

Adoring Our Gracious God

Psalm 111:1-10

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Introduction:

Next week, I plan to begin a new series in Paul's epistle to the Ephesians.

- The first three chapters of Ephesians show how God has lavished His people with His grace...
 - It is one of the clearest statements of the riches we have obtained through Christ!
 - We are told repeatedly that God does it for the praise of His glory...
 - We were just a ruined and unworthy by the fall as anyone else,
 - But He, wanted to show the whole universe the depths of His gracious character,
 - Has made us an example—
 - He pours out His grace on us to show all just how deep and strong and abundant that grace is!
- He is revealing to all, both angels and men, just how kind He is to undeserving sinners,
 - and you who fear Him are the ones He has chosen to be the recipients of that grace!
 - You are theatre of His grace for the whole universe to see!
 - What could be better than this!
- But alas, what could be worse than the alternative...
 - The alternative is to be a vessel of God's wrath upon which He displays before all the universe His holy hatred of wickedness,
 - a vessel on which He shows His burning indignation against that which is no longer in harmony with His glorious perfect beautiful self...
 - He will make a display of the glory of His wrath upon the Devil and all those angels and men who are in league with him...
 - that is, all those who are not redeemed by His grace.
- My friends, there is no middle ground with the holy God of all glory...
 - Either you are a vessel of mercy, upon which God will display the glory of His grace,

- or you are a vessel of wrath, upon which God will display the glory of His justice and righteous indignation.
 - One or the other is your destiny forever and ever!

Now let me ask you...

- With these two everlasting destinies set before you,
 - what is the foundation of true wisdom for us?
 - Is it not what the Bible so often tells us it is?
 - “The beginning of wisdom it to fear the LORD!”
 - This is what it says at the end of Psalm 111—in verse 10...
 - “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom...”
 - Do you know what it means to fear the LORD?
 - It means that you are greatly concerned about having His favour.
 - Think about it...
 - When you fear something,
 - you have a kind of respect for that thing—
 - you see it as something that can very much affect your happiness...
 - something that can make a big difference for you.
 - If I fear poverty, it means I have a respect for riches and their ability to make me happy,
 - and I believe that the loss of riches will ruin me.
 - Therefore, I do whatever I can to obtain and keep riches.
 - I would sooner displease my family, give up a pleasure, and deviate a little from God’s call than endanger my riches!
 - If I fear man instead of God,
 - It means that I think man’s favour is more important than God’s favour...
 - That means that when I am forced to decide, I choose to do what I think will please man rather than God...
 - As foolish as it sounds, that’s what we all do whenever we allow social pressures or family pressures or political pressures to cause us to trim what God has commanded.

- This is why Psalm 111:10, after telling us that the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom adds...
 - “A good understanding have all those who do His commandments.”
 - We have a good understanding when we realise that God, not man, is the one we ought to please!

- And so it is that when the Bible tells you that “the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,”
 - it is telling you that unless you fear God who alone determines your final destiny, you are a fool!—
 - you don’t have a single ounce of wisdom!
 - You know what wisdom is, don’t you?
 - Wisdom is knowing what to do in whatever situation you are in so that things will turn out well in the end...
 - A wise person sees a hurricane coming and knows how to prepare his house to keep it from damage...
 - He boards up his windows while the fool wavers and makes excuses—he would rather watch the big ball game than prepare for the storm...
 - Another fool obtains a great job, and chooses to stay up late every night at the bars—
 - he goes to work late and weary, and soon loses his job...
 - He had more respect for his bar time than he did for his new job.
 - A fool then is one who keeps on doing things that don’t end well—
 - things that seem good to him at the moment but lead to trouble...
 - The fool goes along in life like this—

- But of course there are some people who are what we call worldly wise...
 - That is, they know how to get on well in this world and how to make things turn out the way they want...
 - They know how to make money,
 - they know how to handle relationships,
 - they know how to plan a trip
 - they know how to get other people to do what they want.
 - They know what to do in order to get things to turn out the way they want.

