

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 10 March 2024

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 105:1-3

Opening Psalm: 103B O Bless the LORD with All My Soul (1-3)

Confession of Sin

Most holy and merciful Father; We acknowledge and confess before You; Our sinful nature prone to evil and slothful in good; And all our shortcomings and offenses. You alone know how often we have sinned; In wandering from Your ways; In wasting Your gifts; In forgetting Your love. But You, O Lord, have pity upon us; Who are ashamed and sorry for all wherein we have displeased You. Teach us to hate our errors; Cleanse us from our secret faults; And forgive our sins for the sake of Your dear Son. And O most holy and loving Father; Help us we beseech You; To live in Your light and walk in Your ways; According to the commandments of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: Micah 7:18-20

Hymn of Preparation: 288 We Come, O Christ, to You

Old Covenant Reading: Psalm 103:1-14

New Covenant Reading: Matthew 15:29-38

Sermon: *Compassion and Power*

Psalm of Response: 145D God, My King, Thy Might Confessing

Confession of Faith: Q/A 1 Heidelberg Catechism (p. 872)

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Closing Psalm: 103B O Bless the LORD with All My Soul (4-6)

PM Worship

138A With All My Heart My Thanks I Bring

275 Arise, My Soul, Arise

416 Your Hand, O God, Has Guided

Old Covenant Reading: Isaiah 44:1-8

New Covenant Reading: Philippians 1:3-8

Sermon Title: Thankful Assurance

Adult Sunday School: Heidelberg Catechism – Lord's Day 30

Q. How does the Lord's Supper differ from the Roman Catholic Mass?

A. The Lord's Supper declares to us that all our sins are completely forgiven through the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which he himself accomplished on the cross once for all. It also declares to us that the Holy Spirit grafts us into Christ, who with his true body is now in heaven at the right hand of the Father where he wants us to worship him.

But the Mass teaches
that the living and the dead
do not have their sins forgiven
through the suffering of Christ
unless Christ is still offered for them daily by the priests.
It also teaches
that Christ is bodily present
under the form of bread and wine
where Christ is therefore to be worshiped.
Thus the Mass is basically
nothing but a denial
of the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ
and a condemnable idolatry.

**Q. Who should come
to the Lord's table?**

A. Those who are displeased with themselves
because of their sins,
but who nevertheless trust
that their sins are pardoned
and that their remaining weakness is covered
by the suffering and death of Christ,
and who also desire more and more
to strengthen their faith
and to lead a better life.
Hypocrites and those who are unrepentant, however,
eat and drink judgment on themselves.

**Q. Should those be admitted
to the Lord's Supper
who show by what they profess and how they live
that they are unbelieving and ungodly?**

A. No, that would dishonor God's covenant
and bring down God's wrath upon the entire congregation.
Therefore, according to the instruction of Christ
and his apostles,
the Christian church is duty-bound to
exclude such people,
by the official use of the keys of the kingdom,
until they reform their lives.

Suggested Preparations

Monday (3/4) Read and discuss Matthew 15:29-38

Jesus went on from there and walked beside the Sea of Galilee. And he went up on the mountain and sat down there. And great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others, and they put them at his feet, and he healed them, so that the crowd wondered, when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled healthy, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And they glorified the God of Israel.

Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I have compassion on the crowd because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. And I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.” And the disciples said to him, “Where are we to get enough bread in such a desolate place to feed so great a crowd?” And Jesus said to them, “How many loaves do you have?” They said, “Seven, and a few small fish.” And directing the crowd to sit down on the ground, he took the seven loaves and the fish, and having given thanks he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up seven baskets full of the broken pieces left over. Those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children. (ESV)

Jeffrey Gibbs comments:

In the first account, it was the disciples who took the initiative when they asked Jesus to send the crowds away so the people could procure their own food (14:15). In response to their request, Jesus told them to give the people something to eat. The disciples responded by pointing to their meager provisions of five loaves and two fish, and Jesus took it from there.

Here in this account, Jesus is the one who brings up the situation. He begins by declaring that He has compassion on the crowds, and He lets the disciples know in advance that He doesn’t want to send them away. It’s out in the open; the Master cares, and He doesn’t want the people to be sent away. One would think that once the Lord has taken off the table the possibility of dismissing the crowds and has highlighted His own compassion, the disciples would recall the earlier miracle and would at least suspect what Jesus is about to do. They do not, however, suspect any such thing.

