

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 23 June 2024

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 96:1-3

Opening Hymn: 171 O Word of God Incarnate

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: Romans 3:21-26

Hymn of Preparation: 465 Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

Old Covenant Reading: Deuteronomy 19:15-21

New Covenant Reading: Matthew 18:15-20

Sermon: *Dealing with Sin*

Hymn of Response: 456 Jesus! What a Friend for Sinners!

Confession of Faith: Ten Commandments

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Closing Hymn: 179 Forgive Our Sins, as We Forgive

PM Worship

79B Remember Not, O God

527 Loving Shepherd of Your Sheep

526 He Leadeth Me: O Blessed Thought!

Old Covenant Reading: Psalm 79

New Covenant Reading: John 10:1-18

Sermon Title: Sheep Who Need Their Shepherd

Adult Sunday School: Missions Presentation by Annika Kamerman
and Micah Carminito

Suggested Preparations

Monday (6/17) Read and discuss Matthew 18:15-20

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you,

whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.” (ESV)

Jeffrey Gibbs writes:

Matthew 18:17 seems intrinsically liable to over-interpretation. “Let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax gatherer” should be read at face value and taken no farther. It can be and has been over-read in two directions. One view that takes an unwarranted next step says, “Well, Jesus reached out and welcomed Gentiles and tax gatherers. That must be what He is telling the disciples to do: to continue to reach out to the fallen sinner.” Exegetically, this would be over-reading the text. Jesus’ words simply say that this person is a non-disciple, no more and no less. To be sure, larger issues of theology surely would lead to such an ongoing attitude of outreach and concern – of course! But Jesus’ words here do not say that.

The other over-interpretation is even more dangerous. It has especially occurred among groups of disciples who emphasize the fellowship of the visible church in a theologically unbalanced way. I have good friends in the Anabaptist tradition, for instance, who have talked with regret about the older practice of “shunning” a person who has been taken through the steps of church discipline as perceived here in 18:15-20. After the church member in question refused to respond in repentance and faith to the pleas of others, the congregation and (apparently) even the larger community ostracized the person socially and economically. Such an attitude would make loving outreach to the person being shunned virtually impossible.

Through it all, in both the interpretation and the application of this teaching of Jesus, only the Spirit of God can do what needs to be done in the hearts of all – the hearts of those who go and reprove one who is caught in sin, in the heart of the sinner whom they would gain.

Read or sing Hymn 171 O Word of God Incarnate

Tuesday (6/18) Read and discuss Read and discuss Matthew 18:5-14

“Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

“Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes! And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than

with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire.

“See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven. What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish. (ESV)

Jesus Christ is the pearl of great price. We must lay aside anything and everything that hinders us from being found in Him and being a productive member of the Kingdom of God.

Our Lord’s words are direct and to the point: Do not negotiate with your sin. And do not try to put a respectable veneer over your sin. Jesus is plainly telling us that, by the Spirit, we are to put our sinful deeds and desires to death.

It is important to point out, that we are not to physically cut off our hands or pluck out our eyes for that won’t do anything at all for our heart. Jesus doesn’t want us to take His words woodenly, but He does want us to take them with utmost seriousness. Jesus is using dramatic language to make clear that pursuing purity in our hearts might require us to take very radical steps in our lives. This is a call to action. This is a call to *radical* action.

You are not engaged in some minor and inconsequential skirmish. You are engaged in a war that requires you to take radical and disciplined steps in pursuit of absolute victory to the glory of God.

There are things that you enjoy doing and places that you enjoy going where you find yourself particularly weak and inclined to give in to the sinful desires of your own flesh. It doesn’t matter that these things are not a place of temptation for other Christians. If they are for you then you need to cut them out of your life.

There also may be patterns or activities in your life which are intrinsically sinful. Jesus is calling you to act decisively ... and to cut those patterns and activities completely out of your life. Don’t cut back! Cut them off!

We need to take the negative side of the equation seriously. That is what Jesus is explicitly talking about in this passage. But the simple truth is that you cannot beat something with nothing, and Christ is not calling us to simply avoid impurity. He is calling us to cultivate hearts that are fixed on that which is true that which is good and that which is beautiful.

Read or sing Hymn 465 Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

Wednesday (6/19) Read and discuss Deuteronomy 19:15-21

“A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established. If a malicious witness arises to accuse a person of wrongdoing, then both parties to the dispute shall appear before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who are in office in those days. The judges shall inquire diligently, and if the witness is a false witness and has accused his brother falsely, then you shall do to him as he had meant to do to his brother. So you shall purge the evil from your midst. And the rest shall hear and fear, and shall never again commit any such evil among you. Your eye shall not pity. It shall be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot. (ESV)

The Law regarding *lex talionis* [“eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot] has frequently been misunderstood in the modern West. John Kleinig writes:

The *lex talionis* is not a legal prescription, but a legal principle that is couched in proverbial form. As a legal principle, it was not applied literally and indiscriminately in all cases. Rather, it enshrined the notion of equivalence in the administration of justice. Because modern people regard this principle as a legal decree, they also frequently misunderstand and misrepresent it as a primitive, barbaric form of punishment. Yet it was anything but that in ancient Israel and in the ancient Near East.

