

“Cause for Praise!”—Psalm 111:1-3,10

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Cause for Praise!”, is Psalm 111:1-3,10 → *Hallelujah! I will give thanks to Yahweh with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation. Great are the works of Yahweh, studied by all who delight in them. Full of splendor and majesty is His work, and His righteousness endures forever . . . The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!*

This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord (cf. 1Timothy 1:2). Amen.

Ecclesiastes 12:12 tells us that *of making of many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh*. One might expect such a statement to flow easily off the tongue of a college student whose life seems to be books, books and more books, the study of which never seems to end. A perusal of any bookstore or library gives evidence to the same fact. And if it's not books, it's the information highway via the internet with an abundance of knowledge at the push of a button. The

point of the writer of Ecclesiastes is that the study of our world, its creatures, its life rhythm and patterns, and so forth never ends. It creates a vast field of study and disciplines which are never totally mastered by human beings. Thus, the writer of Ecclesiastes also concluded: *In much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases SORROW* (cf. Ecclesiastes 1:18).

The writer of psalm 111 came to a much different conclusion. For him, all study is connected to what may be called “theology,” the study of God. In what way? He states it in verse 2 of our text: *Great are the works of Yahweh, studied by all who delight in them.* Since creating the heavens and the earth and all that is in them is God’s great work, all search for knowledge is study based upon **what He has put in place** for the preservation of life. The more people *delight in* their learning about *the works of Yahweh*, the more they study to gain more insight and understanding.

However, the outcome of the psalmist’s observation of *the works of Yahweh* led him to praise the LORD, not despair in sorrow. Why such a different conclusion of both men as they *studied . . . the works of Yahweh*?

The difference is in the heart of each individual and his motive for acquiring such knowledge. One functions from a sanctified dominion over God’s creation while the other functions from a domination of

creation and it's creatures. While God gave the first man and woman *dominion . . . over every living thing that moves on the earth* (cf. Genesis 1:28), their fall into sin corrupted such dominion, turning it into a selfish desire to dominate their world around them. Instead of submitting to Yahweh in faith sinners submit Him to their own faithlessness and strive to gain control over life, people, death, nature and even God Himself. Thus, the conclusion of the faithless is that knowledge is power to subdue others and the world around them, usually for selfish purposes. The conclusion of those who trust in Yahweh is that knowledge leads to praise and thanksgiving in the midst of a world around them and relationships with others affected by sin.

As the psalmist considered the *great . . . works of Yahweh* it gave him cause to shout, *Hallelujah!* (the Hebrew word for “praise Yahweh” or “praise the LORD”). Notice the context in which he could make such a confession of faith in verse 1 of our text: *I will give thanks to Yahweh with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation.* His praise and thanks was an act of submission in the corporate worship with *the upright in the congregation.* The praise of God in the Psalms was not primarily a private matter between the believer and the LORD. It was usually a public celebration (i.e. at the temple in Jerusalem) of God's holy virtues, His saving acts and the gracious bestowal of His blessings. Thus, the Psalter (i.e. the book of Psalms) was the “hymnal”

of the Old Testament Church used in worship at the temple. “Alleluia,” the Greek word for “praise the LORD,” is used in our hymnal and worship repeatedly as well.

The cause for praise comes not only as a result of the *great . . . works of Yahweh* in His creating and continued preservation of our physical lives. Many put their whole heart and life into the study of God’s created order bringing forth wonderful discoveries which are beneficial to all mankind. As they work with the *great . . . works of Yahweh* He allows them to harness His power for great purposes which bless many people’s lives physically. Notice how we’ve been the recipients of so many amazing blessings of God’s creation in this technological age. However, this does not mean that all necessarily recognize the *great . . . works of Yahweh* in the world which they are studying, even though they too experience God’s gracious blessings as He provides for their physical sustenance daily (cf. Matthew 5:45). Such a recognition must come from a different heart—the heart of faith in Yahweh’s greatest work.

It is His work to restore sinners in His original *righteousness*, for which He created us and which *endures forever*. Once when asked what must be done *to be doing the works of God*, Jesus said in John 6:29 → *the work of God is that you believe in Him Whom God has sent* (i.e. Jesus). Since sinners were lost in their sin eternally, unable to submit to God, He promised to restore that perfect relationship with Him and all

creation through a Child born of a woman. Christmas is the celebration of the incarnation where Yahweh took on our humanity in the Person of Jesus.

Even though in Christ *the whole fullness of deity dwelt bodily* (cf. Colossians 2:9), *He did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself and humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death . . . on a cross* (cf. Philippians 2:6-8). He died on the cross as the perfect sacrifice for the forgiveness of your sins so that, by faith in Jesus, you can *draw near* to God in praise and thanksgiving *with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with **our hearts** sprinkled clean from an evil conscience* (cf. Hebrews 10:22). Yahweh's greatest work of your redemption in the Person & Work of Jesus is the cause of our Christmas praise! *Hallelujah!*

The *splendor and majesty* of His righteous work in Jesus puts a whole different perspective of our relationship to His creation which we study on so many different levels. The Holy Spirit gives us a sanctified view of the stuff of earth, recognizing it all as a blessing of God's creating for us. Each discovery of new information of God's creation brings us to confess with the words of Psalm 139:14 → *I praise You, O Yahweh, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.*

While more knowledge does bring more responsibility for the use of

that knowledge, it does not lead us to despair. Verse 10 of our text says: *The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. The fear of Yahweh is faith which respects and trusts in Him as our Creator, Who provides for our well-being on a daily basis. Thus, we have a good understanding that the cause of our praise is His care for us and His creation. The fear of Yahweh is faith which respects and trusts in Him as our Redeemer Who daily gives us the forgiveness of sins in Jesus. Thus, we also have a good understanding that the cause of our praise is His giving us eternal life in Jesus. The fear of Yahweh is faith which respects and trusts in Him as our Sanctifier. Thus, we have a good understanding that His Holy Spirit Whom we have received in our baptisms is working to preserve us in this new relationship with Him into eternity.*

With such faith we recognize the *beginning* point of *wisdom* is Yahweh, not our own conclusions to control our world, environment and relationships. We act ultimately trusting in Him to deliver and protect us even as we walk by faith in our study and use of His creation. We confess that we are not the “cosmic know-it-alls,” no matter how knowledgeable we may be. Thus, *with our whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation, His praise endures forever! Amen.*

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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