



Psalms 36:5-7

New International Version of the Holy Bible

The Lord, Our Provider

“Your love, O Lord, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies. Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your justice like the great deep. O Lord, you preserve both man and beast. How priceless is your unfailing love! Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of your wings.” Psalm 36: 5-7

A father and mother were working in their back yard while their four year old daughter was playing nearby with her little dog. When she tired of playing with Spot, she started her favorite game of asking questions. Her father as usual answered without much thought. *“What is Spot doing?” “He is running.” “What is Mommy doing?” “She’s pulling grass.” “What is Grandpa doing?” “He is in the house.”* Unexpectedly in the same tone of voice the little girl asked *“What is God doing?”* Somehow the answer didn’t follow automatically. Later, when the father told his pastor about the incident he remarked: *“I could think of many things which God had done but it took me a while to answer what God was doing just at that moment.”*

“What is God doing today?” That’s a good question to ask as we continue our series of sermons on the First Article of the Apostles’ Creed. The First Article reads: *“I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.”* This statement talks only about what God has already done and doesn’t really answer the question of what God is doing today.

For the answer we have to read Luther's explanation. He tells us both what God has done for us and what he is still doing today. He writes:

"I believe that God has made me and all creatures, that he has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses."

That's what God has done. Then Luther continues: *"And still preserves them."* As usual Luther is entirely biblical, for our text says: **"O Lord, you preserve both man and beast." Psalm 36:6**

The Lord isn't like a contractor who builds a house and then, when you have bought it, expects you to take care of it. The Lord not only made heaven and earth, he continues to take care of it – he also continues to take care of you and me.

I – The Lord preserves People and Animals

What a task! Our text says: **"O Lord, you preserve both man and beast." Psalm 36: 6**

A chicken rancher received an order of 30,000 baby chicks. He will feed them for about 20 weeks, and then sell them as pullets. During that short period of time these chicks will eat 450,000 pounds of feed. Imagine how many pounds of feed are needed to feed all the chicks, ducks, geese, turkeys, cows, calves, sheep, goats and all the other animals all over the world. The Lord feeds them all, as the psalmist declares: **"The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing." Psalm 145: 15-16**

What is true of God's care for the animals is doubly true of God's care for all people. People were not created for the animals but the animals

were created for people. The population of our own country now exceeds 240,000,000. According to the encyclopedia, an average person consumes four pounds of food a day. That means we need 800,000,000 pounds a day or three hundred million pounds of food a day or three hundred billion pounds of food a year in our country. The United States are only one sixth of the world's population. The population of the world is about 4,000,000,000. That's such a staggering figure that I have no idea what it really represents. But the Lord knows us all individually and day by day supplies our needs. Jesus has said: **"He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."** **Matthew 5:45** What is God doing today? He preserves man and beast.

II – The Lord Gives Me All I Need

Luther makes it personal and specific. He says in the explanation of the first article: *"He has given me . . . clothing and shoes, meat and drink, house and home, wife and children, fields, cattle, and all my goods."* Of course, this is not a complete list. Just take a moment and try to count what God has given you personally so far today: clothing, shoes; a house, automobile, and gas and electricity to heat the house and run the car; chairs, rugs, tables, clocks, desks; the sun, light, air, water, plus all that you have had for breakfast this morning. Maybe you want to add to that good government, peace, health, children, spouse, friends and the multitude of ingredients which make for a full and happy life. What's God doing today? He gives all that we need.

III - The Lord Provides for Us Faithfully

Our text says: **“Your love, O Lord, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies.” Psalm 36: 5**

Wives want a faithful and dependable husband, children want dependable parents, parents want a dependable government, employees want dependable labor, and employees want dependable employers. But there is no one in this world that is absolutely and always dependable. People repeatedly fail other people because they are human. God never fails us because he is God.

He promised Noah that as long as he would permit this earth to stand, he would give seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, day and night. He has kept his promise. When the people of Israel traveled from Egypt to Canaan the Lord promised them manna from heaven every morning. In spite of the fact that some doubted his promise and needlessly hoarded the manna, the Lord gave them manna every morning for forty years. So today when the Lord says: **“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” Matthew 6:33** He will do what he has promised because he is faithful.

IV. The Lord Gives Us What is Fair and Good

Our text says: **“Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains . . .” Psalm 36: 6**

A great mountain is unmovable and so is the righteousness of God. He is always right and never makes a mistake. Children sometimes accuse their parents of being unfair or of showing partiality. What they forget is that there is no parent who is perfectly fair and that when they become parents they won't either. Parents are human, which means

they don't do anything perfectly even though they try. How wonderful that our Father in heaven, upon whom everything depends, is always fair and righteous with his children.

Is God really fair? A farmer complains: *"I just got one-half inch of rain while my neighbor got two inches."* The laborer laments: *"Why should I stand on my feet all day when others sit at a desk in an air-conditioned room. Is that fair?"*

Dealing righteously or fairly doesn't mean giving everybody an equal amount of everything. Do you give a doll to your son every time you give a doll to your daughter? Men and women were not made alike, neither are all men alike. That's why we all have different needs and what's good for one may not be good for the other. The Lord deals with each according to specific needs and gives each what is specifically good for the individual.

