

Psalm 111: “1 Praise Jehovah! I will praise Jehovah with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright and in the congregation. 2 The works of Jehovah are great, Studied by all who have pleasure in them. 3 His work is honorable and glorious, And His righteousness endures forever. 4 He has made His wonderful works to be remembered; Jehovah is gracious and full of compassion. 5 He has given food to those who fear Him; He will ever be mindful of His covenant. 6 He has declared to His people the power of His works, in giving them the heritage of the nations. 7 The works of His hands are verity and justice; All His precepts are sure. 8 They stand fast forever and ever, and are done in truth & uprightness. 9 He has sent redemption to His people; He has commanded His covenant forever: Holy and awesome is His name. 10 The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever.

"Going Forth to Serve"

We come this week to the end of ordinary or normal time in the Church calendar and we come to the final message of the five I have used to review Covenant Renewal Worship. Next week we begin our celebration of Advent, the coming of Christ...

- **It is a season that should rightly remember that Jesus came in history as a man and that Jesus will come at the end of time as the Judge of all.**

So just as our Church calendar works its way each year through the ministry of Jesus and the growth of His Kingdom, so we have seen that the divine worship service has five movements as God renews His Covenant with His people each week as we gather on the Lord's Day:

- **A Call to Worship our Triune God**
- **A Confession of our sins & forgiveness**
- **A time of Consecration of the Saints**
- **A Communion meal with our Savior**
- **A Commission to disciple the nations**

This week we consider how and why we are commissioned: I used Psalm 111 as our text and did so because it was part of our scheduled readings on our Church of the King calendar. As I read it this week, I was reminded about what we have been studying:

We began our series with some study material that I hope many of you have had the time to review. There we saw how the covenant renewal pattern of our worship service is something that we often see in the Scriptures: As I tried to show in the chart that was attached, it should be something that we see almost everywhere.

In the covenantal pattern we see God taking hold of something or someone: We see Him then change or reorder them, we see Him speak instructions to them and bring about maturity. God then confirms the covenant with signs & seals [often a meal] and finally God looks to the future & the purpose for which He took hold of something or someone in the first place.

We see this with creation and Adam, where the purpose was to have the earth full of Godly people who would become mature stewards of God's grand creation.

We see it again with the calling of Abraham, where he was taken from his land & people and called to a new land. God made a covenant with Him, gave Him a new name and sealed it all with a meal and then told him that he was to be fruitful and become a blessing to many nations.

Years later, God's people were delivered out of Egypt so they could possess the Promised Land.

The nation of Israel was restored after the Babylonian captivity so they could prepare for the coming of the Messiah who would bring a Kingdom that would fill the earth.

- The whole purpose of the New Covenant is given in the Great Commission, which is why we end our service with our commissioning and a blessing from God!

We have shown how our time of confession and forgiveness related to the sin offerings, that our time of worship and instruction related to the burnt offering or more properly the ascension offering and that our communion celebration related to the peace offering: If we think about it in New Testament terms, God is justifying His people; God is sanctifying His people and God will glorify His people: Blessings we are reminded of each week! This should bring a new richness to Leviticus 9:22 where we read: 22 "Then Aaron lifted his hand toward the people, blessed them, and came down from offering the sin offering, the burnt offering, and peace offerings. 23 And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of meeting, and came out and blessed the people."

- We are told in Numbers chapter six how they were to bless the people:

And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying: 23 "...This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them: 24 "Jehovah bless you and keep you; 25 Jehovah make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; 26 Jehovah lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace." 27 "So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, & I will bless them."

So as with the Advent season, the commissioning portion of our service is both the end and the beginning...

- It is the proper end of our Covenant Renewal Worship service...
- AND it is the beginning of our new week of service in the Kingdom of Jesus.
- We have gathered together in response to God's call.
- We have remembered that we belong to Jesus, wearing His white robes of righteousness!
- We have matured in our faith as we have been instructed by God's Word and brought forth our worship, gifts and prayers.
- We have been given food and drink indeed as we partook of the body and blood of Jesus at His Table

And now God desires to bless us with much fruit in the work of His Kingdom.

