

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 25 February 2024

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 96:1-3

Opening Psalm: 96 Sing to the Lord, Sing His Praise

Confession of Sin

O great and everlasting God, Who dwells in unapproachable light, Who searches and knows the thoughts and intentions of the heart; We confess that we have not loved You with all our heart, nor with all our soul, nor with all our mind, nor with all our strength; Nor our neighbors as ourselves. We have loved what we ought not to have loved; We have coveted what is not ours; We have not been content with Your provisions for us. We have complained in our hearts about our family, about our friends, about our health, about our occupations, about Your church, and about our trials. We have sought our security in those things which perish, rather than in You, the Everlasting God. Chasten, cleanse, and forgive us, through Jesus Christ, who is able for all time to save us who approach You through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for us. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: Joel 2:12-13

Psalm of Preparation: 119H You, LORD, Are the Portion

Old Covenant Reading: 2 Chronicles 24:17-21

New Covenant Reading: Matthew 15:1-20

Sermon: *Christ the Cure for Legalism and Antinomianism*

Hymn of Response: 277 Before the Throne of God Above

Confession of Faith: Ten Commandments

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Closing Hymn: 278 Nothing but the Blood

PM Worship

252 This Is My Father's World

77 I Cried Aloud to God for Help 1-4

508 Jesus, Priceless Treasure

Old Covenant Reading: Psalm 77

New Covenant Reading: 1 Peter 1:3-9

Sermon Title: *Remembering Your God*

Adult Sunday School: Heidelberg Catechism – Lord's Day 28

**Q. How does the holy supper
remind and assure you
that you share in
Christ's one sacrifice on the cross
and in all his benefits?**

A. In this way:

Christ has commanded me and all believers
to eat this broken bread and to drink this cup
in remembrance of him.

With this command come these promises:

First,
as surely as I see with my eyes
the bread of the Lord broken for me
and the cup shared with me,
so surely
his body was offered and broken for me
and his blood poured out for me
on the cross.

Second,
as surely as
I receive from the hand of him who serves,
and taste with my mouth
the bread and cup of the Lord,
given me as sure signs of Christ's body and blood,
so surely
he nourishes and refreshes my soul for eternal life
with his crucified body and poured-out blood.

**Q. What does it mean
to eat the crucified body of Christ
and to drink his poured-out blood?**

A. It means
to accept with a believing heart
the entire suffering and death of Christ
and in this way
to receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life.
But it means more.
Through the Holy Spirit, who lives both in Christ and in us,
we are united more and more to Christ's blessed body.
And so, although he is in heaven and we are on earth,
we are flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone.
And we forever live on and are governed by one Spirit,
as the members of our body are by one soul.

**Q. Where does Christ promise
to nourish and refresh believers
with his body and blood
as surely as
they eat this broken bread
and drink this cup?**

A. In the institution of the Lord's Supper:
"The Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed
took bread, and when he had given thanks,
he broke it, and said,
'Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you.

Do this in remembrance of me.’
In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying,
‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood.
Do this, as often as you drink it,
in remembrance of me.’
For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup,
you proclaim the Lord’s death
until he comes.”
This promise is repeated by Paul in these words:
“The cup of blessing that we bless,
is it not a participation in the blood of Christ?
The bread that we break,
is it not a participation in the body of Christ?
Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body,
for we all partake of the one bread.”

Suggested Preparations

Monday (2/19) Read and discuss Matthew 15:1-20

Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, “Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat.” He answered them, “And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? For God commanded, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’ But you say, ‘If anyone tells his father or his mother, “What you would have gained from me is given to God,” he need not honor his father.’ So for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God. You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said:

“‘This people honors me with their lips,
but their heart is far from me;
in vain do they worship me,
teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’”

And he called the people to him and said to them, “Hear and understand: it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person.” Then the disciples came and said to him, “Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?” He answered, “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.” But Peter said to him, “Explain the parable to us.” And he said, “Are you also still without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone.” (ESV)

Grant Osborne writes:

Human teachings must always be judged on the basis of their adherence to the truths of God found in His Word. In every Jewish and Christian movement certain historical hobbyhorses are raised to the level of dogma, both in the areas of theory and praxis. I grew up in a fundamentalist tradition where it was essential to not go to movies, play cards, dance, or drink wine. In and of themselves those are not necessarily bad things to avoid, but they became the external signs of a true Christian.

Moreover, many of those who assiduously kept those rules failed to observe the weightier matters of God's Word, like love, compassion, and mercy. I saw many of their children rebel against Christianity because they observed the hypocrisy of their parents. Our lifestyle as well as our doctrinal system must at all times flow out of the demands of God's revealed truths, not just out of church tradition. Colossians 2:8 talks about the danger of "deceptive philosophy" emerging from the imposition of "human tradition" on God's truths.

Read or sing 96 Sing to the Lord, Sing His Praise

Tuesday (2/20) Read and discuss Matthew 14:22-36

Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" and they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."

