Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 26 May 2024

AM Worship
Call to Worship: Psalm 96:1-3
Opening Psalm: 67A O God, to Us Show Mercy
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: 2 Chronicles 7:14
Hymn of Preparation: 449 As When the Prophet Moses Raised
Old Covenant Reading: Deuteronomy 32:1-22
New Covenant Reading: Matthew 17:14-21
Sermon: *Faithful Jesus and Faltering Disciples*
Psalm of Response: 31A In You, O LORD, I Put My Trust (Odd Stanzas)
Confession of Faith: Ten Commandments
Doxology (Hymn 568)
Closing Hymn: 492 How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds

PM Worship
248 All Creatures of Our God and King
119N Your Word Sheds Light upon My Path
535 Go, Labor On
Old Covenant Reading: Deuteronomy 7:6-11
New Covenant Reading: Philippians 2:12-18
Sermon Title: Working Out Your Salvation

Adult Sunday School: Lord's Day 36

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

A. That we neither blaspheme
nor misuse the name of God
by cursing, perjury, or unnecessary oaths,
nor share in such horrible sins
by being silent bystanders.
In summary,
we must use the holy name of God
only with reverence and awe,
so that we may properly

confess him,
call upon him,
and praise him in everything we do and say.

100 Q. Is blasphemy of God's name by swearing and cursing really such serious sin that God is angry also with those who do not do all they can to help prevent and forbid it?

A. Yes, indeed.
No sin is greater
or provokes God's wrath more
than blaspheming his name.
That is why he commanded it to be punished with death.

Suggested Preparations

Monday (5/20) Read and discuss Matthew 17:14-21

And when they came to the crowd, a man came up to him and, kneeling before him, said, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he has seizures and he suffers terribly. For often he falls into the fire, and often into the water. And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him." And Jesus answered, "O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me." And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" He said to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you." (ESV)

Grant Osborne writes:

> True faith is not seen in the amount it attempts but in the degree of its absolute dependence on God. The focus in this story is on Jesus and the power of God available to those who trust completely in Him. Even the smallest amount of this kind of God-awareness can remove great obstacles. The question is clear: Is it "self" or God in whom our reliance is based? Even the smallest amount of God-centered living can accomplish incredible things.

Read or sing Psalm 67A O God, to Us Show Mercy

Tuesday (5/21) Read and discuss Read and discuss John 14:1-14.

"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. (ESV)

Edward Klink writes:

> Heaven is a place (or at least a topic) that still fits comfortably in most modern culture. Those with minimal religious interest will use the term as a concept for the afterlife, a happy place of peaceful dwelling for those who have died. In this [passage], however, the place about which Jesus speaks is entirely different. It is not a generic place beyond this one but a home, the very home of God the Father and the Son, who not only dwells there but prepares it for the children of God. This "house" belongs to God and to those – only those – who believe in the Son. For this reason it is a glorious place, not because of us but because of God; it is a home God prepared for us, a home in which we may be with God. This is cosmological home, the extension of God's grace from this temporal place into eternity.
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> The danger is that such common talk about a very uncommon thing will secularize it – transfer it from sacred to civil possession, making the dwelling of God a common depiction in cartoons, movies, and common speech – places in which it does not fit or make sense. No, the place about which Jesus speaks is "my Father's house." So we must speak of it as sacred, since God himself not only prepared it with his own hands but paid our debt fully in order to give us access to it. This place, therefore, cannot be secularized, for it is not a common possession. It is a place of grace, the holy of holies, the creation, our true home. The church needs to recover this

sacred place, not only as a future place but as a present hope that guides and directs the manner of our current dwelling.

Read or sing Hymn 449 As When the Prophet Moses Raised

Wednesday (5/22) Read and discuss Deuteronomy 32:1-22

"Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak,
and let the earth hear the words of my mouth.
May my teaching drop as the rain,
my speech distill as the dew,
like gentle rain upon the tender grass,
and like showers upon the herb.
For I will proclaim the name of the LORD;
ascribe greatness to our God!

