

3/20/11

**THE PSALM ANT THE CALL TO WORSHIP**                      **Psalm 111**

Lay Minister: 1 Praise the LORD. I will extol the LORD with all my heart in the council of the upright and in the assembly.

**People:**        **2 Great are the works of the LORD; they are pondered by all who delight in them.**

Lay Minister: 3 Glorious and majestic are his deeds,

**People:**        **and his righteousness endures forever.**

Lay Minister: 4 He has caused his wonders to be remembered; the LORD is gracious and compassionate.

**People:**        5 He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever.

Lay Minister: 6 He has shown his people the power of his works, giving them the lands of other nations. 7 The works of his hands are faithful and just;

**People:**        **all his precepts are trustworthy. 8 They are steadfast for ever and ever, done in faithfulness and uprightness.**

Lay Minister: 9 He provided redemption for his people; he ordained his covenant forever—

**People:**        **holy and awesome is his name.**

Lay Minister: 10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;

**People:**        **all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise.**

Lay Minister: We begin our worship in the Lord God who is faithful and just, trustworthy, steadfast, and upright.

**People:**        **We begin our worship, called to grace by God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

**THE PRAYER OF THE DAY**    Lord God, you loved us, and sacrificed your very own Son to show us Your love.    Move us by your Spirit and your love so that we are willing to sacrifice to love others.    Help us to live as wise, not as unwise, in regard to choices with alcohol; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.    Amen.

**THE EPISTLE LESSON**    Ephesians 5:11-21

*(God calls for us to be careful how we live, not as unwise but as wise!)*

11 Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. 13 But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, 14 for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: "Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

15 Be very careful, then, how you live-- not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. **18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.**

19 Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make

music in your heart to the Lord, 20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

**THE GOSPEL LESSON** John 2:1-11 page

*(Jesus performs the miracle of turning water into wine.)*

1 On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, 2 and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. 3 When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine." 4 "Dear woman, why do you involve **me**?" Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come." 5 His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

6 Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. 7 Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim. 8 Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so, 9 and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside 10 and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."

11 This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.

**THE SERMON** "The Sacrifice of Love – Christians and Alcohol." Ephesians 5

INTRO - The other day I was getting ready to go to church, and Kathy was getting ready to go to a sewing retreat. There is a retreat each year, and she really looks forward to it. She not only had packing to go, you know, not so much clothes, as sewing machines, material, supplies. But, she had errands to run too. But she wanted to get to the retreat. So, as I was getting dressed I noticed that one of my favorite socks had a hole right at the big toe, and I asked, "Kathy, can you do me a favor? Can you sew this up quickly?" What would you do? This wasn't getting her to the retreat, or helping the errands get done.

I. As children of God we are called to love others, especially other Christians. Jesus says, **John 13: 34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.**

- A. And how has Jesus loved us? Matthew 16:24 is a Lenten verse.
  - 1. It says, **Matthew 16: 24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.**
  - 2. Following Jesus, loving others, includes the cross. It means denying ourselves to serve God and love others.
- B. Last week Hunter began our sermon series, "The Sacrifice of love."
  - 1. The key verse of that passage is **1 Corinthians 8 9 Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak.**
  - 2. Scripture talks about areas of freedom like eating meat, days for worship, and even alcohol.

II. How do we live as a child of God, do we need to totally refrain from alcohol?

- A. No, The Bible talks about positive uses of wine and even beer.
  - 1. Proverbs 31: 6 says, Give **beer** to those who are perishing,
  - 2. In 1 Timothy 5:23, Paul tells Timothy, **Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.**
  - 3. And, in today's Gospel lesson Jesus makes 6 40 gallon Jars of wine for a wedding celebration.
  - 4. These are just some of the positive uses of alcohol.
- B. However, the Scripture calls us to live in the Spirit, not in the flesh.
  - 1. Our Epistle lesson for today in Ephesians 5:18 says, **18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.**
  - 2. Galatians 5 tells us, **Galatians 5:19 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.** In other words, drunkenness leads away from faith and away from God. We are to refrain from drunkenness.
  - 3. Many other verses warn about the dangers of being drunk.

4. So, there is a balance. Drinking is acceptable. Getting drunk is not.

III. What happens when someone can't keep that balance? That's where love comes in.

A. When I came to Alaska, exercising my freedom. I made beer. I still like a beer now and again, but I don't make it anymore. Not only don't I need the extra calories, but as Pastor, and as a 20 year Alaskan, I've met more people who have trouble with alcohol here than in any other place I lived.

1. If A Christian knows they have trouble with alcohol, then the need to refrain from alcohol.

2. First, this is important for our relationship with the Lord, according to our Bible verse.

3. And often, when a Christian drinks, they hurt those around them.

B. But, have you ever been on a diet when someone else was eating a piece of chocolate cake? It is tough to resist our desires. It can be done, but it takes discipline.

1. That is another reason I've stopped making beer myself. It's not that it is wrong, but what does this say to others who struggle with drinking.

2. If a Christian knows another person has trouble with drinking we can choose to act in love, rather than in freedom.

A. Perhaps we'll refrain from drinking in front of that person.

B. Perhaps we'll offer to help the person in time of struggle.

C. But, exercising our freedom is not always loving.

3. I am considering my fellow Christian. **1 Corinthians 8 9 Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak**

IV. Why would I want to sacrifice in order to love someone? **John 13: 34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.**

A. As Christians, we know our failure, and God's love. Jesus sacrificed His life so we could have life.

B. We are moved to share God's sacrificial love, and not just by speaking, but by sharing a little of the bigger love God has given us.

C. When it comes to alcohol that might mean refraining from drinking if I have trouble. It might mean considering someone else before I exercise my freedom.

CONCLUSION - Anyway, back to Friday. Kathy stopped what she was doing, and went upstairs and repaired my sock. That is a small example, but sometimes loving people means sacrifice. She gave up getting to the retreat earlier, to take care of her husband. I am blessed!!! This was an act of Christian love.

Scripture gives us a number of areas in our lives where we don't HAVE to sacrifice for others. But, knowing God's love for us, we sacrifice in order to love. Such sacrifice helps Christians with the balance in regard to alcohol.

