

Introduction to Psalm 111

One mode of poetry in the Psalms is all-out praise and thanksgiving, such as the one for today's scripture reading – Psalm 111. We also find praise even in Psalms of lament and complaint because “God is good all the time and all the time God is good!” Life is not always good, but when we engage in gratitude, we remember the evidence of God at work in our lives and we remember that indeed, God is holding our lives, even now.

Psalm Reading - Psalm 111

Alleluia!

I will thank you, ADONAI, with all my heart
in the meeting of the just and their assembly.

Great are your works,
to be pondered by all who love them.

Majestic and glorious are your works,
and your justice stands firm forever.

You make us remember your wonders—
you are compassion and love.

You give food to those who revere you,
keeping your Covenant ever in mind.

You reveal to your people the power of your actions
by giving them the lands of the nations
as their inheritance.

The works of your hands are truth and justice,
and all your precepts are sure,
standing firm forever and ever,
and carried out uprightly and faithfully.

You have sent deliverance to your people
and established your Covenant forever.

Your Name is holy and awe-inspiring!

Reverence for ADONAI

is the beginning of wisdom—

those who have it prove themselves wise.

Your praise will last forever!

The psalm we just read is the first of several that begin, “Alleluia!” It is like the moment we hear good news that we have been waiting for and we let out a “hoop and a holler” or a “woo hoo!” The mixture of joy and relief is a powerful emotional combination. And it turns out that the expression of praise and gratitude is important for making it through the bad times. Science tells us that serotonin, the “feel good” chemical in our brains, is one of the essential elements of well-being. In the midst of living with a lot of bad news, we can be depleted in ways that are harmful to our resilience. Offering our whole hearts in praise even for small things can keep us going when the going is rough.