



The Word @ Home

January 29, 2012

Scripture: Psalm 111

Thoughts: Psalm 111 is classified as an Individual Hymn of Thanksgiving, a psalm type in which the singer gives thanks for God's goodness in delivering him/her from various life-threatening situations such as illness, oppression, or enemy attack. The words of thanks by this individual worshiper are unusual, however, for they recount not an event of God's deliverance of an individual, but God's deliverance of an entire *community*.

In addition, Psalm 111 is a succinct and masterful *acrostic* poem. It consists of twenty-two phrases (excluding verse 1a), each of which begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In a mere seventy-two words, the psalmist summarizes the whole history of God's deliverance of ancient Israel.

Discussion: If you've ever met a person with amnesia, they may be functioning beautifully. They may be talking, they may be laughing, they may have a perfect heart rate, but they will not be able to tell you whom they are. Memory is the source of identity. The church gathers together to do *memory work*, that is, to remember how it is they have come to know the presence of God in ages past. We read from the Old Testament more than two thousand years ago. We read from the New Testament. We sing hymns that have been written over the last two thousand years. It's the church gathered together doing its *memory work*, reminding ourselves of the many ways in which God has been made manifest to human beings over the ages. That gives us a sense of God's authority spoken through these many manifestations.

Then having done the memory work, we offer ourselves, our souls to God. This is who we are. Today's Gospel shows us Jesus teaching people gathered together. The decision to accept Jesus as the primary authority in my life is an individual decision but the spiritual journey to make that authority real is a *community* journey.

A community of God should demonstrate favor or grace toward one another. Ultimately, it is God who saves and expands the community, but not without our assistance. God

worked in and through people willing to teach and be taught, to believe in, perform and receive signs and wonders, and to create mutual *cooperation*.

Activities: How are you connected to your church community? It is important that community building starts on the right foot. Think about how you serve God and your church community. Are you ready to do more? If so, think about how you can incorporate service into your everyday life. There are many opportunities that take less time than you think. Can you involve your family in a project? For example, there are families at St. Paul's who serve as ushers together and Sunday school teachers. Carefully listen for God's message to you. He has a plan for each one of us and yours may surprise you. Perhaps you'll be led to write the Word@Home...