Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 31 March 2024

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Minister: People of God … Christ is Risen!
Congregation: He is Risen Indeed!

Opening Hymn: 363 Jesus Christ Is Risen Today

Confession of Sin

Almighty and most merciful Father; We have erred and strayed from Your ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against Your holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done. And we have done those things which we ought not to have done; and there is no health in us. But You, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders. Spare those, O God, who confess their faults. Restore those who are penitent; According to Your promises declared to mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord. And grant, O most merciful Father; For His sake; That we may hereby live a godly, righteous, and sober life; To the glory of Your holy name. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: John 3:16-17

Hymn of Preparation: 357 The Day of Resurrection!

OT Reading: Psalm 8:1-9

NT Reading: Luke 24:1-12

Sermon Title: *Overwhelming Wonder*

Hymn of Response: 367 Up from the Grave He Arose

Confession of Faith: Nicene Creed (p. 852)

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Closing Hymn: 365 Thine Be the Glory

PM Worship

512 Jesus Lives, and So Shall I

33 With Joy Let Us Sing to the LORD (ODDS)

488 May the Mind of Christ, My Savior

Old Covenant Reading: Philippians 1:12-18

New Covenant Reading: Psalm 33

Sermon Title: Progress and Adversity

Adult Sunday School: Extended Time of Fellowship – No Sunday School

Suggested Preparations

Monday (3/25) Read and discuss Luke 24:1-12.

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in

Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." And they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened. (ESV)

Why don't people believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The evidence is compelling, for anyone who will consider it. The problem is that we don't make decisions simply on the basis of evidence. James Baird tells the following story about the famous philosopher Aldous Huxley:

> On an Easter morning Aldous Huxley was in a party of people. Huxley came to prominence right at the turn of the century, a philosopher, literary giant, a brilliant man from a brilliant family. Huxley had a group of folk at this party who got up early on Easter morning and were going to the local church to worship. Huxley grabbed one man that he knew and respected as a Christian and said, "You stay and you talk to me and you tell me what Easter is all about and what Jesus Christ means to you." The man said, "You're too brilliant. You'd just argue me like you do everybody else." Huxley said, "I won't say a word. You just tell me." And so the man stayed and he began to tell Huxley about Christ and His resurrection, and what had happened in his own life as he received Christ, and how he had served him, and the peace and the joy and the service that was his. And at the end, Huxley bowed his head and said, "I would that, God, I could believe that." "Why don't you believe it, Aldous?" "Well, you see," he writes in another place … "For me to acknowledge Christ would mean He would be my master, and I would have to give up my lifestyle and my women and I don't choose to do that."

You see, there are many people in the face of evidence who for their own chosen morality style will not believe, but we believe that He was raised from the dead and is the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

The fact that Jesus is the risen and exalted King means that we are not in charge. Take some time to pray for your unbelieving friends and family members that they would come to see not only the truth of the resurrection but also that it is good news … that it is far better for our perfect Savior to be in charge of everything than it is for us sinners to go our own way.

Read or sing Hymn 363 Jesus Christ Is Risen Today

Tuesday (3/26) Read and discuss John 19:16-30.

So he delivered him over to them to be crucified.

So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but rather, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfill the Scripture which says,

> "They divided my garments among them,
> and for my clothing they cast lots."

So the soldiers did these things, but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst." A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. (ESV)

One of the most horrible things for a parent to contemplate or experience is the death of a beloved child. I can't even imagine the anguish that Mary endured watching her eldest son having His life snuffed out through a brutal death on the cross.

Nevertheless, the focus of these verses is not on the pain that Mary endured … but on what Jesus did about it.

As William Barclay observes:

> There is something infinitely moving in the fact that Jesus, … in the agony of the Cross, … in the moment when the salvation of the world hung in the balance, … thought of the loneliness of His mother in the days when He was taken away.[1]

And yet, I think it is important for us to notice that Jesus doesn't call Mary His mother. … Once again, … Just as He had done before He turned the water into wine … Jesus calls Mary

[1] Quoted by Leon Morris in *Expository Thoughts on the Gospel of John*, p. 665.

"woman." This is a polite and honorable term – but it also reframes the relationship. Jesus is not primarily speaking to Mary as her Son – but as her Savior and her Lord.

