

# *Pentecost Sunday School Lessons*

## *Sermon Series: "Psalms of the Spirit"*

**Date:** June 15<sup>th</sup>

**Topic:** Love

**Open with prayer**

**Before reading...**

*What does it mean to love regardless of the circumstance?*

**Main Scripture: Psalm 136:1-9, 21-26 (verses 10-20 optional)**

*(Reading on page two)*

**Opening Questions:**

- What is the main point of this Psalm?
- How does the "...love endures forever" refrain center the theme of the Psalm?
- Why do you think the Psalmist is so insistent on the persistence of God's love?

**Some history on...Endures forever:**

The Hebrew bible's main narrative theme is that of the "Promise of the Land". From Abraham through Isaac and Jacob to the building of the nation of Israel, the Hebrew people believed that the essential promise of God to them was that they could have a land of their own. Through enslavement, war, isolation, and destruction the overarching belief in this promise held firm. The idea was rooted in the belief that God's love was somehow transcendent and everlasting to the Hebrew people. Even when the nation collapsed and the people taken prisoner into Assyria and Babylon, the persistence of this belief led to a reevaluation of the teachings of the Jewish religion, leading to synagogue worship. Even if they could not be physically in the land of the promise, they could be there spiritually. For the Jewish people of Hebrew bible (and the Psalmist) God's love endured forever because of the eternal nature of God's promise.

1. How does this history affect your reading of the Psalm?
2. When have you reevaluated your faith in light of life events?
3. Are there any groups in today's society that have similar stories to the Jewish people?

**Scripture commentary:**

A frequent Psalm used in hymn and praise writing, Psalm 136 tells the story of the nation of Israel (and in many respects the history of humanity) from the beginning of time through the present and into the future. From the very creation of the universe through to the promises of God's final victory, the Psalmist tags each verse with the refrain, "[God's] love endures forever." The Psalm functions as a poetic narrative mentioning the rise of the Israel, battles that have been fought, leaders and prophets, and to theological understandings of whom and what God is. More importantly, the Psalm is a kind of testimony for the Psalmist as well: if God can remain faithful and loving through all the trials and issues regarding humanity and the nation, then God will certainly remain faithful to individuals in their walk of life.

- How does the narrative nature of this Psalm teach us about human struggle?
- Why do you think the Psalmist mentions aspects throughout all of history?
- How does the poetry emphasize the Psalmists thoughts about God?

### Reflection:

“[God’s] love endures forever...” One of the central truths of Judeo-Christian beliefs is that the love of the creating God supersedes any other aspect of the human divine relationship. Throughout the walk of daily life, the one certainty persons can rely upon is the assurance of God’s affection. The Psalmist not only reasserts this strong belief, but implores the people of God to remember and proclaim the refrain over and over again: “[God’s] love endures forever...” For the modern reader, the idea may seem overstated and an established matter of doctrine, however, this is many times not lived out in one’s walk of faith. To truly believe that God’s love endures forever is to share that love with all whom someone encounters. By living out the message of the Psalmist, the Holy Spirit can then be made known as a new testimony.

- How do you live out God’s enduring love?
- How is sharing God’s love a testimony?
- What is comforting about the assurance of God’s affection?

### Closing:

Consider this question:

*What does it mean to love regardless of the circumstance?*

Close with prayer.

## Psalm 136:1-9, 21-26

<sup>1</sup>O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.

<sup>2</sup>O give thanks to the God of gods, for his steadfast love endures forever.

<sup>3</sup>O give thanks to the Lord of lords, for his steadfast love endures forever;

<sup>4</sup>who alone does great wonders, for his steadfast love endures forever;

<sup>5</sup>who by understanding made the heavens, for his steadfast love endures forever;

<sup>6</sup>who spread out the earth on the waters, for his steadfast love endures forever;

<sup>7</sup>who made the great lights, for his steadfast love endures forever;

<sup>8</sup>the sun to rule over the day, for his steadfast love endures forever;

<sup>9</sup>the moon and stars to rule over the night, for his steadfast love endures forever;

<sup>21</sup>and gave their land as a heritage, for his steadfast love endures forever;

<sup>22</sup>a heritage to his servant Israel, for his steadfast love endures forever.

<sup>23</sup>It is he who remembered us in our low estate, for his steadfast love endures forever;

<sup>24</sup>and rescued us from our foes, for his steadfast love endures forever;

<sup>25</sup>who gives food to all flesh, for his steadfast love endures forever.

<sup>26</sup>O give thanks to the God of heaven, for his steadfast love endures forever.