And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

And when they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret. And when the men of that place recognized him, they sent around to all that region and brought to him all who were sick and implored him that they might only touch the fringe of his garment. And as many as touched it were made well. (ESV)

Peter is not simply imitating Jesus. Jesus walks on water in His own power. He is the One who created the seas and everything in them; and Jesus upholds all things by the word of His own power. Peter cannot and does not walk on the water in his own power but through His faith in the person of Jesus Christ.

But then Peter sees the wind ... he becomes afraid ... and he begins to sink!

Jesus had just commanded the disciples to stop being afraid. After all, He was with them. Yet, the same Peter who had boldly stepped out of the boat was now afraid again. What had happened?

There are three things worth noticing in these words:

1. First, Peter had walked so close to Jesus that, when he began to sink, Jesus could just reach out a hand and grab hold of him. Walking closely to Jesus or walking with Jesus for a long time is no guarantee that we will not stop looking at Jesus in order to focus on our problems and when we do that, like Peter, we will begin to sink.
2. Second, Jesus mildly rebukes Peter: “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” Now we see that “little-faith” is not a quality in the faith itself. As though our faith begins like a thin rope and, over time, we need to work on making that rope thicker. Our little-faith manifests itself whenever we take our focus off of Jesus and place it on anyone or anything else. Christians sometimes imagine that since they have walked with the LORD for a long time, they now have such strong faith that they can just focus on the problems of their lives, and they can handle those problems and challenges by themselves. This passage is reminding us, that Christian maturity is marked out by a *greater sense of dependence* upon Jesus and by keeping our Lord at the pulsating center of our thoughts and life.

The central issue of faith is not the size of our faith but the direction of our focus.

3. Third, when Peter begins to sink, he panics. But in his panic Peter instinctively says the right thing. Peter cried out, “Lord, save me!” [and] Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”

Jesus not only corrects Peter for his little faith He **also rescues Him**. See, every person of little-faith, no matter how little that faith belongs body and soul to his or her Savior Jesus Christ. And Jesus is not only **a glorious LORD** the creator of heaven and earth. Jesus is also **a compassionate Savior**: So, everyone who calls on the name of the LORD ... shall be saved!

As Leon Morris points out:

[Jesus] could have delivered His servant simply by speaking, but Jesus’ firm grip must have been very reassuring to the sinking Apostle.¹

¹ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, p. 384.

Jesus is not only committed to saving us. He wants us to know that we are secure in the grip of His loving and omnipotent hands.

Read or sing 119H You, LORD, Are the Portion

Wednesday (2/21) Read and discuss 2 Chronicles 24:17-21

Now after the death of Jehoiada the princes of Judah came and paid homage to the king. Then the king listened to them. And they abandoned the house of the LORD, the God of their fathers, and served the Asherim and the idols. And wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this guilt of theirs. Yet he sent prophets among them to bring them back to the LORD. These testified against them, but they would not pay attention.

Then the Spirit of God clothed Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, and he stood above the people, and said to them, “Thus says God, ‘Why do you break the commandments of the LORD, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, he has forsaken you.’” But they conspired against him, and by command of the king they stoned him with stones in the court of the house of the LORD. (ESV)

Andrew Bowling writes:

Joash’s later wickedness contrasts sharply with the greatness of Jehoiada. Burial in the vicinity of the royal tombs (not necessarily in one of them) shows his stature.

Two disappointments coincide with Jehoida’s death. Then, as later under Hezekiah, Yahwistic revival and reform is sometimes a thin, orthodox veneer over a deeply rooted, popular paganism. Isaiah well describes this popular paganism and its consequences (Isa 6:9-13). Though the people had opposed the foreign paganism of Baal-Melqart, the leaders request the revival of local paganism. The king quickly grants their wish.

Zechariah’s condemnation features two basic covenant themes: (1) the duty to obey God’s commands; and (2) the loss of prosperity because of unfaithfulness to the covenant. Joash’s murder of the son of his benefactor shows the depravity latent even in a godly king.

Sing or Read Hymn 277 Before the Throne of God Above

Thursday (2/22) Read and discuss Psalm 77

I cry aloud to God,
aloud to God, and he will hear me.
In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord;
in the night my hand is stretched out without wearying;

my soul refuses to be comforted.
When I remember God, I moan;
when I meditate, my spirit faints. Selah

You hold my eyelids open;
I am so troubled that I cannot speak.
I consider the days of old,
the years long ago.
I said, "Let me remember my song in the night;
let me meditate in my heart."
Then my spirit made a diligent search:
"Will the Lord spurn forever,
and never again be favorable?
Has his steadfast love forever ceased?
Are his promises at an end for all time?
Has God forgotten to be gracious?
Has he in anger shut up his compassion?" Selah

Then I said, "I will appeal to this,
to the years of the right hand of the Most High."

