

Wise Stewardship =
Everything is From God and For God

4th Sun. after Epiphany – 01/28/24 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Psalm 111:1-10 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 10 **“The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!”**

Introduction

- ✘ What is God’s purpose for my life? That’s a question we all ask at some point – either quietly to ourselves or sometimes out loud into a mirror or before a trusted friend.
 - ➔ And here at Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church it is the question that we intentionally take up to explore and remind each other of God’s answer to that question at least once every year when we embark on our *People With A Purpose* journey.
 - ➔ To be honest, the answer is always the same, because God’s Word of truth never changes, but He reveals His answer and teaches it to us using more illustrations, through countless nuances in just about every part of Holy Scripture.
- ✘ So, this year we’re going to tap into a part of God’s Word that is not used as often to learn about this purpose that God has given to us for our time here on earth. It is the book of Psalms – more specifically the three Psalms that have historically been assigned to these three last Sundays in the season of Epiphany.
 - ➔ So let’s dive into God’s answer to the question we all want to know, “What is God’s purpose for my life?” or more directly, “What does God want me to believe, do and pass on to others during my time here on earth?”
 - ➔ Is that a question you’d all like to know the answer to? Is it really? ...

I. Stewards of Praising Yahweh (v.1ff)

- ✘ “What does God want me to believe, do and pass on to others during my time here on earth?” Think about it, you wouldn’t even ask that question if you didn’t first believe a couple of basic truths. Number one – that God exists! And number two – that God is the Creator and Giver of all things! So, let’s get this out of the way, “Does everyone here believe those two truths? That God exists? ... That God is the Creator and Giver of all things? ...
 - ➔ Alright, then you have all received His greatest and primary gift – the gift of faith! And that means that it’s safe for me to assume that you all wholeheartedly embrace verse one of this Psalm that we’re learning from today, “Praise Yahweh! I will give thanks to Yahweh with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation.”
- ✘ What do you mean when you say to or about someone else, “I love you/him/her with my whole heart”? It means with your entire being; with every ounce of energy, right? It means that person is at the top of your priority list and all that you think, say and do is going to be directed at expressing your love for that person.
 - ➔ So, what does that mean for those of us to whom the one Triune God has given us the undeserved gift of faith? We already said that we do believe He exists and that He has created us and given us life. On top of that we celebrate now in Epiphany that the Son of God, born at Christmas has become the Light of Salvation from all sin; from death and from the wiles of the devil in and through His death and resurrection in our place.

- Those are all gifts that neither you nor me nor any human being on earth has ever deserved to have. Yet God has given them all to us freely out of His undeserved love. That's a lot! There is no gift or gifts greater, are there?
- ✘ Because you know that, what then does God want you and me to do with those gifts of faith and salvation; with the forgiveness and new life that we've received in Jesus Christ? They belong to God, yet He has given them to us for our salvation. But do you think He wants us to just sit in our pews and our living rooms, behind closed doors and say, "Wow, how blessed am I!" and that's it? Nothing else?
- Of course not! From the beginning of Creation He told Adam and Eve that all of His people are to be caretakers; stewards of the gifts He has given to us.
- ✘ And that's what we see the Psalmist model for us here in Psalm 111 when he writes this song out for us to sing. He's very clear, this is not just for us to sing or express to ourselves in private. "Praise Yahweh! I will give thanks to Yahweh with my whole heart" (i.e. with every ounce of my being and in every way possible). And now here it is, "in the company of the upright, in the congregation."
- This means folks, that our praise and our expressions of gratitude toward God are absolutely to be celebrated among our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ's Church, but it is also to be done in public; at all times; in every single part of our lives in this world! If not, the Psalmist wouldn't have said that he gives thanks "with [his] whole heart."
- ✘ But why should you and I do this, even when we know that those around us may not appreciate it; that they might even call us out or persecute and torment us for displaying our faith in public?
- Because, as verse two and the rest of the Psalm lists out in great detail, "Great are the works of Yahweh...". For anyone who is willing to open their eyes and their hearts to the obvious evidence all around them, the facts cannot be disputed. As Paul says in today's Epistle Reading in 1 Corinthians 8:6, "...there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist."
- EVERYTHING from our food to our clothing to our homes to our toys to our health and our families and relationships and everything else that we have – physically, emotionally, spiritually and more – everything is from God and for God!
- ✘ As verse four points us to see in the various feasts and festivals; the holidays and ceremonies that have been passed down to us to celebrate, God "has caused His wondrous works to be remembered; Yahweh is gracious and merciful." Think of Christmas and Easter; or Thanksgiving and even supposedly secular celebrations like the Fourth of July, as well as birthdays and anniversaries. When we celebrate these days and events are we thanking Yahweh with our "whole heart", publically and boldly or are we celebrating ourselves and our barbeques and who knows what else?