- But if such persons do not fear the LORD,
 - they don't really have any wisdom at all... not even its beginning...
 - Because even though they may get along well for a while in this world,
 - they have not concerned themselves with having the favour of the one whose favour alone will matter at the end.
 - He is the Almighty, and our whole destiny for good or ill is in His hands!
 - He will bring us all to final judgement, and He will determine at last what is to be done with us!
 - He is able not only to destroy our body, but our body and soul in Hell!
 - Wisdom begins with fearing Him!
 - Riches and security and human relationships and pleasures of this world are all secondary causes of happiness...
 - but the LORD is the first cause—
 - To go through life with no concern for obtaining God's favour is to go through life as a fool!

Now my friends, over the next few weeks in our study of Ephesians,

- we are going to be looking at the treasures of God's grace that He lavishes upon those who fear Him...
 - And if you believe what Ephesians teaches,
 - you will see what a difference God's grace makes...
 - You will grow in the fear of the LORD.
 - You will say,
 - "It is clear to me that nothing else really matters but to have the Lord's favour."
 - "This is where all happiness is found and out of which no happiness is found."
 - "It doesn't matter if I am poor or rich, healthy or sick, popular or lonely...
 - all that matters is that I am a recipient of God's grace."
 - And as you grow in the fear of the Lord,
 - you will grow in your appreciation of what Jesus did to obtain God's favour for us...
 - And you will cling to Him with joyful faith...

- And you will be full of praises to God for His abundant grace...
- You will delight in praising Him and in declaring to all what He has done—how great His grace is—just as Paul does.

And as a congregation, we are going to express that praise together in the singing of Psalm 111...

- Each week as we read and learn about God’s abundant grace,
 - we will lift up our voices in unison with the words of this great Psalm in praise to God for His wonderful works of salvation.
 - This morning I want to present this Psalm to you so that you can better understand what you are singing.

I. Let us look first at the call to praise the Lord which is found in verse 1.

A. The Psalm opens with this call...

- It simply says: “Praise the LORD.”
 - In Hebrew, it says “Hallelujah.”
 - Hallel means praise...
 - Yah is a shortened form of Jehovah or Yahweh.
 - so it is a call to praise the LORD.
- After looking at riches of God’s grace,
 - we are led by this Psalm to exhort one another to praise Him...
 - Together we sing to one another, “Praise the LORD.”
 - We exhort one another to put away all doubt and murmuring as we come before Him.
 - We stir each other adore the one who alone is worthy of all praise!

TRANS> And as soon as the call has come forth from your lips,

- the song then leads you to make a resolution—

B. The song then leads you to resolve that you will praise Him with your whole heart and that you will do it in the public assembly!

1. Resolutions like this are very important...

- It is fine to have good intentions about doing this or that,
 - but it is another step to put those intentions into specific words and to speak them out loud...

- When you sing this Psalm then,
 - realise that you are making a resolution here...
 - you have called others to join you, but regardless of what they do,
 - you are promising that you will praise God in the assembly with all your heart...
 - Understand that when you stand before God and sing a resolution like this in a covenant song,
 - you are not just making empty music...
 - you are making a resolution that God will hold you to...
 - Don't do this in vain—without realisation of what you are doing!

TRANS> Now notice how you resolve to praise Him in two particular ways...

2. First, notice that you say “I will praise Him **with my whole heart.**”
 - a. This means that you will not to praise God with an insincere or divided heart.
 - This is what I was just talking about—you won't sing the words of resolution without realising that you just made a binding commitment to God.
 - Nor will you stand there saying all these wonderful things about God while thinking about other things that have nothing to do with God...
 - No, this is promise that you will speak these praises as an expression of your true love and adoration of God.
 - b. When you come before God in truth—in the fear of the LORD,
 - You know that He sees your very thoughts and intents...
 - He knows if you are indifferent about His praise, or if your mind is consumed with covetous thoughts, immoral thoughts, selfish thoughts, or grumbling thoughts...
 - Everything is open before Him, and those who fear Him, are more concerned about Him than they are about anything else!
 - They know that He is not on the side, but at the centre of all things!
 - And in praise of Him especially, they are mindful that they are before Him...
 - But O how weak we all are!
 - We all bring wretched half-hearted praises before God.

