

Psalm 111:1-10 The Lord Gave Us Mothers Falls Ch. AM 5/14/2023

Psalm 111 begins with the word Hallelujah, showing that the topic is praising God. In addition, each of the next 21 phrases begins with the next letter of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, beautifully and comprehensively showing many reasons to praise God. That brings us to our main point... **We praise God for His many mighty works, such as providing us with mothers!**

The most repeated idea in the Psalm is God's work, or works. God's actions, deeds or handiwork, or God's production. What shines through in all of God's activity is God's character – God's goodness, graciousness, and righteousness.

1. We give hearty public thanks to God for His incredible acts in nature. (v.1-4)

The circle of people spoken of in verse 1, was the worshipping community. The phrase "...*in the congregation...*" refers to the time when the people of God had gathered, or congregated, to praise the Lord in the sanctuary. So, when the author wrote, "*I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart,*" it was not a time when the author was alone. Rather, the author had gathered with others, and everyone was giving thanks, everyone was wholeheartedly praising the LORD. We see this in verse 1, "...*in the company of the upright, in the congregation.*" Worship is gathering of people to exalt, thank and to praise the LORD. For what?

In verse 2, we praise the LORD for His works or achievements. This refers to the things that God has made, such as Psalm 8:3, "*When I look at Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have set in place...*" Or Psalm 19:1, "*The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork.*"

We all marvel at God's creation, and the more we take notice of or study God's creation, the more we marvel. Scientists, who study God's creation, marvel all the more. Cambridge University in Cambridge, England, is home of the great Cavendish Laboratory, named after the late Sir Henry Cavendish, a leading chemist and physicist who lived in the 1700s in England. Over the entrance to the Cavendish Lab are the words of Psalm 111, verse 2, "*Great are the works of The LORD, studied by all who delight in them.*" More than 30 Nobel prizes have been awarded to scientists studying God's works there in that laboratory, making many foundational discoveries, such as the discovery of the electron, neutron, and structure of DNA. Many scientists daily walking under the words of verse 2, forget that the same God joined verse 2 with verse 10, "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, all those who practice it have a good understanding...*" Brilliant scientists are professing to be wise, but without the fear of God who made those wonders, they have actually become fools who suppress obvious truths about God, and refuse to give thanks to God, just as Paul described in Romans 1:18-23.

As our Psalm makes clear, also the prophet Isaiah showed that we cannot draw too sharp a distinction between God's initial actions of creating, and God's

follow-up actions to continue to sustain and uphold His creation. Listen to the wisdom of God through Isaiah in chapter 45:9-13, “...*Does the clay say to him who forms it, ‘What are you making?’ or ‘Your work has no handles’? Woe to him who says to a father, ‘What are you begetting?’ or to a woman, ‘With what are you in labor?’*” Thus says the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and the one who formed him: “*Ask me of things to come; will you command me concerning my children and the work of my hands? I made the earth and created man on it; it was my hands that stretched out the heavens, and I commanded all their host. I have stirred him up in righteousness, and I will make all his ways level; he shall build my city and set my exiles free, not for price or reward,*” says the Lord of hosts.”

God created. God upholds. God redeems His people. The classic or main example of redeeming actions of God is what the Bible calls “The Exodus.” God intervened to rescue His people from Egypt, where they had been bullied by a slave driver.

Back to Psalm 111, verse 3, there is a more complete description of the works of The LORD – they are “*full of splendor and majesty.*” But what does that mean? Keep reading in verse 3, for all these actions of God lead us to one significant concluding lesson, namely, that “...*His righteousness endures forever.*” Whenever we study God’s actions to create, sustain and redeem His people, we find out one central thing about God – His righteousness. He always does right.

What is astounding about God’s people was their ability to forget! So, in verse 4, God took action to “...*cause His wondrous works to be remembered!*” Remembrance involves more than an act of our memory – to bring to mind. Remembrance involves a renewing of devotion, and a re-commitment to obey.

Since the people of God did not behave in such a way as to earn or elicit this action from God, then how can we explain this action of God to help them remember? From where did it spring? Keep reading in verse 4, where we find the answer. The answer is that it springs from God, from God’s internal nature. “*The LORD is gracious and merciful.*” Yes, and amen.

