

Psalm 111 & Ephesians 5:15-20

Especially Psalm 111:10 & Ephesians 5:18-19

In Psalm 111:1 the Psalmist says, 'I will thank the Lord with all my Heart

Notwithstanding our current snap COVID lockdown orders , we in Eden have much to thank God about when we measure our situation by the circumstances of many others throughout the world. We could pause for a moment and think of all the situations where unimaginable problems are currently being experienced.....

- Do you think of Afghanistan?
- Or wild fires in Italy and Greece?
- Or COVID19 catastrophes in Indonesia or India?
- Unrest in South Africa?
- Or the rates of Indigenous incarceration in Northern Territory?

Certainly when we think of the plight of many others we must give thanks to God that we have escaped such pain BUTOur pain and problems are not something that we can easily feel better about simply by a comparison with the pains & problems of others as if their pain by its immensity makes ours somewhat easier to bear. No, pain does not work that way.

Yes, when we compare our lot with others we may well have much to be thankful aboutbut I am aware that many who are reading this reflection have real pain in their life and much anxiety. Please, in your minds eye think of our congregation or your friends - some are in frail health, some concerned because of insecure accommodation, some worried about whether their income will stretch to their needs, some anxious about friends who are living at what seems like an 'infinite distance'. There are many among us with real pain and deep worries. In the mids of their pain and

anxiety, comparing their pain with others is, to say the least, 'small comfort'. Do you agree? I assume you will.

So how can we join with the psalmist and say

'I will thank the Lord with all his Heart

Well - perhaps the 'comparison thing' mentioned is sometimes helpful but the psalmist is of course not really referring to 'good fortune' when he 'thanks the Lord'. No, the Psalmist is talking about more than just the good things that happen to me or you indeed he is even talking about something beyond even the current calamity that may have happened to us or is still yet to happen to you or me or us! When the Psalmist in Psalm 111 is thankful to what God has done he is primarily, overwhelmingly, thinking of what God has done for us in 'Salvation History'! See the references to 'his Covenant', 'giving them lands', 'his commandments' & both 'the wonders he performs' and 'paid full ransom' (both most easily seen as references to their exodus from Egypt) - in the light of these things the psalmist is most thankful to what God has done to save his people according to God's own promises (Genesis 12:1-3).

This History is the action of God to bring people back into peace with God! It is a history of creation where God gifts us life. It is a History where God as lover continues to woo and seek even as humanity turned their back on their creator. Our 'fall' from God is an every-person story - Edam and Eve, Cain and Lamech, Citizens of Babel - the Bible would have us see ourselves in each of these characters - And as their waywardness progresses so the Grace of God abounds - clothing is provided, marks of safety given, culture is born, an ark is built, and Abram is called and to him a promise is given - All the families of the earth will be blessed through you. (Genesis 12:1-3). In Psalm 111, the psalmist is thinking of this Salvation History from the fall of Adam to the promise to Abram and on to the creation of the Nation of Israel in which God will make spectacular promises to Moses and David and the prophets - Promises which find their fulfilment when the true son of David,

the true son of Abraham, is born in a Bethlehem manger - namely Christ the Lord.

In Psalm 111 the Psalmist can only imagine the fulfilment in Jesus Christ - but for all the past faithful actions of God in Salvation - for all this - the Psalmist is thankful - such that any personal pain and calamity, though never diminished or removed, is somehow 'quietened' - for such is the seeking of God to gift us with friendship and love that our pain, though real, can never prove/mean that God has disregarded or forgotten us - NO - in God's Salvation History we see God for humanity, even-though, things may not always work for my sort term wellbeing every day!

[We do not always know why pain and calamity impact our lives - mostly it is a fruitless or even false task to even try to work out the why! Is it our foolishness?, the evils of others?, natural disasters that are bound to happen in a 'broken or majestic' creation? - or may it have been the hand of God to discipline us? Because of frequent uncertainty, I'm not sure if these questions are ever very helpful, certainly never straight-forward! but then again sometimes these questions must be asked and sometimes real action taken to curb our actions, run from danger, seek justice, heal our planet or even repent]

But back to the Psalmist and to Ephesians - How can we learn thankfulness in our lives? This would be good to learn for Thankfulness is certainly a beautiful attribute to recognise in us and others! I'll leave you with the following points:

1. (Psalm 111:1 - Gather together...specifically to 'meet with godly people' The timing of this for us in lockdown means that we are temporarily 'apart' but whenever we gather we remember the gracious actions of God for us in Jesus. We do this together remembering in prayer, in song, in the sacraments, in sermons - in all of these we remember the actions of God in Salvation History to remind us that no matter what is our

current pain and anxiety or even our Joys - we remember that God is 'for us' and so no pain, indeed nothing, can separate us from the love of God in Christ (Romans 8:35-39). So even as we are in lockdown - let us look for ways to 'together remember'. If you are reading this then we are together remembering even as we are physically separated. If you are going to our Eden UC website - <https://eden.uca.org.au> - you will see at our 'Content from Sunday including sermons' that there are hymns and songs - why not click on these links and in your own home sing aloud - knowing that others in our church are doing the same - and in doing you will be remembering, we will together remember, the wonderful actions of God to save us - and then we will give thanks to God (Ephesians 5:19-20).

2. Psalm 111:10 - This verse teaches us that reverence for the Lord - surely a precursor to or component of thankfulness arises from our obedience. I think this is very important. Sometimes our thankfulness we grown, and our reverence and wisdom will grow, when we give ourselves to following the commands of God - loving God and neighbour. As Paul says - Make the most of every opportunity for doing good in these evil days (Ephesians 5:15-18).

And so thankfulness can be ours even now. Oh, and do not forget Ephesians 5:18 I think that this filling of the Holy Spirit primarily comes as we remember together the wonderful acts of God to save us and as we yield to that Love. The filling comes as we pray that God will shape us to be the very best people that we can be. The filling comes as we fill our minds through remembering together, and as individuals, of the 'stories' of God's actions in History. The filling comes as we obey God's commands of love, as we walk in the footsteps of Jesus. It comes as we pray - in thanks for all that God has done, and as we pray for a growth in us of love to others and for courage in the days ahead.

May God raise up in us all hearts of thankfulness.