- How wrong it is to come before the One who has been so kind to us with less than our whole being!
- May He help us to keep this resolution to praise Him with our whole heart.

TRANS> But there is also another part to this resolution...

3. When you sing this Psalm, you also resolve to praise Him in the public assembly.
 - a. There are many who feel themselves too good for the public assembly—
 - They will tell you that they worship God in their own way...
 - They will tell you that the church is filled with hypocrites...
 - They will tell you that people have been unkind to them at church and they have no use for it anymore...
 - They will tell you that have no use for the elders God has appointed to watch over the congregation...
 - They feel that they are better off without these things.
 - b. But you see that the scripture has a very different view about this...
 - 1) The assembly of the upright is a narrower term and speaks of the faithful.
 - It is a pity that some persons are quite indifferent about where they worship—
 - Some will go to places where images of saints have been set up and where alters are set up that God has not appointed...
 - or where the word of God is not preached in faithfulness...
 - or where worship is turned into mere entertainment.
 - We are to seek out the faithful who worship God in Spirit and truth according to His commandments and unite ourselves with them in the praise of God...
 - The assembly of the upright will require a credible profession of faith from its members, it will administer the sacraments according to Christ's institutions and it will preach the word in truth.
 - Even when you travel, it is good to seek out those congregations that are faithful to God's call and join them for worship.
 - 2) But we must not lose sight of the fact that we are also part of a larger congregation...

- We unite our praise with the great catholic or universal church in all ages and in all places—
 - We join with all those who call upon the name of the LORD in every place...
 - We are part of the worldwide congregation of God's people who are called out to praise Him and to learn of His gracious works that are the occasion of our praise.
 - This is the great congregation over which Jesus presides as the Head.

TRANS> See then in the opening verse of this Psalm that as you exhort one another to praise our Lord for all that He has done,

- you must also resolve that you yourself will praise Him...
- Now the Psalm moves along to present the great reason we have to praise Him.

II. We praise Him because His works are great!

- The word **great** is an all-encompassing word—
 - a very pregnant word!
 - It speaks of great in character, great in grace, great in magnitude, great in extent, great in power, great in every way.
 - Everything about God's work is great because He is great!
- There is much pleasure to be found in God's works...
 - There is so much to see in them, so much to stir up our praise of God!
 - If you are a Christian,
 - God's whole purpose in raising you up is to show you how good He is at loving you—
 - to show you how well He loves you—
 - One of the signs that you have truly come to know the Lord is that you find great delight in what He has done...
 - And because you do, you are very eager to study His word and to hear it preached...
 - You want to understand more about the great things He has done for you and for the entire church—
 - That's why the Psalm says that His great works are:
 - “studied by all who have pleasure in them.”

- And you find the more you study, the more pleasure you find...
 - Who could have loved you so well as this?
 - Who else has done such great things?
- Let us then consider the greatness of His works as that greatness is presented to us in this Psalm...let us take a moment to see just how great His works are...

A. First, the greatness of His work is found in the nobility of His work...

- Verse 3 says,
 - “His work is honourable and glorious, and His righteousness endures forever.”
- 1. The words *honourable and glorious* are very similar in meaning...
 - They speak of a special kind of majesty and splendour that characterises His work...
 - These are words that describe a certain regal deportment as you would expect from a king...
 - not an ostentatious king, but a king of true noble birth and greatness...
 - a certain beauty and dignity that calls forth our admiration...
 - We read the stories about King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table...
 - There is a certain dignity and nobility about the way these men carry out their work...
 - We see men who understood the nature of true honour and true nobility—doing what had to be done without all the whining and peevishness that is so common to us...
 - We see them bravely going forth to risk their own necks for the cause of righteousness and goodness...
 - They perform heroic acts the way David’s mighty men did...
 - remember the one who fought until his sword was stuck in his hand...
 - and the one who, hearing that David wanted water from a certain well, endangered his life to get it for him.
- 2. But how much greater do we see this nobility in Jesus Christ.
 - We recently observed our Lord’s regal bearing in Matthew’s gospel...
 - the regal bearing He had before His accusers and adversaries?

