

A while ago I saw a program that was called a praise service. In this service, one guy was running back and forth on the stage, jumping up and down, yelling “Praise the Lord.” He was yelling “Let everyone praise the Lord.” The camera would scan the audience and the audience was jumping up and down, waving their hands, clapping, and in the background some rock band was blaring and a choir was half dancing and repeating something about praising the Lord over and over again.

Now my question is, is that what a praise service is supposed to be? When God sees that does He consider that out of control mob to be worshipping Him in praise? If we compare that scene to what the Bible says about real praise worship, does that fit the pattern? The answer is “NO!”

Psalms 111 is a Psalm that gives us great insight into what God deems as true praise. The point of the Psalm is this:

ACCEPTABLE PRAISE IS A PRAISE THAT CAREFULLY STUDIES THE WORD OF GOD TO TEACH ABOUT THE WORKS OF GOD SO THAT PEOPLE WILL FEAR AND OBEY GOD, WHICH IS THAT WHICH BRINGS GREAT GLORY OF GOD.

The Hebrew word “praise” (Hallel) is one that means to make something shine clear and bright and brilliant to the point that its glory is seen (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 226).

So the real Biblical idea of praise is that we make the truth of God shine clear and bright and brilliant to the point where God’s glory is seen. Real praise has nothing to do with emotional outbursts or irrational nonsense. It has nothing to do with our glory. It has everything to do with God’s glory. Real praise is about glorifying God by seeing God for whom and what He is. Real praise does not elevate man; it elevates God.

Now **verses 1-3** set the stage for the rest of the Psalm and in these verses there are six features of real praise:

Feature #1 - Real praise gives thanks to God with all one’s heart. **111:1a**

This should always be the attitude we have when we gather for worship. Real praise is not ever half-hearted; it is whole-hearted.

Feature #2 - Real praise is in the context of the assembly of upright people. **111:1b**

The assembly of upright people refers to those who love God and His Word. They love to be taught and challenged. The assembly may be many or few, but this is where you will find real praise. Real praise not only is concerned about where it takes place, but with whom it takes place. When godly people gather corporately to worship, the potential to truly praise God is dynamic.

Feature #3 - Real praise acknowledges that God's works are great. **111:2a**

God's works cover everything. They include what He has made, what He has done and what He is doing and what He will do. It is interesting that no works are mentioned, so the idea is all works of God are great. In design, in number, in size, in perfection, all of God's works are great. We don't even know many of the silent, sovereign works of God; but they are all great.

Feature #4 - Real praise features people who delight in studying God's Word and works. **111:2b**

People right with God love to study the Scriptures. Careful study of the Scriptures by people who love the Scriptures is crucial to praise. Someone said, "Human things must be known to be loved. Divine things must be loved to be known." You must love to study the Scriptures if you are to truly praise God.

The word "study" means to carefully seek out and examine God's Word. This is not a sermonette or moral challenge to entertain. There is no greater use of mind and no greater offering of praise than to carefully study the Scriptures to know the Word and works of God. When we study the doctrines and the different books of the Bible, we are offering a form of praise to God.

Feature #5 - Real praise honors God because His works are splendid and majestic. **111:3a**

Every work of God may be viewed as splendid and majestic. It is majestic in number, design, purpose and magnitude. Every work of God has divine worth.

Feature #6 - Real praise honors God because His righteousness endures forever. **111:3b**

Righteousness is not temporal; it is eternal. God's righteousness endures forever. God is always and will always be righteous. People think they are getting away with their unrighteous, immoral, godless behavior. But know this, the righteousness of God endures forever and it will track one down.

Now in **verses 4-9**, there are eight great works that are great and praiseworthy:

(Great Work #1) - God has made memorable wonders. **111:4a**

God's works are God's wonders. God has done things, created things and continues to do things that leave people standing in awe of His work. He has done memorable things. He caused a worldwide flood. He parted a sea. He gave His commandments at Mt. Sinai. He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. He sent His own Son into this world. These are amazing things.

(Great Work #2) - God is always gracious and compassionate. **111:4b**

In everything about God there is grace (unmerited favor) and compassion (kind mercy). God is a gracious God and a compassionate God.

(Great Work #3) - God has always provided for those who fear Him. **111:5a**

People who fear God will discover God will abundantly supply for them. David said I have never seen the righteous forsaken or begging bread (Ps. 37:25). When we stop thanking God for all He has given to us, we stop worshipping.

John Rice had six daughters and he said they always needed money. He said I would often say to them "Go easy, I am not made of money." One day he said I realized that God never said that to him. God never says to His people "Go easy, I cannot provide what you ask or need." He said I came to realize that often my lack was a lack of faith to believe that God provides for those who fear Him.

(Great Work #4) - God remembers His covenant forever. **111:5b**

In the O.T. economy, there was the Abrahamic covenant; the Mosaic Covenant and the Davidic covenant. The specific covenant is not named, which means this applies to any covenant God makes. This is true for Israel and for us.

What a blessing it is to know that when God enters into a covenant relationship with some nation or individual, it is forever (Heb. 9:13-15). No matter how confused or distorted one becomes, God will not forget the covenant relationship He has with His people.

A covenant was a legal pact in which God would enter into a legal agreement with someone and promise to do something, thus legally binding Himself to do it. God says I will remember My covenant forever. I remember My legal pact with Israel and with the N.T. Grace Age believer. Even if His own people deny Him, He will still be faithful to them (II Tim. 2:13).

(Great Work #5) - God has made Himself and His power work known to His people. **111:6**

This is a very interesting verse. God's people have a unique relationship with God and a unique privilege of knowing God's Word and works. God's people have a unique sense of the work of God and the future of God. God has only revealed this to His people and only God's people know that God has the power to accomplish this. God's people learn things from God they cannot learn in any school.

The ability to grow in the Word and grasp the deep things of God is a unique work of God. Do not ever take that for granted. When we understand God's Word, God is letting us understand it.

(Great Work #6) - God's works are all done in the context of truth and justice. **111:7a**

Two great themes that are always involved in God's works: truth and righteous judgment. There is no development of God without truth. People can convince others and con others, but they cannot con God. God is a God of truth. There will be no false promotions in eternity. All of the works of God will be based on truth and justice.

(Great Work #7) - God's Word and precepts are all sure. **111:7b-8**

All the precepts of God are trustworthy and dependable. Not one of God's words will ever fail. This to me is why God's Word must be studied and taken literally. What God says is true. What God says will happen, will literally happen. Since God uses literal words to teach literal truth, we need to carefully study those words.

Now in **verse 8** the writer elaborates on this theme. God's Word is upheld forever and ever. God's Word is magnified forever. His Word is truth and it is upright.

People right with God have a reverence for the Word of God.

(Great Work #8) - God's work of redemption is forever praiseworthy. **111:9**

The concept of redemption is that one pays the price of ownership. Do you see who is redeemed? The people of God are redeemed. God sends redemption to His people. He sends condemnation and destruction to those who are not His people.

In **verse 10** we get further insight into the kind of real praise we should have toward God in view of these things:

(Ingredient #1) - Real praise begins with a fear of the Lord. **110:10a**

This statement here is the motto of all wisdom writers.

(Ingredient #2) - Real praise has a good understanding of God's Word. **110:10b**

(Ingredient #3) - Real praise obeys the commands of God. **110:10c**

(Ingredient #4) - Real praise realizes God's praise endures forever. **111:10d**