- As we always see in the covenant pattern: God looks to the future!
- Our Covenant God has a plan and a purpose for us experiencing such renewal during the worship service!
- Through it we are properly prepared to serve His purposes!

This is why we do more than just say the benediction to end our service.

- After we have celebrated at the Lord's Table together we are reminded about how important our commission really is with another reading from the Scriptures...

Often it is the Great commission but we also use other references relating to the expansion of God's Kingdom. We read together and sing one of the Psalms or a Psalm along with one of the great hymns of the faith like A Mighty Fortress is Our God or Joy to the World focused on our commission.

- Once again, we are allowing the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God to shape and mold our thinking as we prepare to go forth...
- It is important that we consider carefully what we are hearing and reading and that we once again sing heartily before our Covenant God...

We need to stay focused on what is being taught and not be distracted by thinking we need to get to the restroom or how really ready for lunch we are... As for you kids, it is a time to think about how you are going to live and obey ALL week rather than preparing to be first up here for the extra bread.

Again, this is God's Word that we are reading, that powerful sword wielded by the very Spirit of God, and we are singing in the presence of God lifting up our right worship. Then I pronounce the benediction, the blessing that Aaron gave to the people: I use Aaron's blessing or one of several New Testament passages w/ blessings.

- This is a blessing from God that we are to receive! *[It is appropriate to have our hand or hands outstretched to receive such a blessing: Catching as opposed to throwing.]*

And finally, just as we always begin with the same song of adoration with O Worship the King, we end our service with the singing of Simeon's Song and the Doxology. While many of the songs that we sing in the service are far too difficult for our younger members, we provide various places where they can heartily sing along...

- Parents you should be diligent in making sure that they know these songs and that they participate.

Simeon's song is a fitting way to end our covenant renewal service:

- God had promised Simeon that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah...

So in Luke's account we read that [Simeon] took the baby Jesus up in his arms & blessed God & said ...

Luke 2:29 "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; 30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation 31 Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, 32 A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel."

- We must be prepared to go forth and serve Jesus with the same faith that Simeon had, believing that the tiny baby in his arms could and would bring about such momentous changes to a very needy world.

With our hands once again lifted up, we proclaim with Simeon's faith... "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever more shall be, world without end, AMEN.

- We join with the Saints who have gone before and the hosts of heaven in declaring the glory of God with the New Song believing that God has a plan and purpose for all of history!

Our commissioning is both the end and the beginning:

- We have concluded the divine worship service and are ready to begin our divine service to God throughout the week.
- This is why we were gathered together by God and this is why we are now commissioned to go forth.

Jesus came to save His people from their sins, Jesus was raised in power and ascended to God's right hand as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The Spirit was sent at Pentecost to comfort and empower us as the Body of Christ as we carry out the Great Commission that our Lord gave us:

Matthew 28:19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

- What a promise and what a commission!

So, how do we know what our role in God's great plan is going to be?

- The great commission is a tall order so I guess we need to start planning who to run for President!

- We need to make sure we have lots and lots of millionaires in our midst so we can pay for it all.
- We need to make sure that we teach everyone in the world English so they can understand these great plans!

While we may rightly chuckle at such thinking, the sad truth is that as the Church has wrestled with these truths down through the centuries we have often fallen into such traps, failed miserably and then begun to wonder about whether filling the earth with the Kingdom of Jesus is really God's plan.

- In our modern western Church we have simply moved everything off into the future so we don't really have to worry about it... Just go out and save a few more souls.

Now the saving of souls is certainly important because God is not planning on filling the earth with pagans, but rather filling it with His children!

We are to remember and believe the great promises of God and then we are to simply be those who trust & obey. We are to believe that God really is taking history where He wants it to go, that the earth will be filled with the Kingdom of His Son and that He has a role for us to play in the advancement of that Kingdom! _Jesus rightly brought everything back to the two great commands:

- Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbor as yourself.

