

Psalm 111
“Hallelujah Helper”
4th Sunday of Epiphany

January 28, 2017
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Rev. Brent Hartwig

Grace, Mercy, and Peace be unto you from Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior and God our Heavenly Father. Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

[Introduction]

Millions of people have used this product since its introduction in 1971.

My brother requests it each year for his birthday, and ...

You may even have a couple of boxes of it in your pantry right now:
Hamburger Helper.

It may not be what you serve at Easter or Christmas,
but it's obviously tasty and convenient enough
for people to keep buying and using.

Just as we need some help with meal prep from time to time,
we Christians often need help with our worship prep.

Maybe today was one of those Sundays.

Maybe today was one of those Sundays you were not excited about coming to church.
It's not Easter or Christmas...

This is not a Trivia Challenge Sunday and

there is no guest presenter like Brian Young here today.

Instead, I can just imagine,

you might have shuffled through your morning routine
feeling more **obligated** than **excited** to go to church.

Wouldn't it be something if there was a product

that could put us in the right frame of mind for worship every Sunday?

Now Hamburger Helper won't do that, but Psalm 111 can. It's a Hallelujah Helper.

[Hallelujah] Psalm 111 in fact begins in Hebrew with the word “Hallelujah!”

Which means: “Praise YH-” – “HalleluJAH”

“Praise YH-WH” or “Praise the Lord!”

Why should we want to do that? Psalm 111 tells you.

**“Praise the Lord...Glorious and majestic are his deeds,
and his righteousness endures forever.**

He has caused his wonders to be remembered...” (Ps 111:1a, 3, 4a).

Our God is worth praising because his deeds are majestic.

[Example 1]

You might think of how God created the earth in six days with his powerful Word.

When God was done with his work of creation on that first Friday afternoon,

– literally TGIF –

he looked with satisfaction on a universe with

stars, comets, oceans, animals, and

two people named Adam and Eve.

Everything God created was absolutely perfect.

But then sin came into the world.

Sin came into the world and just ruined everything

just as a single grain of sand can easily ruin a climbing rope.

So perhaps you don't feel so inclined to raise a "Hallelujah!" for God's work of creation – not when fires burn the forest and rain causes mudslides...

– not when hurricanes demolish islands and earthquakes level tall buildings.

[Example 2]

Then consider more closely these sentences from the verses we just read:

“He provides food for those who fear him...”

***He has shown his people the power of his works,
giving them the lands of other nations.”***

The author seems to be alluding to the way in which God provided for the Israelites after he rescued them from Egypt.

He not only brought them out of slavery,

he also provided food for them

as they made their way to the Promised Land.

In... Chapter 15 – water made sweet

Chapter 16 – meat to eat and bread from heaven

and in Chapter 17 – water from the rock.

You and I,

we're not struggling through a wilderness like the Israelites did,

but we *ARE* reliant on the food and homes that God provides for us every day.

AND what is amazingis that God continues to provide for us.

He provides even when our attitude is like Bart Simpson

– the TV cartoon character – who once prayed:

“Lord, since we paid for this food, thanks for nothing.”

Sure, you may have paid for the food that's on your table
but... Who gave you the ability to earn the money to buy the food?
Who ensures peace so that the food could be delivered to the grocery store?
Who give you the breath of life? God. And so, he is deserving of our praise.

[Example 3]

But what ought to motivate us even more to give God our hallelujahs
is what the psalmist said in verse 9:

***“He provided redemption for his people;
he ordained his covenant forever—”*** (Psalm 111:9a).

This verse has special meaning for all who are baptized,
for through baptism God has made a covenant with us.
Through baptism God adopted you as his child.
He washed your sins away.
He gave you the Holy Spirit
and has granted you eternal life through faith in Jesus.
He's done this all for free and forever.

Have you ever heard of a will in which the signatory left everything
to his worst enemy?

That's what God has done for you and for me,
for all those who have been baptized.

For even though we, as sinners, were God's enemies,
through baptism God pledged himself to us
and gives us blessings through Jesus
that we don't deserve.

That's quite a covenant!

It's no wonder the psalmist concluded that verse by saying,
“...holy and awesome is his name” (Psalm 111:9b).

[QUESTION] But if our God is so deserving of our hallelujahs,
why can days, even weeks go by without any praises escaping our lips?
It's true – isn't it?

It's because like the Israelites we have such a short-term memory
when it comes to remembering God's blessings and his love for us.

The psalmist gives us a way to combat this attitude – the attitude of ingratitude.

He wrote: ***“Great are the works of the LORD;
they are pondered by all who delight in them”*** (Psalm 111:2).

The word “ponder” in Hebrew literally means to “visit often.”

Does that describe your routine with God’s Word?

Do you visit it often..., as often as you visit Facebook?

The content of Faithbook (God’s Word)

doesn’t ever change like the content on Facebook does

so Satan makes us believe that there is no point

in visiting God’s Word often.

We say and we think, “”Heard it all before!”

Although God’s Word doesn’t change, your life does!

A psalm you read last year may not have seemed to say much to you at the time
but what about today?

What new challenges are you trying to sort through that this psalm would speak to?

FUTHERMORE... The first verse of the psalm reads like this:

“I will extol the LORD with all my heart

in the council of the upright and in the assembly” (Psalm 111:1).

The psalmist is encouraging us to do more than

visit God’s word often in the privacy of our home,

he points out the importance of joining with fellow believers

to sing God’s praises, to sing your hallelujahs.

AND this is not just another plug from your pastor to be regular in worship;

it’s God’s encouragement. Put it into practice.

[***Conclusion***]

Will you be excited about going to church every Sunday? I hope so, but probably not.

So what can you do?

Well when you’re stuck for a meal idea you can reach for the Hamburger Helper,

but when your hallelujahs have become stuck in your throat

reach for Psalm 111 – that Hallelujah Helper.

As you read the psalm again

you’ll be reminded of the many reasons you have to praise the Lord,

even if it isn’t Easter or Christmas.

Psalm 111 teaches that we have an awesome God who saved us from our sin,

and who never takes a break from caring for us.

May we never take a break from praising him. “Hallelujah!” Amen.

“Now may the God of peace... equip you with everything good

that you may do his will, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.

Amen.” (Heb 13:20-21)
