



# FROM THE PASTOR

## Psalm 111

- <sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD,  
I will extol the LORD with all my heart  
in the council of the upright and in the assembly.
- <sup>2</sup> Great are the works of the LORD;  
they are pondered by all who delight in them.
- <sup>3</sup> Glorious and majestic are his deeds,  
and his righteousness endures forever.
- <sup>4</sup> He has caused his wonders to be remembered;  
the LORD is gracious and compassionate.
- <sup>5</sup> He provides food for those who fear him;  
he remembers his covenant forever.
- <sup>6</sup> He has shown his people the power of his works,  
giving them the lands of other nations.
- <sup>7</sup> The works of his hands are faithful and just;  
all his precepts are trustworthy.
- <sup>8</sup> They are established for ever and ever,  
enacted in faithfulness and uprightness.
- <sup>9</sup> He provided redemption for his people;  
he ordained his covenant forever—  
holy and awesome is his name.
- <sup>10</sup> The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;  
all who follow his precepts have good understanding.  
To him belongs eternal praise.

I was recently participating in a Zoom meeting with other clergy. At the end of the meeting, I was asked to offer a closing prayer. Thinking that it might be well to begin prayer with a word of scripture, but without time to look up any particular verse, I glanced down at my Bible. It was open to Psalm 111. I have no idea why. But verses 1-2 made a beautiful beginning for a prayer:

***"Praise the LORD,  
I will extol the LORD with all my  
heart in the council of the upright  
and in the assembly.  
Great are the works of the LORD; they  
are pondered by all who delight in  
them."***

After the meeting ended, I looked at Psalm 111 more closely. It wasn't one that was on my radar. I have read it numerous times as I read through the Book of Psalms, and frequently quoted verse 10a: ***"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom..."*** I guess I never paid much attention to it. But, this is a deficiency

that I hope to correct. So, I am sharing it with you in our little meditation upon certain psalms.

Like many of the psalms, this one begins with praise and retelling of the goodness of God. A good example of this is verses 4 and 5:

***"He has caused his wonders to be remembered;  
the LORD is gracious and compassionate.  
He provides food for those who fear him;  
he remembers his covenant forever."***

We should start every day with a reminder of God's wonderful and "amazing" grace—God's good providence, God's amazing promise through our Lord Jesus, and His life-giving forgiveness! As verse 9 tells us:

***"He provided redemption for his people;  
he ordained his covenant forever—  
holy and awesome is his name."***



To consider our God—who created, redeems and sanctifies us—is, indeed, a fearful undertaking. To honestly admit that our sin deserves only God’s wrath; but to hold on to a faith that believes God’s loving promise of eternal life over everything else in life in spite of all doubts, or even appearances, is Wisdom. It is wisdom, indeed. And, as the Psalm says of the one who gives us eternal life: “**To Him belongs eternal praise.**”

In Christ’s service,  
*Pastor Brian Shirey*

### *Post Scripts:*

† Our lessons for this Sunday, August 23, the Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost, are:

FIRST READING: Isaiah 51: 1-6

Psalm 138

SECOND READING: Romans 11: 33 – 12: 8

GOSPEL: Matthew 16: 13-20

† If the current Pandemic has taught us anything, it is that we are not nearly as much in control of our world as we think we are. I believe that some of the best minds in the country have been dealing with this plague, yet we still don’t know when life will get back to normal (new or old). We rushed to build ventilators only to later decide that using them was not a good thing in every case of the virus. We built hospital space that was sparsely used. We are spending taxpayer money on vaccines whose effectiveness we can’t yet evaluate. But we are doing such things from good motives. Now, one of the worse symptoms of the virus is starting to emerge: finger pointing. More and more, this pandemic, or the restrictions that it brings, is being exploited for political, social or individual priorities. Let me say this as forcefully as I can! It is nonsensical to suppose that mistakes have not been made by many in dealing with this virus. It is just as nonsensical to suppose that had the critics of these mistakes been in positions of leadership that they would not have made many mistakes of their own. This is a national emergency that calls for patience and responsibility not hindsight and blame. This pandemic is now part of history and history is not something we understand in advance. It is by looking back that we understand history. When we are in the middle of it, like now, what is needed is prayer, patience, reason and responsibility. We will get through it. Let’s hope and pray we get through it together.