

“The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom...Psalm 111:10”

The responsive reading for this 4th Sunday after the Epiphany is Psalm 111:1-10. Psalm 111 is classified as an Individual Hymn of Thanksgiving, a psalm type in which the psalmist gives thanks for God’s goodness in delivering him/her from various life-threatening situations such as illness, oppression, or enemy attack. The words of thanks by this psalmist are unusual, however, for they recount not an event of God’s deliverance of an individual, but God’s deliverance of an entire people. Psalm 111 is a *Hallel*, one of the psalms that begins with *hallelu Yah*, “Hallelujah”, (or “Praise the Lord!”), initiating a whole series of psalms (Psalms 111-118) in which the word “hallelujah” reverberates.

Life was not easy for the Jewish remnant that returned to Jerusalem after their exile in Babylon. Their neighbors were often hostile, the Persian officials were not always cooperative, and the economic situation was difficult. This psalm may have been written by one of the Levites to remind the people to put the Lord first and trust Him to meet every need. The writer is giving us four instructions to follow if we are to enjoy the help and blessing of the Lord in life’s difficult situations.

1. Begin with praise and worship (v. 1). If we cannot rejoice in our circumstances, we can always rejoice in the Lord. The writer is determined to *praise* God no matter what.
2. Remember God’s great works (v. 2-6). God’s people do not live in the past, but they know how to use the past to give them encouragement in the present and hope for the future. His works reveal His attributes, for like Him they are great (v. 2), glorious, majestic, righteous (v. 3), wondrous, gracious, merciful (v. 4), powerful (v. 6), faithful, upright, trustworthy (v. 7), holy, and awesome (v. 9).
3. Rely on God’s Word (v. 7-9). God gave His law to His people so that they might enjoy His blessings forever, His covenants (promises), and His precepts (rules). God’s Word is trustworthy, and we can rely on it.
4. Obey His will (v. 10). The fear of the Lord is a topic mentioned frequently in Scripture. It is not the scary or anxious fear, but the loving and reverential awe we have for the omnipotent, omniscient God. Fearing the Lord leads to obeying the Lord, and obedience is important to spiritual understanding.

We always have a keen interest in the activities of people we love. This means that it should be a natural thing for us to love and study the works of God as we read and study the Word of God. “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom”. The only way to have wisdom is to fear (reverence) God. If we don’t acknowledge God as our source of wisdom, our foundation for making wise decisions is shaky, and we are prone to making mistakes and foolish choices which will not result in *praising* the Lord. As we recite and reverence the stories of the great deeds and wondrous acts of God performed on our behalf, we maintain and make ever anew our claim of being “the people of God.”

Come Sing Praise to the Lord

Worship Service with Holy Communion

Sunday 10 AM