

Thankful ?

9 10 16

God, the giver of life,
whose Holy Spirit wells up within your Church:
by the Spirit's gifts equip us to live the gospel of Christ
and make us eager to do your will,
that we may share with the whole creation
the joy of eternal life.

Our text may be found in the opening verse of today's psalm (111):

'I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart.'

Last week, I tried to resolve the paradox that, on the one hand, it is a good idea in principle to thank people for what they do, with, on the other hand, the clear teaching that we should not expect to be thanked for doing our duty. Today, I'd like to move on by asking the question: 'What have we got to be thankful for?'

I can't answer that question for you - it's a personal matter for you to decide, to recognise what you might thank God for. But I can guess. It could be health and strength; friends and family; enough food to eat and money to pay for the necessities of life; the pleasure of being here in this place at this time. But whatever it is for which we are, hopefully, suitably grateful, Psalm 111 lists some of the things the psalmist identifies as reasons why he wants wholeheartedly to thank the Lord.

I won't try to cover all ten verses. Instead let me highlight some of his principle thoughts.

First and foremost is the character of God. From the psalm, we can see that the God in whom we believe, in whom we trust, whom we worship, is above all a God of love, **full of compassion** (v4). He is **faithful, truthful** and **just** (v 7/8). He is **holy and awesome** (v9). Above all, he is the **gracious**, (v4) the source of grace. If God is good as the psalmist clearly believes, then should we not be thankful that we believe in him and he accepts us as his children? Like mother Julian of Norwich, the mediaeval mystic, affirm that ultimately all will be well.

Secondly, the works of God. The psalmist is not specific but enthusiastically praises all that God has done for Israel. For me, I guess I'd highlight the fact of creation and the gift of life.

Thirdly, the psalmist cites **his commandments**. In Judaism, there's not just the Ten Commandments but there are as many as 613 of them which Jesus summarises neatly in our duty to love God and to love our neighbour as we love ourselves. I guess what the commandments, the Torah, embody is God's teaching and to better understand what God is saying to us through the Bible is one of the reasons we come to church.

And, lastly, let me point to verse 9 and the word **redemption**. There we have the gospel in a nutshell – '**God so loved the world that gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life**' (John

3v16). The fact of the Incarnation, Crucifixion Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our Saviour, is why we should be grateful of God. Okay, I know the psalmist doesn't spell it out in these terms but as Christians, it's how we now see what the word **redemption** can mean.

So what have we got to be thankful for ? Quite a lot really. We'll each have individual items on our list of thanks but this we can share: that God loves us and we can, one day, come home to him.

What do you think ?

I have spoken in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Preached at the Eucharist

St Bartholomew's, Dinard

9th October 2016

G: Sermons 34 :Thankful