In spite of their little faith and short memory, Jesus provides. At the risk of waxing too overtly homiletical, this observation comes to mind: it is always the people around Jesus who mess things up! He Himself, however, is filled with compassion for all manner of human need. He is able to provide as He has promised, until the day when human need will be swallowed up in eschatological provision and fulness. His disciples look for that day, even as they seek to show their Lord’s compassion in broken and hungry world.

Read or sing Psalm 103B O Bless the LORD with All My Soul (1-3)

Tuesday (3/5) Read and discuss Matthew 15:21-28

And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon." But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, "Send her away, for she is crying out after us." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." And he answered, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus answered her, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly. (ESV)

Jesus had previously withdrawn from the crowds in order to have time alone with His Disciples and time alone for prayer. This is different. This withdrawal is a type of judgment upon the people of Israel. They are being left without their Messiah. Christ's teaching and healing presence is no longer with them as He physically leaves Israel behind.

Please recall, from last week, that a delegation of Scribes and Pharisees have come to Jesus from Jerusalem. They came to check Jesus out. Frankly, they came looking for fault in the movement that Jesus was leading.

As they challenge Jesus about the behavior of His Disciples our Lord reveals that these outwardly pious Jews were completely ignoring the word of God for the sake of their manmade traditions.

They had come to pass their judgment upon Jesus. Jesus responds by pronouncing His judgment upon them.

You hypocrites! ... [Jesus says] ... 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.”

We should therefore understand Jesus turning His back on them as an act of Divine judgment. Since they refuse to listen to the word of God in faith and therefore to put God's word into practice ... the Incarnate word will no longer listen nor speak with them.

This is a profound warning to us. It is easy for all of us to imagine that the gracious blessings the LORD is holding out to us today will always be there ... the next day ... or five years from now. We therefore fool ourselves into thinking that we can put off trusting and obeying God in the present with the lie that we can always get around to doing so later.

First of all, even if that *were true* - it would mean that we are squandering our lives between now and then and creating damage both in our own lives and the lives of other people that

may live on for long after we come to our senses and choose to trust God's word and to cling to Jesus Christ.

Second, the illusion that we can always get around to trusting God **later** simply is not true. Sometimes, when people harden their hearts against the LORD the LORD withdraws the very means of grace that we all so desperately need.

This is why the Author of Hebrews quotes the same line **three times** from Psalm 95:

Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,

“**Today**, ... if you hear His voice,
do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,
on the day of testing in the wilderness,
where your fathers put me to the test
and saw my works for forty years.
Therefore I was provoked with that generation,
and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart;
they have not known My ways.’
As I swore in my wrath,
‘They shall not enter ... My rest.’”

The right time to trust Jesus and the live by every word that comes forth from the mouth of our God is *always* right now!

Read or sing Hymn 288 We Come, O Christ, to You

Wednesday (3/6) Read and discuss Psalm 103:1-14

Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name!
Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits,
who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,
who redeems your life from the pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,
who satisfies you with good
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

The LORD works righteousness
and justice for all who are oppressed.
He made known his ways to Moses,
his acts to the people of Israel.
The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

He will not always chide,
nor will he keep his anger forever.
He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.
For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;
as far as the east is from the west,
so far does he remove our transgressions from us.
As a father shows compassion to his children,
so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.
For he knows our frame;
he remembers that we are dust. (ESV)

Tim Keller writes:

Here is how to work the Gospel into one's own heart until it transforms. It happens through inward dialogue, speaking directly and forcefully to your own heart ("my soul") rather than just listening to it. Biblical meditation, unlike the popular varieties, is not a relaxation technique for emptying the mind but rather one that fills it with truth, using thought and memory to set your heart on fire. Here David dwells on the truth that God forgives sin and eventually will remove all suffering and diseases. When we ask, we get forgiveness now (1 John 1:8-9), but we may not get suffering removed now (2 Corinthians 12:8-9). That is because while sin always blocks our relationship with God, suffering can deepen it.

