

PSALMS

Chapter 111

Great Are the LORD's Works

Praise the LORD! I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation. 2 Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them. 3 Full of splendor and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures forever. 4 He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered; the LORD is gracious and merciful. 5 He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever. 6 He has shown his people the power of his works, in giving them the inheritance of the nations. 7 The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy; 8 they are established forever and ever, to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness. 9 He sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever. Holy and awesome is his name! 10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!

Ps 111 Praise of God for his unfailing righteousness. The psalm combines hymnic praise with wisdom instruction, as its first and last verses indicate. Close comparison with Ps 112 shows that these two psalms are twins, probably written by the same author and intended to be kept together. The two psalms are most likely postexilic. They introduce a series of Hallelujah psalms (Ps 111–118), but stand apart from them in traditional Jewish liturgical use (see introduction to Ps 113). Structurally, both Ps 111 and Ps 112 are alphabetic acrostics (see NIV text note), but unique in that each (Hebrew) half-line advances the alphabet. Both psalms are framed by first and last verses that highlight their primary themes, and in both psalms the main body develops the theme introduced by the first verse, while the closing verse adds a counterpart. In both psalms the main body of eight verses falls thematically into two halves of four verses each, with the corresponding verses of each half containing certain thematic links (compare, e.g., 111:2 and 111:6; also vv. 5 and 9). Corresponding verses of the two psalms also tend to share common themes (compare, e.g., 111:3–5 with 112:3–5). (CSB)

Praises the Lord for His words and works.

Format: Ps 111–12 are acrostic, or alphabetical. Each line begins with a sequential letter of the Hbr alphabet. (TLSB)

111:1 *I will give thanks.* Introductory to the praise that follows in vv. 2–9. (CSB)

Introduces a series of hallelujah psalms (Ps 111–18). (TLSB)

company of the upright. Probably a more intimate circle than the assembly (see 107:32 for a similar distinction) and referring to those who are truly godly—such as the “upright” of 112:2, 4 (see 11:7; 33:1; 49:14; 97:11; 107:42; 140:13). (CSB)

Other psalms also commend us to corporate praise (26:12; 107:32; 68:26). (TLSB)

111:2 *works of the LORD.* The hymn focuses especially on what God has done for his people. Verses 2, 9 sum it up. (CSB)

God's works include creation, the exodus from Egypt, and entrance into the Promised Land. (TLSB)

Cf Jn 6:28–29. Luther said God's greatest work is the creation of believers (AE 11:374–75). Cf also vv 4, 9. (TLSB)

studied. Reflectively examined (see Ezr 10:16, “investigate”; Ecc 1:13, “study”). (CSB)

111:3 *righteousness.* As embodied in his deeds. (CSB)

111:5 *provides food.* Illustrative of his bountiful provisions for the daily needs of his people (as in the Lord's prayer: “Give us today our daily bread,” Mt 6:11). (CSB)

his covenant. What God says in his word is always put into action. What God does is based on what he has said in his word. (PBC)

111:6 *inheritance* – Canaan was occupied by 12 nations, which were displaced by Israel. (TLSB)

111:7 *faithful and just.* Cf. “Glorious and majestic” (v. 3). (CSB)

111:8 *They.* “The works of his hands” (v. 7). (CSB)

faithfulness and uprightness. Cf. “gracious and compassionate” (v. 4). (CSB)

111:9 *sent redemption.* The other great benefit of God's deeds in behalf of his people (cf. “provides food,” v. 5). (CSB)

holy and awesome. As shown by his works. (CSB)

111:10 Concluding word of godly wisdom. (CSB)

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom. The classic OT statement concerning the religious basis of what it means to be wise (see Job 28:28; Pr 1:7; 9:10) (CSB)

The fear of the Lord, which is awe and respect for all that he has revealed and done, is the basis of true wisdom. (PBC)

who practice it. Lit. “who do them.” The plural Hebrew pronoun refers back to “precepts” in v. 7 (see 19:7–9, where “The fear of the LORD” stands parallel to “statutes,” “precepts,” “commands,” “ordinances”; see also 112:1). (CSB)

When people believe the words of God (His covenant) proven by the works of God (creation, redemption, provision), they have wisdom. But wisdom also proves itself in the practice of living by faith. (TLSB)

God's word tells us what he has done, but it also tells us how we should respond to his deeds. We should believe his promises. They are dependable and will all be fulfilled. We should strive to live according to his commands. They tell us what is pleasing to God and what is best for our lives. (PBC)

Psalm 111. Luther suggested that the words of v 4, “the LORD is gracious and merciful,” should be painted in golden letters around a portrait of the Lord’s Supper (AE 13:375), for in this Supper Christians continue to remember both the words and works of the Lord. • Gracious and merciful Lord, we look to You for the remission of our sins in Jesus, who speaks Your faithful words and performs the mighty work of our salvation. Hallelujah! Amen. (TLSB)