

Exposition on Psalm 112

by St. Augustine

The sermon highlights the importance of fearing the Lord, doing works of mercy, and giving to the poor, and warns of the punishment of the ungodly.

Scripture: Psalm 111:1, Isaiah 40:8, Matthew 25:34, Luke 6:37, 1 Corinthians 3:17, Galatians 6:9, Philippians 2:21

Topics: "Mercy And Forgiveness", "Faith And Obedience"

Description

St. Augustine preaches on the Psalms, emphasizing the conversion of Haggai and Zechariah as a symbol of the restoration of the temple and the believers as the holy temple of God. He encourages living a life in obedience to God's commandments, finding delight in them, and sowing seeds of mercy for a mighty harvest. St. Augustine highlights the importance of being merciful, forgiving, and generous, as these actions lead to eternal treasures in heaven and a righteous, enduring legacy. He concludes by stressing the significance of having a steadfast heart, unwavering faith, and hope in the unseen blessings prepared by the Lord.

Transcript

1. I believe, brethren, that you remarked and committed to memory the title of this Psalm. The conversion, he says, of Haggai and Zechariah. These prophets were not as yet in existence, when these verses were sung. ..But both, the one within a year after the other, began to prophesy that which seems to pertain to the restoration of the temple, as was foretold so long before. ..For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are. 1 Corinthians 3:17 Whoever therefore converts himself to the work of this building together, and to the hope of a firm and holy edifice, like a living stone from the miserable ruin of this world, understands the title of the Psalm, understands the conversion of Haggai and Zechariah. Let him therefore chant the following verses, not so much with the voice of his tongue as of his life. For the completion of the building will be that ineffable peace of wisdom, the beginning of which is the fear of the Lord: let him therefore, whom this conversion builds together, begin thence.

2. Blessed is the man that fears the Lord: he will have great delight in His commandments Psalm 111:1. God, who alone judges both truthfully and mercifully, will see how far he obeys His commandments: since the life of man on earth is a temptation, Job 7:1 as holy Job says. But He who judges us is the Lord. 1 Corinthians 4:4 ...He therefore will see how far each man profits in His commandments; yet he who loves the peace of this building together, shall have great delight in them; nor ought he to despair, since there is peace on earth for men of good will. Luke 2:14

3. Next follows, His seed shall be mighty upon earth Psalm 111:2. The Apostle witnesses, that the works of mercy are the seed of the future harvest, when he says, Let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap; Galatians 6:9 and again, But this I say, He which sows sparingly, shall reap also sparingly. 2 Corinthians 9:6 But what, brethren, is more mighty than that not only Zacchaeus should buy the kingdom of Heaven by the half of his goods, Luke 19:8 but even the widow for two mites, Mark 12:42 and that each should possess an equal share there? What is more mighty, than that the same kingdom should be worth treasures to the rich man, and a cup of cold water to the poor?...Glory and riches shall be in his house Psalm 111:3. For his house is his heart; where, with the praise of God, he lives in greater riches with the hope of eternal life, than with men flattering, in palaces of marble, with splendidly adorned ceilings, with the fear of everlasting death. For his righteousness endures for ever: this is his glory, there are his riches. While the other's purple, and fine linen, and grand banquets, even when present, are passing away; and when they have come to an end, the burning tongue shall cry out, longing for a drop of water from the finger's end. Luke 16:24

4. Unto the right-hearted there arises up light in the darkness Psalm 111:4. Justly do the godly direct their heart unto their God, justly do they walk with their God, preferring His will to themselves; and having no proud presumption in their own. For they remember that they were some time in darkness, but are now light in the Lord. Ephesians 5:8 Merciful, pitying, and just is the Lord God. It delights us that He is merciful and pitying, but it perhaps terrifies us that the Lord God is just. Fear not, despair not at all, happy man, who fearest the Lord, and hast great delight in His commandments; be thou sweet, be merciful and lend. For the Lord is just in this manner, that He judges without mercy him who has not shown mercy; James 2:13 but, Sweet is the man who is merciful and lends Psalm 111:5: God will not spew him out of His mouth as if he were not sweet. Forgive, He says, and you shall be forgiven; give, and it shall be given unto you. Luke 6:37-38 Whilst you forgive that you may be forgiven, you are merciful; while you give that it may be given unto you, you lend. For though all be called generally mercy where another is assisted in his distress, yet there is a difference where you spend neither money, nor the toil of bodily labour, but by forgiving what each man has sinned against you, you gain free pardon for your own sins also....He who is unwilling to give to the poor, seeks riches; listen to what is written, You shall have treasure in heaven. Matthew 19:21 You will not then lose honour by forgiving: for it is a very laudable triumph to conquer anger. You will not grow poor by giving; for a heavenly treasure is a more safe possession. The former verse, Riches and plenteousness shall be in his house, was pregnant with this verse.

5. He therefore who does these things, shall guide his words with discretion. His deeds themselves are the words whereby he shall be defended at the Judgment; which shall not be without mercy unto him, since he has himself shown mercy. For he shall never be moved Psalm 111:6: he who, called to the right hand, shall hear these words, Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For no works of theirs, save works of mercy, are there mentioned. He therefore shall hear, Come, you blessed of My Father; for, the generation of the right ones shall be blessed. Thus, the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance. He will not be afraid of any evil hearing; for his heart stands fast and believes in the Lord Psalm 111:7. Such as the words which he will hear addressed to those on the left hand, Depart into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. Matthew 25:34, 41 He therefore who seeks here not his own things, but those of Jesus Christ, Philippians 2:21 most patiently endures sufferings, waits for the promises with faith. Nor is he broken down by any temptations: His heart is established, and will not shrink, until he see beyond his enemies Psalm 111:8. His enemies wished to see good things here, and when invisible blessings were promised them, used to say, Who will show us any good? Let our heart therefore be established, and shrink not, until we see beyond our

enemies. For they wish to see good things of men in the land of the dying; we trust to see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living.

6. But it is a great thing to have the heart established, and not to be moved, while they rejoice who love what they see, and mock at him who hopes for what he sees not; what the Lord has prepared for them that love Him. 1 Corinthians 2:9 How great is the value of this which is not seen, and it is bought for so much as each man is able to give for it. On this account he also dispersed abroad, and gave to the poor Psalm 111:9: he saw not, yet he kept buying; but He was storing up the treasure in heaven, who deigned to hunger and thirst in the poor on earth. It is no wonder then if his righteousness remains for ever: He who created the ages being his guardian. His horn, whose humility was scorned by the proud, shall be exalted with honour.

7. The ungodly shall see it, and he shall be angered Psalm 111:10: this is that late and fruitless repentance. For with whom rather than himself is he angered, when he shall say, Our pride, what has it profited us? The boastfulness of our riches, what has it given us? Wisdom 5:8 seeing the horn of him exalted with honour, who dispersed abroad, and gave to the poor. He shall gnash with his teeth, and consume away: for there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For he will no more bring forth leaves and bloom, as would happen if he had repented in season: but he will then repent, when the desire of the ungodly shall perish, no consolation succeeding. The desire of the ungodly shall perish, when all things shall pass away like a shadow, Wisdom 5:8-9 when the flower shall fall down on the withering of the grass. But the word of the Lord that endures for ever, Isaiah 40:8 as it is mocked by the vanity of the falsely happy, so will laugh at the perdition of the same when truly miserable.

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