Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 5 May 2024

AM Worship
Call to Worship: Psalm 98:1-3 – Pastor Stephen Migotsky preaching
Opening Hymn: 210 "O God, We Praise Thee"
Confession of Sin
O eternal God and merciful Father, we humble ourselves before your great majesty, against which we have frequently and grievously sinned. We acknowledge that we deserve nothing less than eternal death, that we are unclean before you and children of wrath. We continually transgress your commandments, failing to do what you have commanded, and doing that which you have expressly forbidden. We acknowledge our waywardness, and are heartily sorry for all our sins. We are not worthy to be called your children, nor to lift up our eyes heavenward to you in prayer. Nevertheless, O Lord God and gracious Father, we know that your mercy toward those who turn to you is infinite; and so we take courage to call upon you, trusting in our Mediator Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Forgive all our sins for Christ's sake. Cover us with his innocence and righteousness, for the glory of your name. Deliver our understanding from all blindness, and our hearts from all willfulness and rebellion, we pray through Jesus Christ, our Redeemer.
Assurance of Pardon: Deuteronomy 4:29-31
Hymn of Preparation: 271 "Blessed Jesus, at Your Word"
Old Covenant Reading: Deuteronomy 31:9-13
New Covenant Reading: 2 Timothy 3:14-4:4
Sermon: *The Bible Tells Me So*
Hymn of Response: 478 "Jesus Loves Me, This I Know"
Confession of Faith: Nicene Creed (p. 852)
Doxology (Hymn 568)
Closing Hymn: 170 "God in the Gospel of His Son"

PM Worship
133A How Excellent a Thing It Is
404 The Church's One Foundation
406 Jesus, with Thy Church Abide
Old Covenant Reading: Psalm 133
New Covenant Reading: Philippians 2:1-4
Sermon Title: Christian Unity

Adult Sunday School: Lord's Day 35

Q. What is God's will for us
in the second commandment?

A. That we in no way make any image of God
nor worship him in any other way
than has been commanded in God's Word.

Q. May we then not make any image at all?

A. God cannot and may not
be visibly portrayed in any way.
Although creatures may be portrayed,
yet God forbids making or having such images
in order to worship them
or serve God through them.

Q. But may not images, as books for the unlearned, be permitted in churches?

A. No, we should not try to be wiser than God.
He wants the Christian community instructed
by the living preaching of his Word—
not by idols that cannot even talk.

Suggested Preparations

Monday (4/29) Read and discuss Deuteronomy 31:9-13

Then Moses wrote this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel. [And Moses commanded them, "At the end of every seven years, at the set time in the year of release, at the Feast of Booths, when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Assemble the people, men, women, and little ones, and the sojourner within your towns, that they may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, and be careful to do all the words of this law, and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess." (ESV)

Daniel Block writes:

> In the long run, Israel's very life depended on hearing the Torah, for how could they live if they did not obey YHWH? How could they obey if they did not fear Him? How could they fear Him if they did not learn the Torah? How could they learn the Torah if they did not hear it? And how could they hear it if no one read it to them? Remarkably, from now on the reverential fear that the vision and sound of YHWH's glory had produced at Sinai (Exod. 20:20; cf. Deut. 4:10) would be produced by hearing the Torah! Through hearing Scripture, the people would encounter God.
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> Israel's history of listening to the Torah was a history of failure. The generation that succeeded Moses and Joshua did not know YHWH, nor His magnificent actions on Israel's behalf, presumably because the Levites failed to read the Torah to them. In the days of Eli, the "word of YHWH"

> was "scarce" (1 Sam 3:1). The people's religious fervor may have been kindled by David's leadership, but the flame was short-lived. Indeed, Israel's Scriptures were so neglected that, when Josiah's men found a Torah scroll while refurbishing the Temple, Shaphan the scribe seems not to have recognized it (2 Kings 22:10). In direct violation of the Torah, centuries earlier, Solomon had set the nation on a course of apostasy that led to their ruin and exile in 586 BC, exactly as the Torah had predicted (2 Kings 23:8-20; cf. Deut. 28:15-68).

