

## **“The Great Works of our Great God” Psalm 111**

**Intro:** What makes a church great? As you reflect on what you appreciate about the church, a people who call Jesus Lord, what makes them a great church? Is it great leadership? Is it a great small groups? Is it a great experience on Sunday morning where the welcome team is firing on all cylinders, the band is good, and the preaching is on point? Is it a great mission and vision for the church? Is it a great concern for others, I mean a church that actually gives a rip about people in their community? What makes a church great? Is it all the cool people who make up the church? Is it a church that meets *my needs*? OR Is it a great commitment to sound theology wedded to a commitment to live out the implications of that theology in all of life?

**FCF:** At times, we are so tempted to think that personalities and leadership, visions & missions, strategies and ministries are the primary means by which a church thrives. Listen! I am all for leadership. I am all for a clear vision and an aggressive strategy to be about the mission God has for us, but those are not what make a church great. What makes a church great?

A great God makes a great church.

Please open your Bibles to Psalm 111 (page 509). As we look out over the next year of our existence, I believe the wisdom and truth in Psalm 111 will help push us forward as we recognize the greatness of God for his mission among us! We are going to see that...

**The Point: God is awesome in his great works of redemption for his people!**

Follow along as I read Psalm 111 for us this morning...

This morning we're going to take this Psalm, and we're going to allow it to help us reflect on where we've been as a church, and anticipate what God might do as we embark on another huge year of mission?

### **I. We should praise God for his great works over the past year (111:1-3).**

- Psalm 111 is first and foremost a hymn of praise, especially as it relates to God's faithful works of redemption.
- Verse one begins: "Praise the Lord! I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation."
- The Psalmist is unreserved and public with his praise and thanksgiving.
- Are you quick to give praise to God in the presence of others? Do you give respond in grateful worship for how he is working in your life?
- We want to be a church that is quick to give God praise and we want to be public about it! That doesn't mean that we borrow a fire truck from the Fire Dept. on Salem St... But when we people ask us about our church, we must boast in the Lord and not ourselves. Whatever good happens here is a result of the fact that God is on a mission and he is doing an awesome work!
- We have tasted the truth of verse 2, which has become one of my favorite verses in the Bible. One to commit to memory: "Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them."
- What a beautiful declaration! Do you know this to be true in the fabric of your daily life? Do you see God at work? Jesus said in John 5: "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working." God's works are full of splendor and majesty!

- Those who know God well are those who know of his power to provide and accomplish his purposes, and they study them and delight in them.
- We get the picture of someone taking out a pad and paper and saying: God did that. He provided that. He was with me there. He answered that prayer, and that prayer, and I didn't think he heard that prayer for the longest time, but all along he was working, changing me, refining me, glorifying himself.
- We have seen this to be the case at Redemption Hill over the past year. It has been our privilege to study God's works among us.
- Let me share just five **highlights from 2011**:
  - 1. Launch of Sunday Worship**
    - From 7 adults when we moved here with our leadership team in the summer of 2010, to a core group of close to thirty after the New Year, to what we now see.
    - Way ahead of timeline...Not just how many came but who came: Great mix of college students
  - 2. People Serving & Growing...**
    - One of the highlights of the year was seeing our people serve... on Sundays, in our community outreach, and growing through worship, CG, and discipleship relationships.
  - 3. Opportunities to Serve our Community**
    - This one probably has surprised me the most. God has opened up more doors for us to serve our community than we have the ability to walk through. We have strategically served our city by volunteering at the B&G Club and putting our Soccer Nights effort (a free soccer clinic for kids in our city). We helped run a DayCamp through the MHA, cleaned and helped renovated five parks in Medford. We put on a Community Fun Night, gave away Thanksgiving Turkeys, and just held a Christmas Dinner for 15 local families, and that doesn't include other random acts of kindness and what our people do individually for others.
  - 4. Great Partnerships:**
    - We have been the beneficiaries of many partners. We would not be where we are today apart from the generosity of individuals and churches who have said, we want to see a gospel-centered church planted in Greater Boston. Partners from all over America are praying for us, sending us financial support until we can become self-sustaining, they have sent us teams to help us reach out to the community. This is a kingdom effort.
  - 5. God forming our church family**
    - Membership – 25 members... and growing.
    - CGs – really took off in the Fall, going from about 30 weekly attenders in the summer to the mid-50s during the fall.
    - And, we have connected with many others who are considering becoming a regular part of Redemption Hill.
    - Let me say that all of this, *all of this*, is an answer to prayer. It is a direct result of God working through and yes, in spite of his people to accomplish his purposes.
- *Trans*: As great as 2011 was, it should be our prayer and expectation that 2012 will be even better. In verses 4-9 the Psalmist begins to recount the details of God's great works. Essentially, he is looking back at God's grace in the past, and coupling that with the knowledge that God never grows weary in working for his people and keeping his promises into the future. That is why I believe verses 4-9 that will help us as we move into 2012 as a church. They teach us that...