His brothers haven't yet come to a living faith, so Jesus commits Mary to the care of His beloved disciple – and from that very hour – John took Mary into his care.

It is remarkably touching that, with the salvation of the world hanging in the balance, Jesus pressed through His own agony to provide for the needs of Mary as she endured an anguish that goes beyond words. Yet please do not think that this is just a touching extra. This is, in fact, a crucial aspect of what Christ was doing.

Jesus didn't say, "Don't you see that I am engaged in this massive cosmic business. I don't have time to worry about the care of each one of My sheep by name." That is NOT what Jesus says. For the cosmic work of Christ was designed precisely to meet the deepest personal needs of each and every one of us. Jesus didn't simply die for the sins of the world in the abstract. He died for each of you by name.

Read or sing Hymn 357 The Day of Resurrection!

Wednesday (3/27) Read and discuss Psalm 8:1-9.

O LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory above the heavens.
Out of the mouth of babies and infants,
you have established strength because of your foes,
to still the enemy and the avenger.

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,
what is man that you are mindful of him,
and the son of man that you care for him?

Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honor.
You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under his feet,
all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

O LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth! (ESV)

Calvin writes:

From the dominion over all things which God has conferred upon men, it is evident how great is the love which he has borne towards them, and how much account he has made of them. As he does not stand in need of anything himself, he has destined all the riches, both of heaven and earth, for their use.

It is certainly a singular honor and one which cannot be sufficiently estimated, that mortal man, as the representative of God, has dominion over the world, as if it pertained to him by right, and that to whatever quarter he turns his eyes, he sees nothing wanting which may contribute to the convenience and happiness of his life. Now there is no doubt, that if there is anything in heaven or on earth which is opposed to men, the beautiful order which God had established in the world at the beginning is now thrown into confusion. The consequence of this is, that mankind, after they were ruined by the fall of Adam, were not only deprived of so distinguished and honorable an estate, and dispossessed of their former dominion, but are also held captive under a degrading and ignominious bondage. Christ, it is true, is the lawful heir of heaven and earth, by whom the faithful recover what they had lost in Adam; but he has not yet actually entered upon full possession of his empire and dominion. What is here said by David will not be perfectly accomplished until death be abolished. There remains the hope of a better state than the present.

Sing or Read Hymn 367 Up from the Grave He Arose

Thursday (3/28) Read and discuss Psalm 33.

Shout for joy in the LORD, O you righteous!
Praise befits the upright.
Give thanks to the LORD with the lyre;
make melody to him with the harp of ten strings!
Sing to him a new song;
play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts.

For the word of the LORD is upright,
and all his work is done in faithfulness.
He loves righteousness and justice;
the earth is full of the steadfast love of the LORD.

By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,
and by the breath of his mouth all their host.
He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap;
he puts the deeps in storehouses.

Let all the earth fear the LORD;

let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!
For he spoke, and it came to be;
he commanded, and it stood firm.

The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing;
he frustrates the plans of the peoples.
The counsel of the LORD stands forever,
the plans of his heart to all generations.
Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD,
the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!

The LORD looks down from heaven;
he sees all the children of man;
from where he sits enthroned he looks out
on all the inhabitants of the earth,
he who fashions the hearts of them all
and observes all their deeds.
The king is not saved by his great army;
a warrior is not delivered by his great strength.
The war horse is a false hope for salvation,
and by its great might it cannot rescue.

Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him,
on those who hope in his steadfast love,
that he may deliver their soul from death
and keep them alive in famine.

Our soul waits for the LORD;
he is our help and our shield.
For our heart is glad in him,
because we trust in his holy name.
Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us,
even as we hope in you. (ESV)

James Montgomery Boice writes:

> The conclusion of the psalm strikes an entirely different note than was heard at the start. The opening verses call for joyful and loud praise to God. At the end the tone is quiet, as God's people, who have now reflected on his power and goodness to them, declare their intentions to 'wait in hope for the LORD' and 'trust in his holy name.' That is the natural thing to do. For if God is powerful and good, as he is declared to be, it is foolish not to trust him.