2. We remember God’s actions in salvation history. (v.5-8)

Verse 5 adds to the proof, again describing what God did that was gracious and merciful, it was characteristic of God that He “...*provides food for those who fear Him; He remembers His covenant forever.*” God providing food is a reference to the miracle of the bread appearing, a special bread called manna in the desert in Numbers chapter 11. But God providing food is a daily matter, too. Jesus referenced this in teaching us The Lord’s Prayer – give us this day our daily bread. And we have memories of our mothers faithfully giving us food. That food came from the LORD providing for us.

Verse 5 went on to show that God is ever mindful of His covenant. God remembers His covenant forever. Every time we read about God taking actions to

save His people, it is God taking actions because of the relationship that God has already established with His people.

God will be true to His own promise. God will always be consistent with His own Words. God knows this about Himself. This Psalm is here so that God can show us this truth about God.

Verse 6, *“He has shown His people the power of His works, in giving them the inheritance of the nations.”* What does God show us about Himself and His works? God shows us that the giving of the land to His people is typical of God! Listen to Deuteronomy 7:1,6 *“When the Lord your God brings you into the land that you are entering to take possession of it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations more numerous and mightier than you... (v.6), For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.”* Deuteronomy 7.

Back to our Psalm 111, verse 7, we see a connection between the works of God and the precepts of God. What God does is tied to what God says. Listen to verse 7, *“The works of His hands are faithful and just; all His precepts are trustworthy...”* The precepts of God are His commands, what God says.

We get this confirmed in verse 8, where we read that the precepts or commands of God are *“...established forever and ever, to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness.”*

We know what God is going to do. God is going to do what God said that God will do. God said that He would save His people. And He did!

3. Our wisdom begins when we fear/respect God and join in praising Him for His acts of redemption. (v.9-10)

Verse 9, God *“...sent redemption to His people; He has commanded His covenant forever. Holy and awesome is His name!”*

The past tense is used here – God in the past sent redemption. This was a reference to bringing His people out of slavery in Egypt, and then later out of exile in Babylon. And when we read the word redemption, we get a foreshadowing of the later actions of God in bringing us once-for-all out of our slavery to sin, when Jesus accomplished our redemption by His death on the cross. 1 Corinthians 1:30, Jesus became for us *“Righteousness...and redemption.”*

Here in verse 9 of Psalm 111, the term redemption is used like that. It is used of buying persons out of a market, so that the persons will not have to be sold again in the slave market. God redeemed His people by paying the ransom price to set persons free. Again, Paul wrote about this in Romans 8:2, *“...the law of the Spirit of life set me free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.”* Paul used to

be a slave to sin and death, but Jesus had freed Paul from that slavery, as Jesus has freed all us who are God's people. The ransom price: Jesus' death. But He arose!

Luke chapter 1 picks up the song of Hannah, the woman who was barren yet became a mother, and Mary, the woman who was still a virgin yet became a mother, both singing the same thing in the song of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2 and the Song of Mary in Luke 1:49, listen, "...*He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name.*" God redeemed them from barrenness and set them free, representing the nation being set free from spiritual barrenness. She had descendants, and chiefly Jesus Himself would be sent by God the Father to redeem His people. And again in Luke 1:68, Zechariah stated, "*Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people.*"

Verse 10, there is a well-known phrase at that time, and even a well-known phrase today for Bible readers. Here goes, "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom...*" It could be said that this phrase is the "motto" of the Book of Proverbs, the wisdom book! What does it mean? The phrase captures the right way for us to approach the LORD God to gain wisdom. This Psalm has inspired reverence and awe in us, and now this summary statement was used to teach us that much more understanding can be ours! We start by fearing God or respecting the LORD God. In other words, we need to recognize and appreciate the LORD for His great character of wisdom, righteousness, faithfulness and trustworthiness, seen in His actions of creating the world and in His actions of saving His people.

We who are God's people understand the key to what life is all about – the LORD. That is fearing God! Psalm 111 ends in verses 9-10 saying the key to life, which Paul later summarized in Romans 11:36, "*From [God,] and to [God] and through [God] are all things!*" Colossians 2:3, "*in [Christ] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*" Through Christ's redeeming of us, we now hold the key to what life is all about – God. God Himself told us in this Psalm that life is about God's works in His covenant and in his sending His son Jesus to redeem us, and God's praise that God commanded forever. Life is about God – that our response is praising His name, for He is holy and awesome.