"The Rock, his work is perfect,
for all his ways are justice.
A God of faithfulness and without iniquity,
just and upright is he.
They have dealt corruptly with him;
they are no longer his children because they are blemished;
they are a crooked and twisted generation.
Do you thus repay the LORD,
you foolish and senseless people?
Is not he your father, who created you,
who made you and established you?
Remember the days of old;
consider the years of many generations;
ask your father, and he will show you,
your elders, and they will tell you.
When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance,
when he divided mankind,
he fixed the borders of the peoples
according to the number of the sons of God.
But the LORD's portion is his people,
Jacob his allotted heritage.

"He found him in a desert land,
and in the howling waste of the wilderness;
he encircled him, he cared for him,
he kept him as the apple of his eye.
Like an eagle that stirs up its nest,
that flutters over its young,
spreading out its wings, catching them,
bearing them on its pinions,
the LORD alone guided him,

no foreign god was with him.
He made him ride on the high places of the land,
and he ate the produce of the field,
and he suckled him with honey out of the rock,
and oil out of the flinty rock.
Curds from the herd, and milk from the flock,
with fat of lambs,
rams of Bashan and goats,
with the very finest of the wheat—
and you drank foaming wine made from the blood of the grape.

"But Jeshurun grew fat, and kicked;
you grew fat, stout, and sleek;
then he forsook God who made him
and scoffed at the Rock of his salvation.
They stirred him to jealousy with strange gods;
with abominations they provoked him to anger.
They sacrificed to demons that were no gods,
to gods they had never known,
to new gods that had come recently,
whom your fathers had never dreaded.
You were unmindful of the Rock that bore you,
and you forgot the God who gave you birth.

"The LORD saw it and spurned them,
because of the provocation of his sons and his daughters.
And he said, 'I will hide my face from them;
I will see what their end will be,
for they are a perverse generation,
children in whom is no faithfulness.
They have made me jealous with what is no god;
they have provoked me to anger with their idols.
So I will make them jealous with those who are no people;
I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.
For a fire is kindled by my anger,
and it burns to the depths of Sheol,
devours the earth and its increase,
and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains. (ESV)

Paul Gilchrist succinctly explains what's going on:

> Jushurun (v. 15), a poetic name for Israel, means "upright, law-keeping, upholding justice." But instead of living up to its name, the nation grew fat and kicked. Their sinful rebellion expressed in the verbs *abandoned*, *rejected*, *made him jealous*, *angered*, *deserted*. At the heart of their rebellion is their failure to keep the basic requirement of the covenant, namely, exclusive heart devotion to Yahweh. They transferred

> their allegiance to foreign gods, detestable idols, and demons. The loving relationship of Father and son was abandoned (v. 18a), and that of mother and child was forsaken (v. 18b).

Regretfully, this is type of apostasy was not limited to Ancient Israel. It would be an interesting exercise to trace the spread of Reformed Theology from the time of the Reformation to today on a map. If you were then to take a map of the world and color in all the places that have become economically prosperous – you would notice a remarkable degree of overlap. With the exception of Japan, virtually all of the countries which have become prosperous apart from the influence of the Reformation have been because they were sitting on huge reservoirs of oil. Yet, here is the sad part, as the Reformation led to prosperity many countries that were once permeated by Biblical Christianity have abandoned their Reformation roots and made the pursuit of money, fame, sex, and security their new religion. Instead of simply grieving over this apostasy we ought to examine our own lives and ask where our true loyalties lie. Here is a diagnostic test for parents: Are you more concerned that your children get a good job or that they love Jesus?