Read or sing Hymn 210 "O God, We Praise Thee"

Tuesday (4/30) Read and discuss Matthew 16:21-28

From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom." (ESV)

Let's pause and think a bit about the second half of our Lord's correction to Peter:

> For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.

Isn't this a struggle that each of us continues to face in this life? What makes this so difficult, is that God graciously gives us all manner of blessings, comforts, and even material wealth and He wants us to enjoy them without guilt and with grateful hearts.

The problem comes when we move from living for the sake of the Kingdom of God while enjoying the Lord's numerous blessings in our lives to living for the sake of those blessings.

Here is a sober warning that we should all take to heart: You don't need to do anything dramatic in order to end up making this tragic error in your own life. The normal way that churchgoers end up living by worldly priorities isn't by jumping … it is by drifting. You don't need to do anything to drift. In fact, the key to drifting is found precisely in what we are failing to actively do.

How can you avoid drifting into this sinful way of thinking? Three things:

1. First, attend to the ordinary means of grace especially the word of God, the sacraments, and prayer. I am amazed at how regularly the LORD turns back my thinking or my attitude simply through my regular pattern of just reading His word. If you are meditating upon God's word every day His word will reform your thinking every day! If there are large gaps between when you are mediating in God's word you are leaving open a lot of opportunity for spiritual drifting.

2. Second, repent quickly whenever you are convicted of sin. If we realize that our priorities are wrong and that we are becoming worldly in our thinking the time to repent is **right here** and **right now**! Don't make a mental note that this is something that you might want to work on in the near future. The very moment that the LORD is opening your eyes and convicting you is the time to be turned back to Him.

3. Third, commit yourself to giving thanks. The seeds of drifting into worldliness are best sown in a discontented heart. We might imagine that the antidote to drifting into to worldliness is to focus on being more godly. There is a place for focusing on your own sanctification, but I think that the real key is to not focus on yourself at all but to focus on the Triune God and how amazingly gracious all three persons of the Trinity are to you as a member of God's family in Jesus Christ.

   Giving thanks with a grateful heart will naturally lead you to focusing more and more on the things of God.

Read or sing Hymn 271 "Blessed Jesus, at Your Word"

Wednesday (5/1) Read and discuss 2 Timothy 3:14-4:4

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. (ESV)

Ligon Duncan comments:

> I'll never forget a [conversation with a] friend of mine. We were talking about a very famous professor, and we both had a great admiration for him. And he shared

> a story. He sat down with another minister who knew this professor. He's a very godly man, a very wise man, a very kind man, though he didn't like to critique wrong views. He was given simply to stating what was right, and then when people would ask him, "But, what about…" he'd say, "Well, I don't want to get into criticizing those other views." And so, he was talking with this pastor, and this pastor said, "You know what his problem is? He'll draw a picture of a horse and say, 'That's a horse'; but he won't draw a picture of a cow and say, 'That's not a horse.' And that was his colorful way of saying this man will tell you what's right, but he won't tell you what's wrong. And Paul is saying to Timothy, 'It's not enough to tell the people of God what's right; you also need to tell them what's wrong. They need to know the difference, and they need to learn how to discern the difference, and that means being both positive and negative in your proclamation.' And then, he goes on, saying, 'You're to admonish them. You're to have a tender, fatherly affection [for] and exhortation to the people of God in the things which are right, because we don't simply do the right things because we're told them. We need to be warned off the wrong things. We need to be encouraged in the right things. If you could simply announce what the right thing to do, and close the book and go home, well, that would be fine. But that's not how it works. We're tugged by our hearts to do things which are wrong; we're conformed to the mindset of the world, and we need to be warned against those things.' So, the Apostle Paul is exhorting Timothy to preach the word.