II. Stewards in God's Covenant (v.5)

- ✘ God's purpose for us and our lives though are very clear. We are to be caretakers of all that He has done for us and given to us to use in His service first, and above all else.
- In verse four we're told that God "remembers His covenant forever." When the Bible says that God "remembers" something, it means that He is actively working to keep that thing going among His people – in this case it is His promise to Abraham and all of His descendants in the faith. In Psalm 105:8-10, we hear this explanation, "[Yahweh] remembers His covenant forever, the word that He commanded, for a thousand generations, the covenant that He made with

Abraham, His sworn promise to Isaac, which He confirmed to Jacob as a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant.”

→ God lists out generation after generation there to stress that He will always remember His pledge to His people. He is the one who chooses Israel as His people, delivers them from slavery and death and reveals to them how they are to now respond to His saving work both in faith toward Him and in trusting obedience to His Law, that is the “precepts” that we find in verse seven of our text today. As it says, “His precepts are trustworthy; they are established forever and ever, to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness” (vv. 7-8).

- ✘ That’s our purpose in this life folks, not to complain or whine about God’s Commandments or spend our time trying to figure out how we can somehow wiggle around them or twist them to our selfish advantage, but instead to celebrate them for the gifts that they are and to understand and joyfully share them with others so that even more generations in the future can find God’s guidance and direction for life in His “precepts” as well.

III. Stewards of God’s Inheritance (v.6)

- ✘ And so, as God’s purpose for us is that we be good stewards of His “covenant forever”, verse six then points us to that “forever” as the next gift for us to acknowledge and celebrate and yes, carefully and faithfully pass on to others.

→ Verse six says, “[Yahweh] has shown His people the power of His works, in giving them the inheritance of the nations.” When most people think of an inheritance they think of money or possessions that they have, or will receive from a parent or loved one when that person dies.

→ So what is “the inheritance” that verse six says God had already given to His people at the time of Psalm 111? It was the gift of their own land; The Promised Land in Canaan. This was God’s Holy Place here on earth; the place where He established His Temple so that His people could express their praise and offer their sacrifices – all of which God used to teach the people and point them foreword to God’s ultimate inheritance for His people of every time and place and era in history.

- ✘ Colossians 1:11-13 tells us of this inheritance; of our inheritance from God still today. Paul says, “May you be strengthened with all power, according to [God’s] glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son...”.

→ You see, it’s Jesus, God’s Son, through His death and resurrection in our place that “qualifies” us in the waters of our baptism to be adopted now into God’s family of faith and to thereby share in the eternal inheritance of the Kingdom of God in heaven. 1 Peter 1:4-5, tells us that this indescribable gift from God is “an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

- ✘ So folks, raise your hands if you are excited to receive that inheritance! It’s already yours by grace through faith in Jesus. And the great thing about this inheritance is that God wants all people everywhere to have it! That’s why Jesus came; that’s why He suffered and died; that’s why He rose again from the dead, to gain that inheritance of heaven for the souls of all who believe, with their “whole heart” (v.1) in Him as their Lord.

Conclusion – “Wise” Stewards

- ✘ This is where the last verse, verse 10 wraps everything up with a neat little bow for us today. Those who “give thanks to Yahweh with [their] whole heart” as we saw in verse one, and those

who celebrate and seek to live within God's "covenant" and according to His "precepts" as we heard about in verses five and seven, and those whom Jesus has qualified for His eternal "inheritance" in heaven as verse six alludes to, they are the ones that verse 10 says have "the fear of Yahweh".

➔ Verse 10 presents us with a simple math equation. It says, "The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding." You see, the beginning of wisdom is not found in keen insight or wide experience or the learning of the schools, but in the faith-filled expression of reverence and awe. That's what the "fear of Yahweh" means, to believe with your whole heart first, that everything is from God and second, that everything is for God and then to share that truth and declare that truth and celebrate that truth in every aspect of life with everyone in your life for the rest of your life!

➔ That dear Christians is God's purpose for your life today and always; to be "wise" stewards of His gracious gifts; to be His *People With A Purpose*. And so the Psalm ends in the same place that it begins, saying of God, "His praise endures forever!" Amen.