

Scripture: Psalm 136:1-26

Message: Evidence of Enduring Love

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Thanksgiving Day

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There is a scene in the play/movie "Fiddler on the Roof" where Tevya and his wife are quietly resting in bed. Suddenly Tevya asks his wife, "Do you love me?" She can't imagine why he would ask such a question. After 25 years of making his meals, washing his clothes, etc., etc., why would he even have to ask if she loves him? But Tevya has come to see that love is more than only doing things for the other person. Love is acceptance and commitment and giving of oneself for the sake of the other person. And that is part of what is behind his question, "Do you love me?" And Golda, his wife, on thinking this through, says, "I suppose I do."

Have you ever thought of asking that question of God: Do you love me? Or does it sound like heresy to suggest asking that. Like Golda, we are quick to respond that, of course, God loves us. After all these years of believing and worshiping, why would anyone think different.

And it's true. God loves us. There is no need to question or doubt that. Still, it is good to remind ourselves of his love and how that love is expressed. The Israelites would come to the temple in Jerusalem on a regular basis to worship God. Some time in the year, Psalm 136 was part of their worship. Some people suggest that it was recited at the time of harvest because of v. 25, which refers to the blessing of food that God provides. Whenever it was used, we find here a regular reminder from the Israelite worship of who God is, of what he has done and what that means for our relationship with him.

God is good, and he is great. There is no one greater. That's an important starting point. We don't give thanks to God because our parents or our government says so. We give thanks because he is the only one who deserves our thanks. There is no one else, no other god, no other power in all creation that is in control of how things operate. There is no one else who deserves the credit for what we see and have and enjoy.

Therefore we give thanks to *God*.

He is the Creator. He brought this creation into being, giving it the order which we see around us. He made stars and dirt, water and sunshine, day and night, spring and fall, seeds and flowers. There is no chance or uncontrolled development of creation. It is made and governed by one God, who is Lord over all.

As the Lord over all, he does things with a purpose. He made this world for his glory. He works in this world for the purpose of bringing his people into a relationship with himself. He is our Redeemer. He bought us from the power of Satan and restored us as his people.

And so he defeats his enemies and works miracles. This isn't just for the fun of it or for a little game with nature. It is to show his love to his people. It is to receive the worship and

thanks and praise of his people.

In this Thanksgiving season, we can list a whole bunch of things we are thankful for. We typically spend time thinking of what God has done and why we are thankful. And that is good to do that. We need that reminder. This psalm was that reminder of what God had done.

But listing all those things that God has done and thanking him is not enough. We must take the next step which is to realize that all these things that God does for us tells us something about himself. He does these things for a purpose. It is not just to make our life easier. It is not to make us feel guilty for not saying thank you enough. It is to make us realize more and more what kind of a God we have. As we give thanks for what God has done, we must also consider what this reveals to us about God.

He is good.

He is the God of gods.

He is the Lord of lords.

His love endures forever.

His love endures forever.

We need to remind ourselves of that often. Whenever good things happen, we can easily thank God. But when we struggle, we easily doubt. But if we keep telling ourselves, "His love endures forever," we never have to get stuck in the rut of doubt. Sure we may struggle with feeling God's love in tough times. But we can *know* his love endures forever. After all, remember all the good things God is and does?

He remembered us in our low estate. Even while we were sinners, God loved us. He sent his Son, Jesus, to bring us out of that low estate, that being dead in sin.

He freed us from our enemies. He delivered us from evil and from the power of the devil himself.

He gives food to every creature. We have all that we need, our daily bread, and so much more.

Why? Because his love endures forever.

That's the kind of God we have. We have a loving God. His love never fails. He has shown it in many ways. And he will continue to do so.

The psalm ends as it began. Give thanks to the God of heaven. He is the one in charge. He is the one over all things. He is the only one who can make things happen in our lives. He is the only one worthy of our trust. His love for us endures forever. Therefore he is the only one who deserves our thanks and praise.

His love endures forever. See what God has done? Give thanks, yes. But also see what it tells you about God, about who he is. And rejoice that he loves you, with a love that will never fail.

Amen.