> In Charles Haddon Spurgeon's *Treasury of David* there is a story credited to Edward Calamy about a young boy who was at sea during a dangerous storm. The passengers were frightened and at their wits' end, but he was not disturbed at all. In fact, he was even cheerful. The others asked how he could be cheerful when they seemed in danger of losing their lives. He replied that the pilot of the ship was his father, and he knew his father would take care of him.
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> In this life a confidence such as that might be misplaced. For, however loving a skillful a human father might be, there are always dangers in life that are beyond us, and no one is able to guarantee the physical, much less the spiritual safety of another. Yet with God there can be no misplacing of confidence, no error of trust. How could there be? God has made the entire universe by his mere word and by the breath of his mouth. He foils the evil plans, not merely of individuals but of nations. God's purposes prevail. His plans prosper. Besides, he constantly looks upon the affairs of this world to care for his people – to bless, defend, preserve, and prosper them. No one who trusts in this God is ever disappointed. No one who waits in the trusting hope will be let down. Alexander Maclaren said rightly, "Hands, lifted empty to heaven in longing trust, will never drop empty back and hang listless, without a blessing in their grasp."

Friday (3/29) Read and discuss Philippians 1:12-18.

I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.

Yes, and I will rejoice, (ESV)

We enter into business partnerships because we hope to accomplish more together than we could possibly do on our own. This binding of ourselves together for a common purpose is not without risks. A partnership not only allows us the opportunity to benefit from each other's ideas, resources, and labors – it also makes us participants in each other's failures. The first chapter of Philippians is very much about the partnership between Paul and the Philippians in spreading the gospel. The word translated "partnership" could also be translated "shared life" to bring out the deeply personal aspects of this relationship. Now that Paul has been imprisoned, their shared life in the gospel has taken two severe

blows. First, there is the personal concern that the Philippians would naturally have for Paul who, humanly speaking, was their father in the faith. Secondly, there would have been significant concern over the prospects for their shared enterprise of spreading the gospel now that the church's greatest evangelist was in chains. Paul wants the Philippians (and us!) to know that our shared life in the gospel is not entirely like mere business partnerships. While we really do rejoice in each other's fruitfulness and suffer from each other's failures – there is absolutely no possibility of this partnership going under. The founder and builder of this partnership is Christ Himself. So, in spite of the outward circumstances which neither Paul nor the Philippians would have sought, Christ was (and is!) building His Church. In fact, the gospel has penetrated to the Praetorian Guard in a way that the early Christians could never have expected. While only Christ's faithfulness is perfect, we are shown a model of human faithfulness in Paul who rejoices because the mission of their partnership (Christ being proclaimed!) is advancing through Paul's own painful circumstances. Isn't that the sort of partner in the gospel that you want? Isn't that the sort of partner in the gospel that you want to be?

Read or sing Hymn 365 Thine Be the Glory

Saturday (3/30) Read and discuss Luke 24:1-12.

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." And they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened. (ESV)

Darrell Bock writes:

> Luke 24:1-12 is the first account that hints of a reversal of the tragedy of Jesus' death. An act of mourning and respect turns to perplexity for some devoted women. They appear at the tomb, only to find the stone moved, angels present, and the tomb empty. Jesus is brought to life, just as he predicted. The promise of God's power has come to pass, but the whole story is rather unbelievable. Nonetheless, the women go back to the disciples to relate the story, where they are met with unbelief, probably because they thought that resurrection from the dead would come at the end-time. But Peter is not sure. He has learned that what Jesus says is not only surprising, but right. He runs to the tomb. It is empty, except for the grave

clothes, which suggests that Jesus was there at one time. Surely if he had been taken, the clothes would not still be there. No one would steal the body and leave the impression of resurrection. Peter is left to marvel over events and the reminder of Jesus' words. It is a moment of reflection, decision and faith. Is resurrection the only adequate explanation for what Peter sees? Is not resurrection what Jesus promised? Has not God acted on behalf of Jesus? Is Jesus alive to carry out God's plan after all? These are questions not only for Peter in the moment of his discovery, but for all who relive that moment through Luke's retelling of the story. What else can explain these events? Can one really believe in resurrection hope? The story is not over. The apparent end has become a new beginning. Those who doubt will have their doubts laid to rest by the Lord who stands risen from his encounter with death.

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