

Psalm 136

Evening Prayer Monday Week 4

A hymn of joyous admiration which finds expression in wave after wave of jubilant thanksgiving. It is possible that the litany form with the assembly proclaiming after each statement 'for his kindness endures forever' was used with a variety of repeated responses in other psalms, without appearing in the text. The history of Israel is part of Jesus' history and so the history of his disciples. We can sing this hymn thinking also of the Passover effected by Jesus, and the many wonderful ways in which God has proved victorious in the obstacles that have faced us on our journey to the fullness of communion with God.

Part One. Invitation to admire and thank God

**¹O give thanks to YHWH*, for he is good,
for his kindness* endures forever**

The response appears in other places in the Bible:

Praise YH! O give thanks to YHWH, for he is good; for his kindness endures forever.

– Psalm 106:1

Give thanks to YHWH, for he is good; for his kindness endures forever.

– Psalm 107:1

Give thanks to YHWH, for he is good; his kindness endures forever!

– Psalm 118:1

The voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voices of those who sing, as they bring thank offerings to the house of YHWH: 'Give thanks to YHWH of hosts, for YHWH is good, for his kindness endures forever!' For I will restore the fortunes of the land as at first, says YHWH.

– Jeremiah 33:11

They sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to YHWH, 'For he is good, for his kindness endures forever toward Israel.' And all the people responded with a great shout when they praised YHWH, because the foundation of the house of YHWH was laid.

– Ezra 3:11

It was the duty of the trumpeters and singers to make themselves heard in unison in praise and thanksgiving to YHWH, and when the song was raised, with trumpets and cymbals and other musical instruments, in praise to YHWH, 'For he is good, for his kindness endures forever,' the house, the house of YHWH, was filled with a cloud.

– 2Chronicles 5:13

When all the people of Israel saw the fire come down and the glory of YHWH on the temple, they bowed down on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and worshipped and gave thanks to YHWH, saying, 'For he is good, for his kindness endures forever.

– 2Chronicles 7:3

On their return Judas and his soldiers sang hymns and praises to heaven - 'For he is good, for his mercy endures forever'.

– 1Maccabees 4:24

Part One. Invitation to admire and thank God

- ¹O give thanks to YHWH*, for he is good,
for his kindness* endures forever.
²O give thanks to the God of gods,
for his kindness endures forever.
³O give thanks to YHWH of lords,
for his kindness endures forever;

Part Two. Cosmic Reflection

Compare Proverbs 8 and Genesis 1

- ⁴who alone does great wonders,
for his kindness endures forever;
⁵who by understanding made the heavens,
for his kindness endures forever;
⁶who spread out the earth on the waters,
for his kindness endures forever;
⁷who made the great lights,
for his kindness endures forever;
⁸the sun to rule over the day,
for his kindness endures forever;
⁹the moon and stars to rule over the night,
for his kindness endures forever;

Part Three. Historic Reflection

The focus is on God's overcoming violent opposition

- ¹⁰who struck Egypt through their first born,
for his kindness endures forever;
¹¹and brought Israel out from among them,
for his kindness endures forever;
¹²with a strong hand and an outstretched arm,
for his kindness endures forever;
¹³who divided the Red Sea in two,
for his kindness endures forever;
¹⁴and made Israel pass through,
for his kindness endures forever;
¹⁵overthrowing Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea,
for his kindness endures forever;
¹⁶who led his people through the wilderness,
for his kindness endures forever;
¹⁷who struck down great kings,
for his kindness endures forever;
¹⁸and killed famous rulers,
for his kindness endures forever;

¹⁹Sihon, king of the Amorites,
for his kindness endures forever;
²⁰and Og, king of Bashan,
for his kindness endures forever;
²¹and gave their land as a heritage,
for his kindness endures forever;
²²a heritage to his servant Israel,
for his kindness endures forever.

Part Four. Additional verses

²³He remembered us in our low estate,
for his kindness endures forever;
²⁴and rescued us from our foes,
for his kindness endures forever;
²⁵who gives food to all flesh,
for his kindness endures forever.

Part Five. Conclusion

²⁶O give thanks to the God of heaven,
for his kindness endures forever.