



Psalm 36:5-9

Your steadfast love, O LORD, extends to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds. Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your judgments are like the great deep; you save humans and animals alike, O LORD. How precious is your steadfast love, O God! All people may take refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your delights. For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.

Awesome is one of those words that has been so over and inappropriately used that its meaning has all but been lost. In modern American speech the word is used to describe both the mundane and the extraordinary. These verses, from the heart of the 36th psalm, seem, at least to me, to provide a wonderful summary of the truly “awesome” nature of God. God’s steadfast love, faithfulness, righteousness, and judgments are what awesome is all about.

While our love is too often conditional and limited, God’s love for us knows no bounds. Our love can be shallow, self-serving, and unpredictable. God’s love is *steadfast*. You can count on the consistency of God’s love revealed in the beauty of creation, in the gift of God’s law, and preeminently in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. There are no limits, no lines, no conditions. God loves us to the end and beyond.

When we profess our faith as followers of Christ, we promise to “turn from sin and renounce evil and its power in the world,” yet sometimes in spite of our most earnest efforts we fall back into the same old patterns. Or like the would-be followers of Jesus in Luke’s gospel (Luke 9:59-62), we set conditions: “When I have completed this task; when I have more money; when I have more time; if it won’t be too demanding.” God’s faithfulness to us is unwavering and sure. You can always rely on God.

God’s righteousness, the psalmist tells us, is *like the mighty mountains*—majestic, firm, immovable, eternal. God’s ways are just and true, his truth unchanged and unchanging. To say that God is righteous is to say that in God all things are as they should be so that God is the standard by which all things are measured—love, justice, peace, kindness, generosity

God’s judgments, the psalmist tells us, *are like the great deep*: unfathomable in their understanding and truth, neither shallow nor easily manipulated. Yet, they are also tempered by mercy and filled with forgiveness.

And finally the psalmist assures that that in spite of the vastness of God’s love, faithfulness, righteousness, and judgment, the truly awesome nature of God, he is never too big to care for us. As Eugene Peterson paraphrases this verse: “Not a man, not a mouse, slips through the cracks.”