First Baptist Church Merritt Island
Executive Pastor Carey Dean
November 23, 2025
IN THE SCHOOL OF PRAYER
Forever Good. Forever Faithful. Always Thankful.
Psalm 136

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This morning, we are concluding a 6-week series on prayer from the life of Jesus. Let's begin with a responsive reading from Psalm 136.

PSALM 136
Leader: ***Give thanks to the LORD,***

Congregation: ***For He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever.***

Give Thanks to the God of gods
Leader: ***Give thanks to the God of gods. Give thanks to the Lord of lords. To Him who alone does great wonders, to Him who by understanding made the heavens, to Him who spread out the earth above the waters, to Him who made the great lights, the sun to rule over the day, the moon and stars to rule over the night,***

Congregation: ***For His steadfast love endures forever.***

Give Thanks to the LORD (Yahweh)
Leader: ***To Him who struck down the firstborn of Egypt, and brought Israel out from among them, with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, to Him who divided the Red Sea in two, and made Israel pass through the midst of it, but overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea,***

Congregation: ***For His steadfast love endures forever.***

Give Thanks to the Lord of lords
Leader: ***To Him who led His people through the wilderness, to Him who struck down great kings, and killed mighty kings, Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, and gave their land as a heritage, a heritage to Israel His servant,***

Congregation: ***For His steadfast love endures forever.***

Give Thanks to the God of heaven
Leader: ***It is He who remembered us in our low estate, and rescued us from our foes, He who gives food to all flesh, give thanks to the God of heaven,***

Congregation: ***For His steadfast love endures forever.***

In 2014, a University of Texas commencement speech by US Navy Admiral William McRaven went viral. The speaker told the graduates that the most important thing they could do each morning was one thing.

He said, “If you want to change the world, start by making your bed.” Now if the hope of the world depended on my daughter’s bed being made when she was growing up, we would have been left to raise the white flag.

But Scripture gives us something deeper. Something that doesn’t just prepare your day but changes your heart. Before anything else, before the noise, before the worries begin to invade, begin the day thankful.

This week of Thanksgiving is the perfect time to start a new way to begin your day. Earlier in the service you were part of reading our text for the morning: Psalm 136.

For Israel, Psalm 136 is a very special psalm and is known as *the Great Hallel.* It isn’t called “great” because of its length, but because of its themes of who God is and the mighty acts of His steadfast love.

Can you imagine millions of people proclaiming together,

Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; for His steadfast love endures forever. (Psalm 136:1)

This opening line gives us two Hebrew words that were the reasons Israel gave thanks, and they are our reasons too:

1. God is good — tov. It is who He is. Good in all his ways.
2. And His steadfast love endures forever — hesed. It is how His goodness moves toward His people. Covenant loyalty. Unfailing mercy. Enduring kindness. A love that never lets go.

Tov and hesed are the foundation of Psalm 136.

So, let’s begin where the psalm begins: Give thanks to the God of Creation. Because sometimes the clearest place to see His goodness is right in front of us, in the world He made.

<u>GIVE THANKS to the God of Creation (136:2-9)</u>

1. God’s Goodness Invites Awe

When was the last time God’s creation stopped you in your tracks? Maybe the day was so busy that you couldn't catch your breath until a sunset painted the heavens before you.

Or maybe you woke up and the day felt too heavy before it even began until you went outside and saw the sunrise shining forth its light. Both moments draw you back to what you were made for—worship. No one had to tell you what to do. Your heart moved from admiring creation to worshiping the Creator.

Before the psalm tells us what God has done, it tells us who He is.

"Give thanks to the God of gods…" (v. 2)

Thanksgiving doesn't begin with our blessings; it begins with the God who gives them.

2. God's Goodness Declares His Glory

This God—the God of gods—is the One who:

"does great wonders…" (v. 4)
"by understanding made the heavens…" (v. 5)
"spread out the earth above the waters…" (v.6)
"made the great lights…" (v.7)
"He made the sun to rule the day…" (v. 8)
"The moon and stars to rule the night…" (v. 9)

God created everything, not from chaos, but with wisdom, purpose, and beauty. And the psalm wants you to see that this is not mere power, this is God's steadfast love, His covenant mercy.

The God who holds creation together has not and cannot forget His people. He holds the world in His hands and yet He sees you, He knows you, and He will not let you go.

3. God's Goodness Reveals The Son

Standing on this side of the cross, we see even more than the psalmist could see. The One who made the world has now entered it.

"Through Him all things were made…" (John 1:3)
"In Him all things hold together…" (Col. 1:17)

The Son of God did not remain distant; He drew near to you. The same God who once said, "Let there be light," now says, "I am the Light of the World." This is the God of gods. And His steadfast love endures forever. So, when you step outside tonight and see the sunset or when you rise tomorrow and see the sunrise

Let it remind you: the One who holds the sun, moon, and stars, still holds you.

Prayer: "Give thanks…"

Let’s take a moment to give thanks to the God of Creation, for the wisdom of His world, the beauty of His order, and the Son through whom it all holds together.

GIVE THANKS to the LORD of Redemption

But the psalm doesn’t stop with creation and neither does God’s goodness. It bows before the LORD of redemption. Psalm 136:10–16 takes us straight into the heart of Israel’s story; the moment when God’s covenant love refused to leave His people in bondage.

