

“Blessed Is the One Who Fears the Lord”

Psalm 112

August 17, 2025 (Pen. 10-C)

St. Paul’s Lutheran, North Freedom

Praise the LORD.

Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who finds great delight in his commands.

His children will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed. Wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endures forever. Even in darkness light dawns for the upright, for the gracious and compassionate and righteous man. Good will come to him who is generous and lends freely, who conducts his affairs with justice. Surely he will never be shaken; a righteous man will be remembered forever. He will have no fear of bad news; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD. His heart is secure, he will have no fear; in the end he will look in triumph on his foes. He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever; his horn will be lifted high in honor.

The wicked man will see and be vexed, he will gnash his teeth and waste away; the longings of the wicked will come to nothing. (Psalm 112, NIV84)

Dear fellow believers in the triune God,

“A is for apple, B is for banana....” A preschool picture book might go down the alphabet to teach little ones their ABCs as well as fruits and vegetables and other objects. It works pretty well until you get to the letter X, where we struggle to find words other than “Xylophone” and “X-Ray”!

Psalm 112 is a poem that’s like one of those ABC books. Except for the first line, “Hallelujah!” (“Praise the LORD!”), each line begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet in order, 22 letters in all. You can picture Hebrew parents reading it with their children: “Aleph is for Ashree,” meaning “Blessed.” While we can’t duplicate the “ABC” structure of this Hebrew psalm in the English language, we can all learn what the psalm teaches us, from its very first line: **“Blessed Is the One Who Fears the Lord!”**

Psalm 112 is a companion with the psalm before it, Psalm 111, which is also an acrostic or “ABC” psalm starting with “Hallelujah!” Psalm 111 focuses on the great deeds and works of the LORD God, how he provides food, his Word, and redemption for his people, while Psalm 112 focuses on the one who believes in the LORD God, who “fears him.” That also ties in with Psalm 111, which teaches us, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Ps. 111:10).

But what do we mean by “the fear of the LORD”? Are we supposed to be very scared of him, like fearing Frankenstein’s monster or a serial killer? Well, if we turn aside from God and don’t believe in him, we would be deadly afraid of him when our time in this world draws to a close, because then we would suffer eternity in hell. “The longings of the wicked will come to nothing,” this psalm reminds us. But here, to “fear the LORD” means to hold him in the highest regard and with the utmost respect, hating evil, and delighting in his commands and his holy Word, as this psalm teaches us.

For example, in the first commandment our Lord God teaches us not to have any other gods before him. Luther explains, “We should fear, love and trust in God above all things.” If we fear other people more than God, if we follow peer pressure and try drugs or break rules because we’re afraid of becoming unpopular, we’re breaking the first commandment. Likewise, in the second commandment

we are told not to misuse his name in any way. If the words that come out of our mouth are curse words instead of praising, if we by habit say “Oh my God” because that’s the trendy thing to say, we’re not fearing the LORD, we’re treating his name like a joke or even an evil thing. James observed, “Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be” (Jas. 3:10).

But when we use our mouths to bless the Lord and not curse, when we honor him and delight in his commands, the Lord promises great blessings on us. Psalm 112 promises quite a bit: “His children will be mighty in the land....Wealth and riches are in his house.” Now, that doesn’t mean that everybody who fears the Lord and obeys him will necessarily be rich, materially speaking, or always have a happy, harmonious family life. It does mean that we can trust the Lord to provide for our physical needs. Most of all, it means that we will find an abundance of spiritual wealth: Righteousness that “endures forever.” “Even in darkness light dawns for the upright.” Even in the darkest days of life, the one who fears the LORD walks in his light of hope and comfort.

Now, remember that Psalm 112 followed Psalm 111 that focused on the works of God. Without the works of God, none of us could do enough to earn righteousness; we would not be qualified enough to be considered “upright” according to God’s holy law. But Psalm 111 tells us that the LORD “provided redemption for his people.” When we were trapped in sin, unable to free ourselves, the LORD promised a Redeemer who would buy us back, pay the price to free us from our sins. In the New Testament that Redeemer came, God’s own Son, Jesus. He died to pay the price on the cross, and then he rose again. With Job we cry out, “I know that my Redeemer lives!” (Job 19:25). For Jesus came and paid our ransom, and we are now free—free to fear and find our delight in his law.

Yes, blessed is the one who fears the Lord. Our joy in being redeemed will lead us to show that favor toward others. Psalm 112 talks about the “gracious, compassionate, and righteous man.” The person who is given grace by God will naturally be gracious and forgiving toward others. “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you,” the Bible teaches us (Eph. 4:32). Christ is our righteousness, and wearing his robe of righteousness, we will do what is right toward others, being fair and just instead of always “in it for me.”

Psalm 112 speaks specifically about the one “who is generous and lends freely.... He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor.” Generosity is not something that comes naturally to us. We’re tempted to think, “I worked hard for this paycheck, I earned my money, I’m going to keep it for myself.” We need to remember God’s generosity to us, and when we fear and respect the LORD, we will be generous and help others—not just with money, but with kind deeds and helpful advice.

We need not fear becoming impoverished or taken advantage of when we’re kind, compassionate and generous. The Lord promises to bless us: “Good will come to him who is generous....Surely he will never be shaken; a righteous man will be remembered forever. He will have no fear of bad news; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD. His heart is secure, he will have no fear.” When we sometimes get concerned that the wicked have the upper hand and are getting ahead in life, remember God’s promise: “In the end [the one who fears the LORD] will look in triumph on his foes.” For in eternity, the evil will perish; the believer in Christ will reign with him forever!

What undeserved grace! When we receive these blessings, both now and in eternity, we can only say as Jesus directs us, “We are unworthy servants; we have only done what is our duty” (Luke 17:10). Give all the glory to God, praise the Lord for saving us all! Amen.