Sing or Read Hymn 478 "Jesus Loves Me, This I Know"

Thursday (5/2) Read and discuss Psalm 133

> Behold, how good and pleasant it is
> when brothers dwell in unity!
> It is like the precious oil on the head,
> running down on the beard,
> on the beard of Aaron,
> running down on the collar of his robes!
> It is like the dew of Hermon,
> which falls on the mountains of Zion!
> For there the LORD has commanded the blessing,
> life forevermore. (ESV)

Allen P. Ross writes:

> What at first seems to describe the benefits of an extended family dwelling together in harmony is actually the manifestation of the greater spiritual unity of the people gathered in Zion to receive God's blessing. The psalm is not so much about fraternal harmony or the unity of brothers as it is about the blessing from God that truly binds together in the covenant. As Kidner says, community is praiseworthy, but dependent on the LORD. That blessing is bestowed in the sanctuary, the place where people come together

> to worship and to pray for it; it is a blessing that brings all the common joys of life to the people who dwell together. …
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> Both testaments emphasize the importance of living in peace and harmony with others, most certainly others in the covenant. And that unity should be most evident as people gather in fellowship in the presence of the LORD to worship in common and to realize his renewed blessings. If the blessing of God is not the cause of the unity, then there is very little basis for it. But if that unity is from God, then it brings with it the responsibilities of a community.

Friday (5/3) Read and discuss Philippians 2:1-4

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. (ESV)

Gordon Fee writes:

> Having acknowledged his friends' suffering by offering a Christological reason for it, Paul now returns to the urgent matter at hand: the appeal in verse 27 that in the face of the opposition that is causing suffering, they stand firm in the one Spirit, contending for the gospel as a unity body.
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> It is instructive to watch Paul deal with such matters, especially noting how he refrains from our own tendencies toward "saint-bashing" when the sins of others are clearer to us than our own. Again, their relationship to him as friends and his need to speak into their present situation combine to create another long and complex sentence. But the way the parts work is easy to see.
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> Verse 1 offers the basis of the appeal, which has to do with their own trinitarian experience of God: Christ's comfort, God's love, and their common sharing in the Spirit. But it is also based on their long-standing relationship with Paul, who has shared both the suffering (1:30) and these same graces with them, and now looks for tenderness and compassion from them.
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> The concern of the appeal is expressed in verse 2, where he piles up three phrases that all say essentially the same thing: that their community life should be characterized by unity of mind and love. Only thus can they complete Paul's own joy.

> The content of the appeal (vv. 3-4) describes, first, those expressions of our human fallenness that altogether militate against unity within the household of faith, selfish ambition and vain conceit; and, second, those virtues necessary for it to happen, love and humility, which find concrete expression as God's people learn to live as Christ, to care for the needs of others as the matter of first priority – all of which will be gloriously displayed in the Christ narrative that follows.

Read or sing 170 "God in the Gospel of His Son"

Saturday (5/4) Read and discuss Deuteronomy 31:9-13

Then Moses wrote this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel. [And Moses commanded them, "At the end of every seven years, at the set time in the year of release, at the Feast of Booths, when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Assemble the people, men, women, and little ones, and the sojourner within your towns, that they may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, and be careful to do all the words of this law, and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess." (ESV)

Adolph Harstad writes:

> Nehemiah 8:13-9:37 relates a scene of Israel obeying these instructions of Deuteronomy 31:9-13. The ceremony of the book of Nehemiah at the Feast of Booths takes place almost a thousand years after the commands of Moses in Deuteronomy 31. A lot of water has flowed down the Jordan River and evaporated from the Dead Sea in the intervening years. The faithfulness of Yahweh has flowed steadily through those many years. The love, faith, and obedience of Israel have evaporated, and the stench of the dead sea of idolatry has appeared. The exile in Babylon has taken place. As promised through Moses and the prophets, a repentant remnant has returned to the land once given by Yahweh through Joshua.

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