## II. We should look to past grace for confidence in future grace (111:4-9).

- In verse 4, the Psalmist begins to detail God’s great work, and the backdrop here is God keeping his covenant with Abraham to protect and bless and be with his people, and he did so through exodus out of Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea, through their wilderness wandering, and into ultimate conquest as he gave them the Promised Land, which is unpacked for us in the first six books of the Bible unpack. That’s the backdrop. What do these verses teach us about God and his gracious work in the past?
- He is a God who is gracious and merciful, causing people to remember his wondrous works (v.4). He is a God who provides the necessities of life and keeps all of his promises to be with and bless his people (v.5). He is a God who is powerful in his works, who backs up everything he says he’ll do, just as he brought Israel into the Promised Land (v.6). He is a faithful and just God, who is not hiding from his people but reveals his will to them (vv.7-8), and he is a God who send redemption to his people. He keeps his covenant forever, and in light of all this we, with the Psalmist must say: “Holy and awesome is his name!”
- God is a God who keeps his covenant and works redemption for his people, and let me share something with you: we are still in the middle of the story. God is has not completed his mission. He is still performing his work of redemption in the hearts of people from all peoples of the world, and he does his work in and through people like us and churches like ours.

**Trans:** Like the Israelites, even though we are incredibly young church, we can look back to God’s past grace and find exceeding confidence for his future grace! We can walk with a little spiritual swaggah in 2012 because we have great faith, not in ourselves, but in the authority of Christ for the mission of Christ. We want to, in the words of the great missionary William Carey: **“Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God.”** (Expound) That is what we’re about. There should be an atmosphere of expectation in our church. So what are we going to expect and attempt this year? Here’s...

### **Our Prayer for 2012...**

#### **Gospel**

1. We want 2012 to be a year where we **grow in the gospel through passionately pursuing God in his Word and Prayer.**
  - Reading through the Bible this year as a church. (It’s not too late to get on board.)
  - We’re going to keep digging in the Word on Sunday mornings. We will be working through Ecclesiastes, Titus, and we’re planning to begin the gospel of Luke in the Fall, as well as working through thematic series on biblical community and worship.
  - We also want to increase frequency of church-wide prayer meeting & strategic corporate fasts.
  - Start Offering Equipping Classes that will cover a variety of areas of the Bible, Theology, and the Christian Life (sometime in 12’)
  - Initiate our Counseling Ministry. This is something we want to be a blessing to our church and even as a way to reach out to our community.
  - These are all ways we want to grow as we seek to become more like Christ.
2. Additionally, we want to see an **increase in the number of weekly worship attendees and on our Sunday morning Serve Teams.**
  - Let’s take those in reverse order. Our serve teams have been phenomenal, but they need help. We need more people serving for us to continue to thrive on Sundays.
  - Our First Impressions and Music & Media teams do an awesome job, but they need your help. Our Children’s Ministry Leaders have been awesome, but in order for us to see our children’s ministry be the vehicle by which children are taught what it means to know, love, and serve Jesus, we need more workers.

- As God sends more and more people to RHC, we need more people ready to serve. And we do expect more and more people to join us on Sundays by the way. We would love to see God increase our worship attendance to 125 by Easter & 175 by the year's end.

Excurses on #s: Let me set the record straight.

- Ministry is not about numbers. Why?
  - Numbers are not what makes a church great. Numbers are not necessarily a sign of health. Thousands of people show up on Sundays to listen to the rambling of heretics every Sunday. There are plenty of ways to draw a crowd, but a couple hundred or couple thousand people gathered together in a room do not necessarily constitute a church, much less a healthy one.
  - We could have 1000 people here on Sundays and be a mile wide.... but only an inch deep. We've really prayed for steady, consistent growth, so that we can care for people, invest in people, and grow in a wise, healthy manner.
- Ministry is about numbers. Why?
  - Because numbers represent people and people matter to God. People need the transforming power that God's grace provides.
  - That's why we're concerned about numbers. We want to see more and more of the hundreds of thousands of people surrounding our city follow Jesus.
- We are not responsible to make this church grow. Jesus builds his church and God gives the growth (to reflect on Mt. 16 & 1 Cor. 3). We are responsible to pray, attend, invite, bring, and spend our lives well for God's glory.

