

## The consistency of Christ:

### Introduction:

As a church we do communion once or twice a month on a Sunday evening.

But this Easter Sunday morning, I would like for us to do it as a church family.

Turn with me to Psalms 136.

It is a very interesting Psalm, written in a very interesting way. It is written in a declarative or call and response way.

John Gill believes that it was written by David and given to the Levities to sing every day in the temple.

The levities would make a statement, reminding people of all that their God had done and the people would respond as one voice declaring the goodness and greatness of God.

Let's try it...let's get a little bit Lutheran here!

*Psalms 136:1-9 ESV*

*(1) Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.*

*(2) Give thanks to the God of gods, for his steadfast love endures forever.*

*(3) Give thanks to the Lord of lords, for his steadfast love endures forever;*

Great the first part declares the greatness and wonder of our God. This next part declares His wonder in creation.

*(4) To him who alone does great wonders, for his steadfast love endures forever;*

*(5) To him who by understanding made the heavens, for his steadfast love endures forever;*

- (6) To him who spread out the earth above the waters, for his steadfast love endures forever;*
- (7) To him who made the great lights, for his steadfast love endures forever;*
- (8) The sun to rule over the day, for his steadfast love endures forever;*
- (9) The moon and stars to rule over the night, for his steadfast love endures forever;*

Then it goes on and talks about His faithfulness to the children of Israel.

*Psalms 136:10-22 ESV*

- (10) To him who struck down the firstborn of Egypt, for his steadfast love endures forever;*
- (11) And brought Israel out from among them, for his steadfast love endures forever;*
- (12) With a strong hand and an outstretched arm, for his steadfast love endures forever;*
- (13) To him who divided the Red Sea in two, for his steadfast love endures forever;*
- (14) And made Israel pass through the midst of it, for his steadfast love endures forever;*
- (15) But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea, for his steadfast love endures forever;*
- (16) To him who led his people through the wilderness, for his steadfast love endures forever;*
- (17) To him who struck down great kings, for his steadfast love endures forever;*
- (18) And killed mighty kings, for his steadfast love endures forever;*
- (19) Sihon, king of the Amorites, for his steadfast love endures forever;*
- (20) And Og, king of Bashan, for his steadfast love endures forever;*
- (21) And gave their land as a heritage, for his steadfast love endures forever;*
- (22) A heritage to Israel his servant, for his steadfast love endures forever.*

But then right at the end there is this change in the expression and tenor of the psalm.

*Psalms 136:23-26 ESV*

*(23) It is he who remembered us in our low estate, for his steadfast love endures forever;*

*(24) And rescued us from our foes, for his steadfast love endures forever;*

*(25) He who gives food to all flesh, for his steadfast love endures forever.*

*(26) Give thanks to the God of heaven, for his steadfast love endures forever.*

David is no longer talking about what was done to them and for them as a people, but about what will be done and what has been promised for a future age.

The entire song is meant to speak of the goodness and greatness of our God.

The mercy and faithfulness of our God.

That all blessings, all grace flows out from Him.

*, for his steadfast love endures forever.*

And the Hebrew words for this phrase means

*“..For his tender mercy is to the coming age”.*

Adam Clarke in his commentary says that he believes it was a prophetic psalm, a declaration and display of God's compassion and the redemption of the world through the Lord Jesus Christ.

You see this love, this mercy; this grace is not dependant upon you and me.

It is not dependant upon what we do or what we have done.  
This love is independent of us and not dependant upon us, this love endures forever.

### **Remembering where they had come from:**

One of the great things I find in this psalm is that the children of Israel remembered where they had come from.

They declared their sin...and then the grace and mercies of God.

They declared their mistakes...and then the grace and mercies of God.

The declared their season of lack...then the grace and mercies of God.

They remembered the enemies and obstacles set before them...and then the grace and mercies of God.

We don't do that today.

We don't do remembrance well at all.

People want to hide their mistakes.

Cover up their errors.

Not talk about their failures.

We are not only concerned any more about our reputation

We are concerned about our brand.

I see this in people all the time.

They come to church, they collide with Christ and then about 2 years into their walk they say things to me like this....we have decided to leave the church because we want a fresh start.

We want to go somewhere where people don't know our mistakes or our sins and where we can start again.

They don't want to remember.

They don't want to declare over their past the glory and greatness of God, they want to deny that they were ever a sinner.

Or that they ever stumbled.

Or that they ever fell.

They want to hide the truth.

They want to re-launch their brand.

They don't want to remember the God of their deliverance; they want to worship the god of their self-righteousness and reputation.

These Jews, they were testifying.

They were declaring.

They were saying....we remember who we were and we remember that God loved us in spite of ourselves.

That to me is wonderful.

That to me is marvelous.

That to me is hope.

I don't have to pretend to have my stuff together, because His love endures forever.

I don't have to be fake or insincere, because His love endures forever.

I don't have to hide or run from Christ or Church if I stumble or fall,  
because his love endures forever.

You keep your pride; I'll keep my testimony...because His love  
endures forever.

You be a self made man, I am a God broken man...because HIS love  
endures forever.

You go your own way; I will follow in His footsteps...because His love  
endures forever.

You deny your past, I will pick up my cross...because His love  
endures for ever.

I find no shame in my past because in my past is my salvation.

That's what this psalm says to me.

In my past was my deliverance.

In my past was my redemption.

In my past was my forgiveness.

In my past was my justification.

In my past was my infilling.

In my past is proof that in my future, His love will endure forever.

All these things, these statements by David, they are memorials; they are altars to the faithfulness and the goodness of God.

I truly hope that some day God so grips your heart that you will stand and declare...I was an adulterer, but I repented...His love endures forever.