Notice the last word. Forever. God's praise endures forever. Just as verse 8 said forever and ever. So also His praise is forever. God's works are made to last. God's works are seen in God's constant care for us, His daily provision of us.

Conclusion:

1. Praise God with your whole heart. Since God has revealed Himself to us so that we know Him, He is worthy of our highest praise. No more half-hearted worship. We should worship God intensely. With our whole mind and heart engaged. This means praising God in person. Listen again to words in verse 1, "*in the company of the upright, in the congregation.*" We know that livestreaming worship is a gift from God, and we are committed to continuing to offer livestreaming. The reason

is that people get sick, and it is needed, so it is merciful to offer it. But those of us who are healthy enough, we are expected to keep up our habit of coming together – to congregate. Congregating is what makes us a congregation. Gathering is what makes us the body of Christ. If you are going to worship by livestream, then download the bulletin, and get a hymnbook, and dress up, and stand when we stand and sing when we sing. Don't snack during worship. Worship by livestream with your whole heart. Be in worship in person whenever possible, and be here to praise God with your whole heart.

2. Thank God for your mother. I am not talking about whether you ARE a mother, I am talking about you HAVING a mother. I am not talking about whether your mother is still living, nor whether she is a Christian. Some of us have had personal difficulty on this topic of motherhood. I am saying that every person came into this world through a mother. Thank God for that person, that woman, that means by which God blessed you with life itself. If scientists can study the works of God under microscopes and discover electrons, we can also study the works of God in society and discover the means of our existence. You are alive. How did you get here? It was God giving you life, through your mother. Now your mother is also a sinner who has sinned against God and has disappointed you in certain ways. Still, we are called to thank God for His creating of us, and using our mothers to bring us into this world. In addition, if your mother was good to you, if your mother was a good woman and a good mother to you, then thank God further for that blessing! And for those of you that had a mother who is a Christian, and even a godly Christian woman who instilled into you the things of God. Come at this from Psalm 111, and just think about God giving you a blessing, and the way that blessing came was through your Mom. You ought to thank God for her. And if she is living....why not contact her and tell her that you praise God for His blessing of life, given through her? That is a Biblical thing to do. Thank God for your mother.

3. Look beyond your mother to God Himself.

If you had a bad mother, then look beyond her to God Himself. Has not God been kind and merciful to you? Has not God blessed you, despite your mother?

If you had a good mother, then look beyond her to God Himself. If your mother could be so good to you, then what goodness might God show to you?

Biblically speaking, this is not Mother's day. This is The LORD's day. Look beyond your mother to God Himself, because this is His day. He created you. He redeemed you. He sustains you.

Listen to how another Psalm talks about our relationship to God, beyond our mothers. Psalm 139:13, where King David prayed to the LORD God, "...*You knitted me together in my mother's womb.*"

It was God who gave us life.

The Lord has given us days with our mothers, and days without our mothers. But you know what? All the days we have, we have the LORD.

Psalm 139:16, *“in Your book were written...the days that were formed for me.... (v.18) I awake, and I am still with You.”*

The LORD was there before your mother.

The LORD was there all the time that you had your mother.

The LORD will be there after the last day you have with your mother.

When Pastor Charles Spurgeon was only 20 years old, he began to serve as a pastor in London in April of 1854. It was 169 years ago. It was 20 years BEFORE the Cavendish lab was opened in his city in London, England. Here was what Spurgeon said in his first sermon, “The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father.”

Spurgeon was right. The central thing about today is not that you had a certain woman as your mother on earth, but rather that you have this God as your Father in heaven.

God continues to give us mothers in the church. Consider how our Lord Jesus Christ, from the cross, re-defined motherhood, and re-defined relationships in the church. Listen to John 19:25-27 *“...standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” 27 Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.”*

We must focus our worship services on God. God is the one who tells us to care for older women in the church as we care for our own mothers. In 1 Timothy 5:1-3, *“Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, 2 older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity. 3 Honor widows...”*

Joshua 1:9, *“The LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”*

Hebrews 13:8, *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”*