## Community

### 3. Develop leaders for our Community Groups and tweak our approach.

- Define & Describe
- Philosophical Importance of CGs (Community, Growth in Godliness, Shepherding, Discipleship (Investing in Others and Being invested in)
- Add groups & Multiply groups. Here's our goal: *100% of our members and regulars involved in a CG. We would love to see RHC have 7-9 groups by the end of 2012.*
- See more people involved in discipleship relationship and more people taking on leadership roles & responsibilities. We need leaders, assistant leaders, point people to take the lead on hospitality, service efforts, and communication with our missionaries.

### 4. See God continue to make our church more of a thumbprint of our community.

- Ethnic, generational diversity & locals...

### 5. Add new members to the church regularly.

- People Buy into the Mission/Vision, Doctrine and Practice of our Church and want to join the family.
- We want to add... ---- *60-80 members by the end of the year.*
- We want to care for our members strategically
  - Pastors will be in touch with our members...
  - We will add Deacons & Elders as needed moving forward as a church.

## Mission

### 6. Make Disciples who make disciples.

- Our mission is to make disciples. A disciple is someone who has responded to the call to follow Jesus in repentance and faith. A church, in a most basic definition, is simply a community of disciples. We want to see those who call themselves disciples to fulfill Jesus' final command to us and make more disciples.
- Every person/Every Family would reach one person, one family. The responsibility is on your shoulders, our shoulders.

- That means each person is going to have to see their spheres of influence whether that's your family, your workplace, your neighborhood, your various social groups, we have to see those spheres as mission fields where we display and declare the gospel.
- *We want to pray that God will bring at least 20 people to faith in him this year through our collective witness.*

### **7. Continue Serving People in our Community**

- We want to build on all that God did in 2011 through our local service efforts and with our local partnership. (Soccer Nights, Serve Medford, Turkey Giveaways, etc.)
- We are going to establish our benevolence fund that will go toward mercy ministry, as well as continue to be involved with related social justice issues.
- With this, let me just say, that we want to continue to help equip you to serve and use the gifts and talents that God has given each one of you. That's our job: equip the saints for the work of the ministry.

### **8. Continue Spreading the Mission**

- We do not exist for ourselves!
- 1<sup>st</sup> Mission Trip (New England)
- Implement Church Planting Strategy to reach Charlestown with the gospel.
- Launch Boston Church Planting Equipping Center

Now, that's *a lot* to accomplish by God's grace in the next 11 ½ months, but our God is a great God. His resources for his church are exhaustless. We have the opportunity to be a great church, but we will be a great church only so far as we live out the truth of verse 10...

### **III. We should respond to God with fear, obedience and worship ().**

- Here's what I'm asking you to do in 2012. Fear. Obey. Worship. This is my strategy as a pastor to move our church toward greatness...
- You feel me. Here's the philosophy: If God has your heart, if you are committed to following Christ with all of your heart, fearing him, following him in obedience, worshiping him, I don't need to worry about whether or not you will give yourself to God's mission here. People will be praying and worshiping and serving and sharing and spreading.
- And then we have to make the decision to rearrange our priorities and our calendar and find ways to make room for God's mission in the church.

### **Conclusion: The Challenge for 2012.**

#### **Make a commitment to...**

- 1. Go deeper with God than ever before.**
  - a. Pursue God with greater passion. Spend time in his Word. Don't miss the opportunity to worship him with other believers. "Draw near to God and he will draw near to you."
- 2. Get more involved in the life of Redemption Hill. (CGs, Serve Teams)**
- 3. Live like a missionary: pray. display. declare.**

Those who taste the awesome works of God will delight in them and they will study them. Do you look for God to be at work all around you? Do you anticipate how he might show up and provide in small ways and powerful ways?

Let's come together a year from now and celebrate as those who study and delight in the great works of God. It will be awesome to come back together and say, "This is what he did. This is what he did. This is what he did. This is what he did." Make no mistake: God is great, and he is at work! Let's pray.