I was divorced; He has healed my heart... His love endures forever.

I had an abortion, His grace covers me...His love endures forever.

I was addicted to pornography, but now I am free... His love endures forever.

Don't you see the power in, the glory, the freedom from the restraints of the opinions of others and the condemnation of ourselves?

I was suicidal, now I live in hope... His love endures forever.

I was going to leave my wife; we have worked it out.... HIS love endures for ever.

I cheated on my husband, but he forgave me... His love endures for ever.

What great a price was paid for your redemption!

Surely we can be proud of all it has accomplished for us!

If the devil can convince you that people will not love you, that Christ can not forgive you, then satan has won the battle for your mind and your heart will very soon follow.

And it is just not the case....because His love endures forever.

## **The fear of the world today:**

We live in a world today that is gripped with a sense of fear, in some cases to the point of hopelessness. 75% of people in nation some study say they are in fear and dread of something.

Fear form terrorism

Fear of failure or success;

Fear of committing to a relationship;

Fear of surviving these uncertain economic times.

People are scared of social security.

They are scared of the deficit.

They are scare if the health care bill is passed; they are scared if it doesn't.

In a sense what they are scared of is the total lack of consistency that permeates every aspect of our lives.

They are scared of what tomorrow holds.

They are scared of the uncertain times.

They have no real anchor for their soul.

Scared for themselves, scared for their children.

In a changing world there is nothing compared to the faithfulness and consistency of the enduring love of God.

*Hebrews 13:8 ESV*

*(8) Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*

For those of us who have experienced His love, who know of His graceful embrace, these words are more than just a comfort to our soul, they are words of security, because they speak of His consistency.

It is the consistency of Christ with moves me at times more than anything else.

Consistency in His passion.  
Consistency in His mercy.  
Consistency in His forgiveness.  
Consistency in His treatment of people.  
Consistency in His standard.  
Consistency in His challenge.

Contrast that to the disciples.  
They had spent time.  
They had spent years.  
They had seen miracles/ wonders.

Judas betrays.  
They all sleep and don't pray.  
They all run in fear.  
They all deny they know Him.  
They all fail and fall away.

Yet, Jesus in spite of what was done to Him,

Despite the betrayal,  
The denial,  
The lies and accusation,  
The torture,  
The total misrepresentation of His life and work,

Looks at His accusers and says-  
"Father forgive them, they now not what they do"

This is the wonder of Our Savior!

This is the wonder of His love!

This is the wonder of His grace!

It is not only ever ending,  
But it is never changing.

It is consistent.

It is not predicated on your performance, but his eternal degree.

His love is every present.  
Ever saving.  
Ever forgiving.  
Ever moving.  
Ever available.

### **The meaning of communion:**

Friend to me, that is what communion means.

Communion in the very purest sense means His broken body and shed blood.

It represents the price paid for your sin, for my sin, for all sin.

It is the visible, ongoing representation of His love that endures forever

*Luke 22:19 ESV*

*(19) And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."*

Do this in remembrance of Me.

I want you to take bread and wine, when ever you are together, when ever feel the need. When ever life and circumstances strain your faith and you feel yourself waiver...and do this in remembrance of me.

Communion is the continual and consistent reminder of the love and grace of Jesus Christ down through the ages.

Communion is the continual and constant reminder of the fact that His love endures forever.

The wonder of communion to me is that regardless of how the church has strayed, regardless of how ministers have erred and their doctrine has become polluted, there is always the consistent reminder of all that Christ has done in communion.

Regardless of how fear filled and godless our society has become.

Regardless of how you and I struggle or how you and I battle.

Regardless of the cries of liberal theologians who deny the reality of our Christ...there is always communion.

We have these simple every day, easily accessible symbols of His ever lasting and all enduring love.

No matter what you face and what you go through there is the comfort in the consistence of the love of God.

His love does not change.  
His grace does not change.  
His forgiveness does not change.  
His hope does not change.

This is what communion means to us.

Friend, if you are not right with Christ, if you are not living worthy of His name, then this is a day of rejoicing for you.  
This is a time when you can.

## **He has risen:**

The story of the love of God does not end with the sacrifice of Christ, but the promise of His return.

*John 20:6-8 ESV*

*(6) Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there,*

*(7) and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself.*

*(8) Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed;*

Have you every wondered why the disciple John could look in at see a face cloth and the scripture declared that *he believed?*

He believed what?

He believed everything.

He saw and instantly knew he need not fear, he need not worry, Everything Jesus promised was true.

Early Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance.

She ran and found Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. She said, 'They have taken the Lord's body out of the tomb, and I don't know where they have put him!'

Peter and the other disciple ran to the tomb to see. The other disciple outran Peter and got there first. He stooped and looked in and saw the linen cloth lying there, but he didn't go in.

Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside. He also noticed the linen wrappings lying there, while the cloth that had covered Jesus' head was folded up and lying to the side.

This folded cloth has significant meaning.

The Roman guards were not there.

When they ran to the empty tomb they believed that grave robbers had stolen the body of Our Lord.

They thought that he had been moved either by the Jews or by the Romans.

But when they looked in and saw that the cloth surrounding his face and it had been neatly folded, they knew that this was not accident, this was no disappearance, and this was not a theft but a resurrection.

Everything He ever said would happen...happened.  
Which means that everything He ever said will happen, will happen.

Communion for me is not just about the remembrance of his death, but the promise of His return.

It is proof to me that everything HE said He would do, He has done and everything he said he WILL do, he will do.

Friend, He has risen.

Friend, He will return.

That is a promised that is renewed to us every time we take communion.

That is the promise that every Easter Sunday morning brings, and as done so for over 2000 years.