The Ten Commandments explain what this means: We are to cast aside ALL idolatry and respect God's name, which represents His authority & power, as well as honoring His Day, which represents His control of all history. Then we are to respect our parents as the earthly picture of God's rule and to respect and love those made in the image of God by not killing them, not committing sexual sins with them, stealing from them, not bearing false witness against them nor coveting their possessions.

So how do we know if we are doing this right in the life we are living today?

We can begin by looking at the accounts of our history as God's people in the Old Testament because Paul says I Corinthians chapter ten that they are there as OUR examples. We read and study the books of wisdom in the Old Testament, and the retelling of God's faithfulness to His people that we saw in our morning text: We must be familiar with ALL of God's Word to properly serve Him.

- We must learn well & apply the many teachings that Jesus gave us during His earthly ministry.

Finally we are given more examples from history in the Book of Acts and we strive to follow the many commands given to us in the Epistles of the New Testament.

- In short, we need to know our Bibles well and to practice what we learn by faith!

- God's Word teaches us how we are to grow and mature as young people.
- God's Word teaches us how we are to faithfully serve God as single people or married couples.
- God's Word teaches us about the joy and beauty the world should see in our marriages.
- God's Word teaches us about the worth and importance of our calling in our homes and to the world.
- God's Word teaches us about the wisdom of age & respect for our elders
- God's Word teaches us about the importance of raising Godly children, both as their parents and their sponsors or examples.
- God's Word teaches us about the priority of caring for widows & the poor among us.
- God's Word teaches us about the importance of sharing the Good News with others, being those beautiful feet who bring the message of hope!

- **And I hope we have learned in these past few weeks how God's Word teaches us to rightly worship our Triune God!**

How we are to gather together as the Body of Christ so that God can renew this great covenant that He has made with His people. How we can remember the great salvation that we have, knowing that our sins are forgiven & the joy of being clothed in the righteousness of Jesus. How we grow and mature each week as we are instructed by God's Word and feast at His Table. And finally how we are commissioned go forth each week to serve our risen and reigning Savior:

This morning we are going to close the season of ordinary time and my series on worship with the singing of two very challenging songs, both for the pianist and our voices! The first is one of the oldest hymns that has survived down to our age: St. Patrick's Breastplate.

Patrick is known as the Apostle of Ireland, but was born in Scotland around the year 387. At sixteen he was captured by Irish pirates and sold into slavery for six years under a Druid priest: Here his faith grew strong in the midst of great toil; he learned the native language and the awful bondage that the Irish people were under at the hands of Satan's servants. Patrick escaped and would later return as a great missionary to the Irish. Of course Patrick is claimed by the Church of Rome today, but he was in fact a Christian missionary, bringing the Good News to a pagan land.

There are many controversies surrounding the many tales and stories about his life, but of one thing there is no doubt: Ireland moved from being a thoroughly pagan land to one that has embraced the Christian faith for over a thousand years. I am sure there were miracles in the work that Patrick did, but we must never forget his love for the Irish people was forged during his time of slavery and oppression and the land was conquered by a man willing to accept God's call to return.

How did he conquer those pagans? With the power of God and the truth of His word reflected in this great hymn: Words that carried and strengthened their work and enabled them to confront and defeat the forces of evil that had ruled that land for centuries. *[Mention the snakes & clover]*

Patrick was commissioned to return to Ireland AND we are commissioned to go forth today...

Perhaps if all the 'problems' that we face in America today begin to get us down, we should join with Patrick's followers in singing his Lorica or incantation on the highways and byways here today.

Remembering that we too must rightly worship and serve our Triune God, as the one true God, the maker of heaven and earth and the Savior of His people, all the days of our lives!

Communion Meditation: Psalm 110:

"Jehovah said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool." 2 The Lord shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies! 3 Your people shall be volunteers In the day of Your power; In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning, You have the dew of Your youth. 4 The Lord has sworn And will not relent, "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek." 5 The Lord is at Your right hand; He shall execute kings in the day of His wrath. 6 He shall judge among the nations, He shall fill the places with dead bodies, He shall execute the heads of many countries. 7 He shall drink of the brook by the wayside; Therefore He shall lift up the head.