

Prayer List

Sheila
Ophelia
Josh
Daniel
Olene

Services:

Sunday

Bible Class 9:00 a.m.
Assembly 9:50 a.m.
Assembly 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday

Bible Class 7:00 p.m.

Pinole Tidings

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This Week's Question:

What rebel against David was beheaded, with his head thrown over the wall of Abel to Joab?

Answer To Last Week's Question:

Saul - 1 Samuel 25:26

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Reverend Is His Name

Most of us have read Psalm 111:9 to our neighbors. Sooner or later, one of them will ask why we don't call our preacher "Reverend," and we will remember this verse. One local newspaper went so far as to refuse to change their obituary's language one time because they said that they did not want to appear "disrespectful." I told them that they would appear to our members to be disrespectful if they called me "Reverend" in violation of our views. I told them that we preferred not to exalt ourselves since Jesus told us that we are all brothers with only one "Father," one rabbi or teacher and one leader or Christ (Matthew 23:8-12). Then I played the ace: Psalm 111:9 is the only place where "Reverend" is used, and it is applied there only to God.

The editor then surprised me by noting that the word itself in English merely means worthy of being revered or worthy of honor, especially religious honor, to which I replied that all Christians are such and therefore called, "Saints." But it got me to thinking about the meaning of "Reverend."

Psalm 111 is a powerful Psalm of praise for God's collective people celebrating the LORD's great, splendid, majestic works, His righteousness, His gracious and compassionate character, His provision for His covenant-people, and the reliability of His upright justice and decisions along with his redemption. Right here the Holy Spirit says, "Holy and reverend is His name." Or "holy and awesome (inspiring reverence) is His name. It is hardly a mere

title. It says something about His “name” – that is, His nature and character. So what is it saying about God that makes Him so different from people, even from His “saints?”

The word translated “Reverend” (Hebrew *yare*, Strong #3372a) is a form of a verb that means to fear, to be afraid, to be in awe of, to tremble. It is used of things that are terrible, dreadful, stupendous, and wondrously admirable. The exact same verbal form is used to talk about a human in David’s Psalm 139:14 when he says that he is “fearfully and wondrously made.” But it is hardly being used as a title there. It is saying that human bodies inspire wonder and awe. It is also used by Jacob/Israel to describe a place that he said was none other than “the house of God, the gate of heaven” in Genesis 28:17 when the patriarch awoke from his dream after seeing the angels of God ascending and descending. Most of the time, it is translated by the English word “terrible.” According to my English dictionary, that means causing terror and therefore frightful and fearful.

This is hardly the image that “men of the cloth” in our culture seek to cultivate when they apply the term “Reverend” to religious leaders – though some have inspired terror by their abuse of followers. What is more, this is hardly the image that is being cultivated in our culture about God. Perhaps that is why people do not really look for God’s authority for what they do in their moral or religious lives, much less their work or recreational lives. Perhaps that is why there is so little interest in growing “saints” among those who talk about “church growth.” There is a healthy, realistic, sober appreciation for God among His people in the Bible that defines genuine humility and explains why true faith always requires obedience.

The character of the true and living God is terrifying. He ignites supernovas and melts rock into magma. He shakes the earth from the insides out. His living creation’s life-forms reshape themselves from the inside DNA out. Those created in His image rule over creation as His agents with capacity for construction and destruction demonstrated in science and technology anew to each passing generation. He reveals His will in Scripture through His prophets and His Son, Jesus, with Jesus’ apostles and prophets (Hebrews 1:1-3 & 2:1-4). And He raises the dead (I Corinthians 15,

esp. 15:3-8, 20-28, 50-58). He will raise all the dead, “those who did the good to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil to a resurrection of judgment” (John 5:25-32, esp. 5:28-29).

This is why we tell our neighbors the gospel. We love them and recognize the terror of the LORD and His judgment (II Corinthians 5:9-11). This is why we remain faithful to Him. Since “we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:28-29). This is why we draw near to God, hold firmly to His faith, and consider how to stimulate fellow Christians to love and good deeds. “It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:31).

This is not the God that American culture talks about and desires. Our culture wants churches that are social clubs, political action committees, and entertainment opportunities because we have lost of fear of God. He is no mere social secretary who sets up “churches” to facilitate visits to local amusement parks. He is no mere impresario who arranges great shows to sensually stimulate those at the “church services.” He is no mere political consultant devising ways for “church” people to influence human governments. He is almighty God. If he were hungry, would he need to tell us since He every beast of the forest is His and He owns the cattle on a thousand hills? We need Him – even though He is way over our heads.

Psalm 111:9 is followed by Psalm 111:10, where a related verb is used: “The fear of (or reverence for) the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments; His praise endures forever.” Recognizing God’s character is where true religion starts. It is the fountainhead of spiritual growth. It is the engine of evangelism. Reverend is His name.

Ed Sanderson Sr. - Vacaville, CA