- There was a very distinctive majesty about the way He responded to them and about the way He carried Himself through His sufferings in the manner of a great king.
 - You can see how with firm resolve He left the glories of His palace in heaven to come and bear what had to be born for the redemption of His people.
 - He proceeds with his face like a flint, fixed on his mission, determined to do what is necessary for the salvation of His people!
 - With what honour, what glory, what majesty he rides forth!
3. What a righteous character this work has...
- a. There is nothing impure, nothing to diminish from the greatness of it, nothing about any of His work to make Him ashamed...
 - no slips into pettiness or shameful excuse making...
 - no uncontrolled outbreaks of passion...
 - nothing whatsoever to mar His work—nothing ignoble in the least degree!
 - b. His mission was to save us, sinners that we are,
 - and that He did without the least compromise...
 - He did not cheat or cut corners, but instead He came forth to fully meet all that was required for our salvation—
 - facing the dragon for us that He might slay Him...
 - bearing guilt for us that He might atone for our sins...
 - accepting shame for our sins that it might be lifted from us...
 - This is true nobility!
 - This is the nobility of God's works for which we render praise to Him!
- B. Secondly, His works are great because they flow from Him as a God who is gracious and compassionate.
1. What was it that stirred Him to establish His covenant with wretched sinners like us?
 - We who had of our own free will openly rebelled against His kindness as our Creator—
 - We, who had the audacity to turn against one so majestic and holy, so beautiful and pure...
 - We whose father Adam declared that we would not live under Him as our Lord but would go our own way, seeking our own glory apart from Him.

- What ingratitude, what impertinence was ours!
 - God, who ever speaks with perfect justice, rightly sentenced us to the everlasting flames of Hell... with the Devil and his angels.
 - We had become most reprehensible to Him, having marred His image in which it had been our privilege to be created!
 - What was it that stirred Him to make a costly covenant of salvation with the likes of us?
 - It was this—that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life!
 - He made a covenant with wretched sinners because He is gracious and compassionate!
2. The works of our redemption are the wonderful works described in verse 4 that He has done to be remembered!
- a. For all eternity, they stand as a memorial of His grace and mercy!
 - As I mentioned in the introduction, the opening of Ephesians tells us that God did His marvellous works of redemption for the praise of His glorious grace.
 - He did it to draw forth worship from us and from the holy angels!
 - He wanted to show us the depths of divine love—
 - and His gracious acts of redemption stand as an everlasting testimony, a memorial, to us of the kind of God that He is!
 - b. When we get to heaven at last, we will be continually praising our Lord Jesus as the Lamb that was slain,
 - The Lamb who is worthy of all honour and glory **because** He was slain!
 - We will know how gracious our LORD is because His works for our salvation will stand forever as a memorial to Him.
 - We will never forget how He took such wretches as us and made a covenant to graciously redeem us!
3. Verse 5 shows how He never forgets His covenant...
- a. He provides food to those who fear Him...
 - Think of Israel in the wilderness—without water and without bread...
 - But God had promised to redeem them and to make them a great nation—a holy nation that was reconciled to Him—a people who were His very own, rescued from the fall.
 - And there they are grumbling and complaining,

- and yet the Lord provided water from the rock and manna from heaven!
 - Their complaining and wickedness did not cause Him to forget His covenant promise!
 - He continued to preserve them when they were not worthy to be persevered because He is gracious and compassionate.
 - It was necessary for them to be preserved alive in order for His salvation to come...
 - He had to preserve them as His people, and keep alive a remnant among them until Christ should at last come through them as promised.
- b. And now He continues to provide all that **we** need through Jesus Christ if we fear Him—
- and He always will—despite our ingratitude and rebellion...
 - He always will because He who has done such a marvellous thing as to give us Christ for our salvation will surely be mindful of His covenant forever!
 - We can trust that He who gave His only Son for us will freely give us all things!
 - He has clearly demonstrated His grace and compassion!
 - We have every reason to be secure in His love if we have come to Him for salvation!