1. The LORD's Steadfast Love brings His People Out

“He brought Israel out… with a strong hand and an outstretched arm.” (v. 11-12)
“He divided the Red Sea in two…” (v. 13)
“He made Israel pass through the midst of it…” (v. 14)

God’s covenant love acted. This was HIs power. The Red Sea obeyed His word and parted to bring His people out. Israel didn’t escape because they were strong. They escaped because His love would not leave them where they were.

2. The LORD's Steadfast Love Silences the Oppressor

“But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea…” (v. 15)

The waters closed over Pharaoh’s army. This was God's justice. Covenant love protects the oppressed. Covenant love confronts evil. God did not simply free His people; He silenced their oppressor.

3. The LORD's Steadfast Love Leads His People Through

“He led His people through the wilderness.” (v. 16)

His love did more than bring them out. His love brought them through. For forty years in the wilderness, He fed them. He dwelled with them. Not once did His covenant love fail. This was God’s mercy**.**

And Israel’s story is not the only one. Every generation has seen His goodness and His steadfast love, because His love endures forever. Redemption has a history. And that history leads straight to Jesus.

Christ Revealed in Redemption

And today, standing on this side of the cross, this history becomes our forever thanksgiving. The LORD who brought Israel out of Egypt has brought us out of a deeper captivity. And Paul tells us the same three realities—mercy, justice, and power—come together in the cross of Christ.

Colossians 2:13–15 holds all three of these truths.

1. Colossians 2:13 — MERCY
“And you, who were dead in your trespasses …God made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our trespasses.” This is the mercy of Christ.

2. Colossians 2:14 — JUSTICE
“He canceled the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This He set aside, nailing it to the cross.” This is the justice of Christ.

3. Colossians 2:15 — POWER
“He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in Him.” This is the power of Christ.

If the mercy, justice, and power of Jesus has redeemed you, give thanks to the LORD of redemption, for He is good. Give thanks because His love brought you out, and His love will bring you through.

<u>GIVE THANKS to the Lord of Inheritance</u>

But the goodness of the Lord didn’t stop after bringing His people out of Egypt or leading them through the wilderness. His steadfast love brings them into a place of promise.

The LORD did not redeem Israel only to leave them wandering. He brought them into the land He had promised, a place to call home. He drove out mighty kings. He prepared the land and His people.

And He gave Israel an inheritance because His covenant love would not rest until His promise to Abraham became reality. That land became the place where the Promised One would come.

Standing on this side of the cross, we see even more. Christ came not only to bring us out of our Egypt and walk with us through our wilderness but to bring us into something far greater than any land could offer.

Through His coming, His dying, and His rising, He gives us a new identity, and an assured future, and a place to belong forever. This is the goodness of God.

“Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken.” (Hebrews 12:28)

Church, give thanks to the Lord of our inheritance. Give thanks because He brought you out, He brought you through, and in Christ Jesus, He has brought you into Himself.

GIVE THANKS to the God of Daily Mercy

And the psalm ends with something beautifully ordinary. The goodness of God is not only seen in the big moments, His goodness cares for us every day. Psalm 136 ends in a beautifully simple way:

"He who gives food to all flesh, for His steadfast love endures forever." (Psalm 136:25)

The God of gods, the great I AM, the Lord of lords is also the God of heaven who sees and sustains you. The first two words of the psalm form the refrain of the entire sermon: "Give thanks." Give thanks to the God of Creation.

When you see the sunset tonight or the sunrise tomorrow, pause. Let creation turn your heart toward its Creator. Give thanks to the LORD of Redemption. Take a moment this week to remember what He brought you out of and who He brought you to.

Give thanks to the Lord of Inheritance. Tell Him "thank You" for the identity you now have in Christ, beloved, forgiven, His. And give thanks to the God of daily mercy. When you sit down to any meal this week, pray a simple prayer of gratitude: "Lord, You see me. You sustain me. Thank You."

Before we close, I want to speak to a different kind of heart in this room. You haven't seen the Creator in the sunrise. You don't feel free or like you belong anywhere. And you wonder if this God could ever remember you. Hear the words of our psalm this morning—

"It is He who remembered us in our low estate, for His steadfast love endures forever." (Psalm 136:23)

What does that mean? His love remembers you at your lowest. Not after you change. Not after you get stronger. He loved you first. And He will always love you.

If today you sense Him calling your heart to Christ, to free you from sin's captivity, and bring you into His forgiveness, we would be honored to pray with you after the service.

Church, we began this morning by reading Psalm 136 together. Now we end with an even louder praise because the fullness of His goodness and the greatness of His steadfast love is found in Christ crucified, Christ risen, and Christ in us, the hope of glory.

CLOSING RESPONSIVE READING

Give Thanks to Christ, Our Creator
Leader: Christ is the Word through whom all things were made, He stretched out the heavens and formed the earth, He set the sun to govern the day, He appointed the moon and stars to rule the night.

Congregation: ***For His steadfast love endures forever.***

Give Thanks to Christ, Our Redeemer
Leader: Christ bore our sin in His body on the tree, He shed His blood to redeem us from death, He rose in power to conquer the grave, He leads His people from death to life.

Congregation: ***For His steadfast love endures forever.***

Give Thanks to Christ, Our Portion
Leader: Christ brought us near and made us His own, He gave us an inheritance that will not fade, He grants us a kingdom that cannot be shaken, He is our portion, our peace, and our rest.

Congregation: ***For His steadfast love endures forever.***

Give Thanks to Christ, Our Shepherd
Leader: Christ remembers us in our weakness, He walks with us through every valley, He feeds us with living bread from heaven, He holds us fast and will never let go.

Congregation: ***Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good. For His steadfast love endures forever.***