway #3: Remember past victories**
 - When your faith is weak, remind yourself of what He's done in the past

Lesson 8: Wisdom for Righteous Living