

Sermon Handout

Give Thanks to the Triune God

Psalm 136:1-9

I. A Litany – A Repeated Phrase in Each Verse

- a. “For everlasting is his mercy” (lit. transl.)
 - i. Used also in Ps 106:1; 107:1; 118:1 (YHWH in each case)
 - ii. Used at dedication of God’s Temple II Chron 7:3, 6
 - iii. Used in the Song of Jehoshaphat II Chron 20:20-21
- b. Teaches us to celebrate the gracious gifts of God.

It is a summons to sing God’s praises.
- c. Is this “vain repetition?”
 - i. Jesus’ warning in Mt 6:5-8
 1. “as the heathen” **not** “as the Psalmist of old” *cf.* Col 3:16
 2. Prayer is not about displaying our religiosity.
 - ii. Jesus does not condemn repeated supplication
 1. Lk 18:1-8 “this type of faith” (v. 8)
 2. Lk 18:9-14 (*esp.* v. 13) Pharisee vs. publican
- d. vv. 1-4 form a prelude to the remainder of Psalm 136
 - i. “the Psalmist declares God’s supreme Deity & dominion” -Calvin
 - ii. The Lord is the only true source of “Great Wonders” v. 4

We therefore acknowledge his enduring mercies.

II. The Wonders of His Work of Creation

- a. By wisdom he made the heavens v. 5 (Gen 1:1)
 - i. Jer 10:12; Prov 3:19-20; Ps 104:24; *cf.* Isa 40:28
 - ii. Jesus: The Active Agent in creation Col 1:16 *cf.* 2:3
- b. He separated the land from the water v. 6 (Gen 1:9-10)
 - i. Habitation of the waters Gen 1:20-22
 - ii. Habitation of the land (earth) Gen 1:24-26
- c. He made great lights vv. 7-9 (Gen 1:14-18)
 - i. Sun, planets, moon, stars for signs, seasons, days, years
 - ii. To give light on the earth (vv. 15, 17)
 - iii. Sun and moon to **rule** over day and night (vv. 16, 18)
- d. In all this we are to praise God for his enduring mercy.

III. Lessons for the Church

- a. Liturgical repetition is sanctioned by the Word.
- b. Importunity in private prayer in faith is encouraged.
- c. Thanks and praise are essential elements in our approach to God.