

**Psalm 116:1-9**  
**God listens to us**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

How often have you been talking to someone, and it becomes painfully obvious that they haven't listened to a word you have said? We get plenty of visual clues when someone is actually paying attention to us. We know when they're not really listening. Sometimes we might even be tempted to throw in a trick question to trap them, and then tell them off.

In today's psalm, we see the writer declare that the Lord hears his voice. And how does he know this? Because God bends down to listen. This is the image of an adult listening to a child. I'm sure many of you have been in that situation. If you want to show a child you are truly listening to them, you need to get down to their level. In the psalm, it's not an adult and a child, but God almighty, and a mortal human. But I think it paints us a very clear picture.

Even though God is the creator of the universe, and we are unable to fathom the depths of his wisdom, he still comes to us in ways that we can understand. The high king of heaven does bother to listen to his subjects. This is not something to just quickly gloss over. It is really quite astounding that we would matter enough to God to be heard. But on account of Christ Jesus, we do. God does hear our prayers. God does listen to our cries for mercy.

In the psalm, this knowledge leads to love for the Lord God and to endless prayers to him:

I love the Lord because he hears my voice and my prayer for mercy. Because he bends down to listen, I will pray as long as I have breath! (Psalm 116:1-2, NLT)

It makes sense that if we know someone does always bother to listen to us, then we are much more likely to repeatedly talk with them. But the psalm doesn't just leave it at that. The writer declares that not only does God listen, but God has been good to him, and God has saved him from death.

These multiple reasons for giving thanks become their testimony. The writer of the psalm begins with the phrase "I love the Lord" and then proceeds to bear witness to all the good that God has done that leads to this point. For us, it's also worth thinking about all that God has done for us. God gives us life, provides for our daily needs, calls us into community, and redeems us from all evil.

We could phrase it as Luther does in explaining the first article of the creed:

I believe that God has created me and all that exists. He has given me and still preserves my body and soul with all their powers. He provides me with food and clothing, home and family, daily work, and all I need from day to day. God also protects me in times of danger and guards me from every evil. All this he does out of fatherly and divine goodness and mercy, though I do not deserve it. Therefore I surely ought to thank and praise, serve and obey him.

Now, the specifics of this are unique to each and every one of us, but we should be able to make similar statements. As individuals and as a congregation, we should be capable of telling why we love the Lord God and gather together for worship. Others around us do need to hear this. As it says in First Peter, "always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Peter 3:15, NIV). Other Christians and those who are seeking answers to the big questions of life need to hear this. And then when we find ourselves in the midst of difficult times it is so crucial that we hear from others that these times can be endured, survived, and overcome, due to God's mercy, God's care, and God's provision.

This psalm is about thanking God even in the midst of the most difficult times. Imagine the circumstances that led to this description:

Death wrapped its ropes around me; the terrors of the grave overtook me. I saw only trouble and sorrow. (Psalm 116:3, NLT)

Life had become so lost, so troubled, that the writer feels dead. He no longer considered himself to have life like everyone else. But God answered him, God delivered him, God was merciful and restored his life. This witness is the core of the psalm. The experience of a death-like state and the restoration to the land of the living led to a strong faith in God.

So why keep praying to God? Because you know that he answers, that he cares, that he is kind and merciful. This is the simple truth of why we continue to thank God, praise God, and trust in God all the days of our life. And I pray that God would give you the knowledge and wisdom to be able to give an answer for the hope that you have and be confident that our God does listen, does care, and does answer the prayers of his people. And may this give you strength and peace as you continue your journey through life. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all human understanding, keep your hearts and minds safe in Christ Jesus. Amen.