Sing or Read Psalm 31A In You, O LORD, I Put My Trust

Thursday (5/23) Read and discuss Deuteronomy 7:6-11

"For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, and repays to their face those who hate him, by destroying them. He will not be slack with one who hates him. He will repay him to his face. You shall therefore be careful to do the commandment and the statutes and the rules that I command you today. (ESV)

Paul Gilchrist writes:

> Israel's special status is by virtue of election – chosen by God, not because of any inherent greatness but solely because of God's love and the oath bound promise made to Abraham. God's sovereignty is also expressed in his faithfulness (v. 9) whereby He keeps His "covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love Him and keep His commands." Love is the epoxy that binds people and God together. Note the amazing grace of God expressed in the Decalogue where the thousand generations to whom God's covenant love is applied is placed in contrast to God's punishing the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Him. Such a high calling is often accompanied by pried and

> boastfulness (problems which Moses deals with in chaps. 8-10). Israel is not to presume on God's covenant love and grace, for carelessness only leads to destruction as a further exhibit of God's justice.

Friday (5/24) Read and discuss Philippians 2:12-18

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me. (ESV)

A. Boyd Luter writes:

> Using the example of Christ's humble obedience (v. 8), and reminding his 'dear friends' in Philippi that they 'have always obeyed' (v. 12), Paul now exhorts them to further obedience and blameless behavior. He had witnessed such obedience during his presence in Philippi on his second and third missionary journeys. He had heard the same report in his absence through Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25) and others. "Therefore" (v. 12) links Paul's exhortation to his readers with the preceding grand example of Christ's obedience and its consequences.
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> A crucial component of being able to 'work out your salvation' is to 'do everything without complaining or arguing.' Such practices may have been at the very heart of the problem in Philippi (4:2-3). Such patterns that promote disunity must be dealt with if the church is to be 'blameless and pure' internally and 'without fault' in its external witness to the world. … When Christians behave in this way, they 'shine like stars' in a lost and dying world. …
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> As his readers pursue selfless humility through the kind of obedient, blameless behavior, Paul will have a proper reason to 'boast on the day of Christ.' No one would be able to say at that point that Paul's efforts for Christ had been 'for nothing.'

Read or sing Hymn 492 How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds

Saturday (5/25) Read and discuss Matthew 17:14-21

And when they came to the crowd, a man came up to him and, kneeling before him, said, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he has seizures and he suffers terribly. For often he falls into the fire, and often into the water. And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him." And Jesus answered, "O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me." And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" He said to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you." (ESV)

How are Jesus' disciples, both long ago and throughout the time that leads up to His return in glory, to understand the sweeping promises with which His teaching concludes?

In the first place, Jesus' assurance that the disciples will be able to command the movement of mountains probably reflects a common expression that means "to do what seems to be impossible" and so should not be pressed to literally. It is true that there is not as much evidence as we might like to establish firmly that this was a common figure of speech at the time. Yet the Lord certainly knows the power of exaggerated or overstated speech (see, e.g., the "beam" or "log" in the eye in 7:3-5), and this saying does come immediately after His pointed and emphatic address to His disciples, "O faithless and crooked generation!" (17:17; cf. 16:23, where He calls Peter "Satan"). The majority of commentators seem to concur in taking the saying about moving mountains as an overstatement or hyperbole. Faith like a mustard seed enables Jesus' disciples to do more than they imagined was possible.

Second, Christ's concluding promise summarizes the intent of His statement about moving mountains: "and nothing will be impossible for you" (17:20). How are we to understand and receive this word? The most important answer to this question is also the most obvious and the most basic: we are to understand the promise in its context in the Gospel of Matthew first and only then to apply it to the life of discipleship throughout the ages.

The words "and nothing will be impossible for you" are not isolated from the situation in which they occur. They apply directly and precisely to the preceding situation, in which Jesus' disciples found it impossible to cast out a demon from a boy. That is, the disciples found it impossible *to do something that Jesus had promised them the authority to do* (10:1). In the narrative context, the disciples must not be imagined as thinking, "Oh, this is a new promise! Now we can do *anything* we want to!" No, the words of Jesus direct the disciples back to earlier promises that the Christ has made and which their little faith has failed to grasp. Jesus' concluding promise,

then, has the following force: "*none of the things that I have promised that you will be able to do will be impossible for you*."

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