C. Thirdly, His Works are great because they are wrought with power!

- Verse 6 says, “He has declared to His people the power of His works, in giving them the heritage of the nations.”
1. This was done in a typological way when God brought Israel, weak as they were, into the land of Canaan and removed nations that were mightier than they were...
- and also when He showed His strength upon Egypt...
 - He showed that the great powers in the world are no match for Him!
 - He showed that He is the LORD!
 - That all of these nations and powers in the earth are nations and powers under Him...
 - That we have no need to fear them, but Him who uses them to accomplish His purposes in the world!
 - He deliberately raised them up in order that He might show His people that real power belongs to the LORD alone.

2. But the promise of giving the nations to His people was not fulfilled when they went into the Promised Land...
 - a. God had told Abraham from the start that nations and kings would be blessed through him and would come to him...
 - And this promise continued to resound through the prophets and the Psalms long after Israel took the promised land.
 - It became focused more and more on Christ as the One who would rule until all the nations were brought under His feet.
 - b. And I say, what great power was unleashed among the nations as soon as Christ ascended into heaven...
 - The gentiles who had little to do with Jehovah their Creator suddenly began to repent and to come to Him for life!
 - God, but His mighty power, was giving the nations to His Son as He promised!
 - And He is still doing this and will continue to do it until at last the number is complete.
 - What a display of His marvellous gracious power to take those dead in sin and make them alive!
 - c. And at the last day, He will give the final demonstration of His power...
 - He will call all the nations forth from the grave and will judge them according to their deeds.
 - Those who have rejected Him will receive condemnation, and those who have received Him will receive life...
 - And He will reign in glory and beauty forever and ever.
 - His power will be revealed as the ultimate and final power and His will will be done on earth as it is in heaven!
 - The nations will fully belong to the LORD and there will be no dispute.

TRANS> So we have seen that the greatness of God's works is seen in their nobility, in their graciousness, and in their power...

D. And fourthly, the greatness of His works is seen in their verity...

- This is seen in verses 7-9:
 - Psalm 111:7-9: The works of His hands are verity and justice; All His precepts are sure. They stand fast forever and ever, And are done in truth and uprightness. He has sent redemption to His people; He has commanded His covenant forever: Holy and awesome is His name.

1. But what is “verity,” or more fully, “verity and justice”?
 - It is truth
 - This is saying that His works are in conformity with truth...
 - In other words, they are exactly in agreement with His word and promises and rules of justice.
 - He acts in perfect harmony with Himself...
 - Do you understand what I mean by that?
 - We don't always act in perfect harmony with what we have said or even with what we stand for...
 - As Paul said, the good that I want to do, I do not do, but the evil that I hate, that I do.
 - What happens when you act out of harmony with what is true?
 - Well, you have to take back what you have said or what you have done.
 - Lies do not stand...
 - When someone pretends to be what they are not, it will not last.
 - But God's precepts last forever and ever—there is no revision necessary.
2. Now as those who were made in God's image, we were also created to act in perfect harmony with truth—with God Himself who is the truth...
 - a. We were supposed to be a true reflection of His glory—“to truth in love” as Ephesians 4 literally puts it...
 - Our English versions say “speak the truth in love,”
 - But the Greek means “truth (speak, live, act, do the truth) in love.”
 - We are called to be those who live in perfect harmony with God's unchanging precepts which are themselves in perfect harmony with His unchanging character.
 - b. Verse 8 says that when His precepts are obeyed, when they are *done*, they are done *in truth and righteousness*...
 - In other words, when you obey God, you are doing truth and righteousness...
 - You are acting in perfect concord and harmony with the living God.
 - But brothers and sisters, we have failed to do the truth!
 - We represent God as His image,

- but we go about telling lies about Him because we do not live according to what He truly is and according to His precepts!