Isn't this an impossible task? It is impossible for people, yes, but not for God. Our text says: **"Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your justice like the great deep."** Psalm 36:6 To be sure, at times we will not understand the ways of God with his people. We might wonder what good purpose there can be in earthquakes, floods, and hurricanes. We might even lament and complain against God, like the people of Israel in the wilderness, when our prayers and God's answers do not agree. That's why the Lord reminds us through the prophet Isaiah:

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:8-9

V. The Lord Deals With Us in Mercy

We can be sure that the Lord will always give us what's fair and good because he deals with us according to his mercy. The mercy of God is accented in two sentences because it's the basic concept in our text: **"Your love, O Lord, reaches to the heavens. . . "** Psalm 36:5 and: **"How priceless is your unfailing love!"** Psalm 36:7 Mercy and loving-kindness are included in everything God does. If the Lord gave us only what we have earned we would have only misery and trouble. Where were you when God made you? Did you earn your hands, fingers, ears, brain, senses, and the body which God gave you at birth? What about today? Do you deserve daily food, clothing, and shelter?

From time to time we read in the business section of our newspaper that a new factory is coming to town. If after one of these new plants is finished you would get a job there but instead of doing your work you would purposely knock out a few windows. After that you stick an iron bar into the motors and halfway wreck the place - what do you suppose the company officials would owe you in return? The Lord God gave us a perfect world and perfect lives. Instead of doing our assignments as outlined by our Lord, like Adam and Eve, we have half-wrecked both the world and our lives through our disobedience and sins.

Praise the Lord for he is merciful. The psalmist says in another place: **"He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities."** Psalm 103:10

Do you remember your first Christmas Eve program in church? The Christmas tree reached the ceiling. I even remember three elders watching the candles burn on the tree, so that we wouldn't have a fire. The church was always filled to capacity. Then came the program centered on God's promise of a Savior was read as recorded in the Old Testament.

After the program, the people read the birth of Christ as recorded in Luke chapter 2. Mary and Joseph go to Bethlehem. There is no room for them in the inn. Amongst the cattle in the barn the Baby Jesus is born and laid in a manger. The angels appear to the shepherds and one of them brings the astonishing good news: **“Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.” Luke 2:10-11** I didn’t understand all these things fully when I was young, but from the Scripture and the carols I know that it was God who gave his own Son to suffer what should have been our punishment. I knew from this sacrifice that God must really love us. Certainly we have all experienced that unspeakable warmth and peace in our hearts as all the lights in church were extinguished and only the Christmas tree stood there in its splendor while we sang: *“Silent night! Holy night! / Christ the Savior is born.”* I’m sure many of you have such memories. They are many more than memories that belong to faith – a deep conviction that God is merciful and that all is well.

What is God doing now? With Luther we reply:

He still preserves me . . . he give me clothing and shoes, meat and drink, house and home, wife and children, fields, cattle, and all my good. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life.

And then add with gratitude:

And all of this purely out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me.

Since God takes good care of us, two things ought to follow. Luther mentions one: *“For all which it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey him.”*

You are totally different than those who see no reason for going to church and who claim they have a right to spend their money and use their possessions just as they please. You know that every good and perfect gift comes from above, that all you have is given you by God as a free gift.

To be honest, there are times when we forget that we haven't paid anybody for our clothing and shoes, meat and drink. Maybe right now some of you are thinking: *"Well, I pay for the bread I eat and every time I stop at a filling station, I pay for the gas."* The truth is you don't. When you pay for the gas station attendant, you are paying for the drilling, refining, and the delivery of the gas. No one has ever paid the Lord for the gas and the oil which he put into the ground. That's free. When you give the grocer money for a loaf of bread, you are paying only for the growing and the milling of the wheat, the baking and delivery of the bread. The material in the loaf is a free gift from God. The same is true of the chair you are sitting on, the automobile you drive, the house in which you live. The material in all of these is a free gift from your Lord.

That's why we who are Christians say a *"thank you"* prayer after every meal; attend church to sing the praises of our gracious Lord, share our income for missions and charity to help those who are in spiritual and physical need, and try to use everything the Lord gives us as good and faithful stewards.

The second thing which ought to follow God's gracious providence is the assurance that all is well. The Psalmist writes: **"How priceless is your unfailing love! Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of your wings." Psalm 36:7**

In the spring of the year a farmer usually has a number of mother hens with some baby chicks. The chicken hawks are a constant threat and danger as they circled the sky they are just waiting for a chick to stray from the mother hen so they would swoop down and destroy it. Whenever the

mother hen would see a chicken hawk, she would call her chicks and spread out her wings so that the chicks could dash under for protection. According to the psalmist the Lord is an even greater protection for us. No matter what the danger or problems (*whether it is the loss of a job, loss of health, or a depression*) the Lord is always there with outstretched arms. He is waiting for us to run under the shadow of his wings for care and protection. Since God is your Provider, he will surely also protect and care for you.

What's God doing today? If your child or anyone else would ask you, you can say cheerfully: "*The Lord takes care of man and beast . . . especially me.*"