I will remember the deeds of the LORD;
yes, I will remember your wonders of old.
I will ponder all your work,
and meditate on your mighty deeds.
Your way, O God, is holy.
What god is great like our God?
You are the God who works wonders;
you have made known your might among the peoples.
You with your arm redeemed your people,
the children of Jacob and Joseph. Selah

When the waters saw you, O God,
when the waters saw you, they were afraid;
indeed, the deep trembled.
The clouds poured out water;
the skies gave forth thunder;
your arrows flashed on every side.
The crash of your thunder was in the whirlwind;
your lightnings lighted up the world;
the earth trembled and shook.
Your way was through the sea,
your path through the great waters;
yet your footprints were unseen.
You led your people like a flock

by the hand of Moses and Aaron. (ESV)

James Mays writes:

Psalm 77 turns on the pivot of a series of anguished questions that begin, “Will my LORD reject forever, and never again show favor?” The question expresses the most fearful anxiety that can come upon the soul, the apprehension that God has abandoned His own once and for all. They have often been the liturgy of those on the edge of despair. These questions came rolling into John Bunyan’s mind when he was in his own personal “slough of despond.” ...

... The psalm is composed as a report of prayer that, unsatisfied, turned into reflection on God. The cry to God has brought no comfort (vv. 1-2), so the psalmist turns to thinking of God, his spirit fainting, so troubled he cannot continue to pray aloud (vv. 3-4). There is no purchase for hope in the present, so the psalmist turns to the ancient past (v. 5) and searches there for an answer – to a series of questions that are in truth only one: Is the LORD’s rejection final? The one question is elaborated by using the list of the attributes that have characterized the LORD’s way with Israel: favor, covenant, loyalty, promise, graciousness, compassion. ... Instead of making a petition for help or a vow of praise, the psalmist resolves to deal with his distress by recalling the marvelous deeds of the olden original times of Israel’s relation to the LORD (vv. 11-12). The resolution brings to a climax the theme of remembering, of thinking the past into the present, that is woven into the psalm. ... It is as if there is a reality of God in the past that, if re-presented in the present, will cope with the awful question. The re-presentation takes the form of hymnic address; now God is spoken to directly. The very shift in style gives the effect of presence.

It turns out that this is a very practical approach for our own prayers when our hearts are overwhelmed. We are easily tempted to believe that the most important thing is to focus on and to talk through our problems. Sometimes, that can be helpful. Yet frequently, the greatest comfort comes neither from focusing on our problems nor on an apparent solution but on the LORD Himself. As we remind ourselves that God is both good and unchanging, that He is a merciful God of faithful love who has repeatedly acted on behalf of His people in the past, our present problems – which are very real – frequently shrink down to a less debilitating size.

Friday (2/23) Read and discuss 1 Peter 1:3-9

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready

to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. (ESV)

Simon Kistemaker writes:

When we learn that our names are mentioned in a will, we know that we have a share in an inheritance described in that will. Often, we do not know the value of that inheritance. We have to wait for the death of the testator and for legal transactions and financial settlements. After the period of waiting is over, however, the value of the inheritance often has diminished. Also, the distribution of the inheritance frequently causes jealousy and strife.

By contrast, our eternal inheritance is a constant source of happiness. From the moment of our salvation, we are filled with joy. Granted that we possess our inheritance in principle now, we know that when we leave this earthy scene, we receive our full inheritance. We are unable to comprehend the value of this inheritance, for “the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23). Furthermore, we cherish that gift in perfect harmony with all believers in the presence of our living testator, Jesus Christ.

Read or sing 278 Nothing but the Blood

Saturday (2/24) Read and discuss Matthew 15:1-20

Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, “Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat.” He answered them, “And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? For God commanded, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’ But you say, ‘If anyone tells his father or his mother, “What you would have gained from me is given to God,” he need not honor his father.’ So for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God. You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said:

“‘This people honors me with their lips,
but their heart is far from me;
in vain do they worship me,
teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’”

And he called the people to him and said to them, “Hear and understand: it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person.” Then the disciples came and said to him, “Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?” He answered, “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.” But Peter said to him, “Explain the parable to us.” And he said, “Are you also still without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone.” (ESV)

Grant Osborne writes:

People are often far more concerned with looking good than with actually being good. We can sing in the choir, take the offering, attend the right meetings with a smile on our face, but until we live the life at home that we pretend to live at church, we are hypocrites. Moreover, Jesus’ point here as well as in the parables of the weeds and the net in chapter 13 is that God knows and will judge us by the true reality of our heart, not by the pretension of our external appearances. We may discover that our Armani suits and our Dior dresses are in the eyes of God nothing but the emperor’s new clothes (cf. Rev 3:18b!). The importance of inward righteousness is also found in Romans 2:28-29 (“circumcision of the heart”) and 1 Peter 3:3-4 (“your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit”).

Prayer: Please lift up tomorrow’s morning and evening worship services.