3. But here is the most excellent news!

a. God's works—His works of redemption for us as sinners—are done in verity and justice—

- They are done in truth and uprightness!
- In other words, His redeeming works do what we have failed to do!

b. The work of Jesus Christ for our salvation brings the whole church—all who fear the LORD—into perfect harmony with God's truth—with His precepts!

- As verse 9 says, the word of God is that He has sent redemption to His people!
 - He has commanded His covenant—His covenant that gives life to dead, wretched sinners...
 - He has commanded it and it will stand forever.
 - He commanded that His Son should come into the world and should make Himself an offering for our sins...
 - He commanded that His Son should bring all the elect into perfect harmony with Himself!
 - And this work was done in verity and justice!
 - It was done to perfection!
 - That is why it endures forever!

c. Do you see what this means?

- It means that you who trust in Jesus are now in perfect harmony with God!
 - Christ has shed His own blood to perfectly satisfy God's justice so that you, for whom He died, are changed from being a great offence to God to being in perfect conformity with His truth!
- And He has sent His Spirit to so work in you that you are growing into perfect harmony with God and all that He is!
 - You are being restored to the beauty and perfection and righteousness in which you were created!
 - You are becoming again a true reflection of God Himself, no longer a teller of lies, but a declarer of truth!
 - His redemption makes you a true reflection of Him...
 - Psalm 112 is a twin to Psalm 111...

- Psalm 111 tells us what God is like...
- and Psalm 112 tells us what the righteous man is like—and it uses some of the same words that Psalm 111 uses to describe God!
 - Isn't that marvellous?
 - It shows that by His saving grace, you are made like Him!
- And even though you still come short now, you are still in perfect conformity because you have Jesus who was crucified for you!
 - God could not in truth say that you are righteous—that you conform to His truth in all that you are—
 - apart from Jesus crucified for you and Jesus obedient for you...
 - Through faith in Him, you who are the sinner, are joined to Christ and so brought into conformity with God the righteous One and the true One...
 - If God accepted you apart from Christ, your acceptance would be a denial of Him...
 - But His acceptance of you in Christ who was crucified for you magnifies His the truth about God—
 - It shows what God required and did through Christ to make you accepted.

TRANS> O brothers and sisters!

- How great are God's works!
 - How great is His work of redemption!
- No wonder verse 9 declares, "Holy and awesome is His name!"
 - What excellent things God has made known about Himself!
 - His name is what He has made known about Himself!
 - And through His works we see His nobility, His grace, His power, and His truth!

Conclusion...

Now you can surely see that we have every reason to praise Him!

- You can surely see that the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom!
 - Only a fool would trivialise God and concern himself with lesser things—fearing man or fearing poverty or fearing sickness...
 - The LORD is the one who makes the difference in the end!
 - What you worried about?

- What are you complaining about?
- What are you living for?

- Turn your attention to Him who alone can make you happy or miserable!
 - Turn to Him whose marvellous works of redemption have been openly revealed!
 - Turn to Him whose grace and power is able to bring you into perfect harmony with Himself in truth!

- If you are living apart from Him—living as if this great God is secondary...
 - If you do not fear Him...
 - If you do not do His commandments...
 - You show that you are a fool who has no understanding!

- But if you are living before His face, delighting in His works, searching out what He has done, delighting in it and praising Him for it...
 - If you fear Him and obey His commandments...
 - They you show that you are wise and that you have a good understanding...
 - You know what truly matters and you will come to a good end.

- You have begun praising Him whose praise endures forever...
 - There is enough in Him and in His gracious works to keep you overflowing with praises forever and ever!
 - The closer your come to Him and the more you learn of Him,
 - the more reason you will find to praise Him.
 - He has put His glorious work on display for you to see how well He loves you.
 - Hallelujah, praise the LORD.