Sing or Read Psalm 145D God, My King, Thy Might Confessing

Thursday (3/7) Read and discuss Isaiah 44:1-8

"But now hear, O Jacob my servant,
Israel whom I have chosen!
Thus says the LORD who made you,
who formed you from the womb and will help you:
Fear not, O Jacob my servant,
Jeshurun whom I have chosen.
For I will pour water on the thirsty land,
and streams on the dry ground;
I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring,
and my blessing on your descendants.
They shall spring up among the grass
like willows by flowing streams.
This one will say, 'I am the LORD's,'
another will call on the name of Jacob,
and another will write on his hand, 'The LORD's,'
and name himself by the name of Israel."

Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel
and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts:
“I am the first and I am the last;
besides me there is no god.
Who is like me? Let him proclaim it.
Let him declare and set it before me,
since I appointed an ancient people.
Let them declare what is to come, and what will happen.
Fear not, nor be afraid;
have I not told you from of old and declared it?
And you are my witnesses!
Is there a God besides me?
There is no Rock; I know not any.” (ESV)

R. Reed Lessing writes:

[Yahweh] encourages His people to recall the ancient pledge that He is their Rock. Israel is prepped to announce a fact that popular pagan opinion will not tolerate. Yahweh is the only God. “The LORD planned, proclaimed, and announced long ago what He is now bringing to pass and, unlike the gods of the other nations, has witnesses to prove it (Edgar Conrad).”

But is this not an audacious claim? During the exile, Yahweh will have no standing Temple, and His people will have no land, no monarchy, and no government. Can He be the world’s only true God? Who would dare embrace this idea? Isaiah did. He offers a “counter-empire testimony (Walter Brueggemann).” He will not give in to Babylon’s brutality and ruthlessness. The prophet offers hope for the deportees that better days will come through Cyrus and the submissive Servant. So Israel must testify, regardless of the consequences. As many have discovered, Yahweh has no witness protection program (e.g., Acts 7). He does, however, promise to raise us up on the Last Day (John 6:40).

Friday (3/8) Read and discuss Philippians 1:3–11

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with

the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. (ESV)

Commenting on verse 11, Peter T. O'Brien writes:

At the conclusion of his intercessory prayer Paul prays that his dear friends will not only be acquitted on the final day (as those who are pure and blameless), but that they will also be filled with the fruit of godly deeds and actions – the result of a right relationship with God. Such a harvest of godly qualities, which include love, joy, peace, and longsuffering (i.e. the fruit of the Spirit, Gal. 5:22), can only be given and produced through Jesus Christ. The crop will be fully visible only at the Parousia; yet Paul's prayer has special reference to the Philippians' present experience as day by day the Spirit's work will be increasingly evident in their lives. Finally, the apostle concludes this introductory paragraph in typical Jewish and Christian fashion, namely with a doxology. It is a fitting conclusion and a reminder that all of the preceding, especially God's saving work among the Philippians, redounds to the divine glory.

Read or sing Psalm 103B O Bless the LORD with All My Soul (4-6)

Saturday (3/9) Read and discuss Matthew 15:29-38

Jesus went on from there and walked beside the Sea of Galilee. And he went up on the mountain and sat down there. And great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others, and they put them at his feet, and he healed them, so that the crowd wondered, when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled healthy, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And they glorified the God of Israel.

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Leon Morris writes:

Matthew has another of his little sections on healing, in which he speaks briefly of great numbers of people coming to Jesus and being healed of a variety of complaints. He goes on to speak of Jesus as taking pity on the crowds in the wilderness with no access to food. As He had done before, He

multiplied a small amount of bread and fish and made it sufficient for a large crowd, the number being given as four thousand people. Discussions of the passage raise the possibility that we have here nothing more than a variant account of the feeding of the five thousand, but this is not what Matthew is saying. He clearly regards the two incidents as distinct: the numbers of people are different in the two incidents, as are the quantities of food and amounts left over; the words for “basket” are different; the people in this incident have been with Jesus for three days whereas in the earlier incident they had just gone around the lake to head Him off; and the times appear to be different, the early feeding being when the grass was green (Mark 6:39), that is, in spring, while here there is no mention of grass and the ground appears to be hard (v. 35); in other words, it is late summer. The feeding of the five thousand is found in all four Gospels, but this miracle is related only in Matthew and Mark.

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