It is, in fact, the basis of all civilized legal systems. The *lex talionis* was already elaborated quite explicitly in Mesopotamia long before it was mentioned in the OT. It performed two very important functions there in ancient Israel. First, it limited the scope for revenge, which always tended to escalate indiscriminately and endlessly in any tribal society. By it, the principle of equivalence was enshrined in the administration of justice. Second, it treated the life and the body of every person as equal in value regardless of social, racial, and economic status. It therefore ensured that the loss of human life and the bodily injury of any person were not treated as commercial matters in a civil court, but as crimes against humanity in a criminal court in the ancient world.

God’s ruling in ... [Leviticus 24:10-23] goes further than that. It makes the murder and bodily injury of a human being a sin against God. What’s more, God not only sanctioned this legal principle in the Pentateuch, He also indicated that, since He Himself administered His justice according to this principle in the order of creation, the Israelites were to use this principle in their administration of His justice by their courts of law.

We also need to contend with the problem that everyone involved in the justice system, whether we are speaking of the accusers, the accused, or the judge, is a sinner. Adolph Harstad writes:

Inherited sin poisons humanity with a strong bias toward revenge plus more – “I’ll hit you harder than you hit me.” The old Adam in all humans loves to amplify the degree of the wound inflicted by an opponent. Lamech – the chapter right after the fall – was stating in his crass way what lingers in all our hearts. Lines from Fiddler on the Roof show the end result of individuals acting out a [wooden and mechanical] meaning of the lex talionis as if it were a legal command that every person must carry out all of the time, even without inflating the degree of retaliation:

A villager says: “An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.”

Tevye responds: “Very good. That way the whole world will be blind and toothless.”

Sing or Read Hymn 456 Jesus! What a Friend for Sinners!

Thursday (6/20) Read and discuss John 10:1-18

“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.” (ESV)

This beautiful passage about Jesus being the Good Shepherd flows out of the conflict Jesus was having with the religious leaders of His own day. They were supposed to be shepherds

for God's people, but instead they saw their religious offices primarily in terms of what they could get out of it. Jesus contrasts Himself with these men in the sharpest possible terms. Andreas Kostenberger helpfully observes:

Remarkably, chapter 10 proceeds without any transition from the previous chapter. This seems to indicate that the recipients of Jesus' Good Shepherd discourse are the same Pharisees who had been the target of Jesus' comments at the end of chapter 9. If so, this helps us understand the thrust of Jesus' words in chapter 10 even better. In the preceding chapter Jesus' healing of the blind man had led to the man's excommunication from the local synagogue (9:34). Jesus saw in this provocative act an arrogant assertion of usurped authority that called for further comment. For the Pharisees were not only blind themselves (9:40-41), they also were 'blind guides' (cf. Mt 23:16, 24), leading astray those entrusted to their care. They were the ones who spared no effort to win even a single proselyte, only to make him (in Jesus' terms) 'twice as much a son of hell as they were (Mt 23:15). ... The dark backdrop of Jesus' Good Shepherd discourse is therefore the blatant irresponsibility he perceives in the Jewish religious leadership.

It is also worth noticing the striking authority that Jesus exhibits in this discourse. He pits Himself against the entire religious establishment and vindicates Himself while condemning them. He claimed that His authority was directly from God. He claimed that nobody had the ability to take His life from Him. And, most remarkably, Jesus claimed the ability to raise Himself from the dead. With that last point, Jesus was quite simply claiming to be God. Sometimes new Christians struggle to discover the key proof texts which demonstrate that Jesus is in fact God incarnate when in fact the New Testament everywhere teaches this truth. For those with eyes to see, finding evidence of the Deity of Christ in the New Testament is like finding salt in sea water. Everywhere you look – there it is!

Friday (6/21) Read and discuss Psalm 79

O God, the nations have come into your inheritance;
they have defiled your holy temple;
they have laid Jerusalem in ruins.
They have given the bodies of your servants
to the birds of the heavens for food,
the flesh of your faithful to the beasts of the earth.
They have poured out their blood like water
all around Jerusalem,
and there was no one to bury them.
We have become a taunt to our neighbors,
mocked and derided by those around us.

How long, O LORD? Will you be angry forever?

Will your jealousy burn like fire?
Pour out your anger on the nations
that do not know you,
and on the kingdoms
that do not call upon your name!
For they have devoured Jacob
and laid waste his habitation.

Do not remember against us our former iniquities;
let your compassion come speedily to meet us,
for we are brought very low.
Help us, O God of our salvation,
for the glory of your name;
deliver us, and atone for our sins,
for your name's sake!
Why should the nations say,
"Where is their God?"
Let the avenging of the outpoured blood of your servants
be known among the nations before our eyes!

Let the groans of the prisoners come before you;
according to your great power, preserve those doomed to die!
Return sevenfold into the lap of our neighbors
the taunts with which they have taunted you, O Lord!
But we your people, the sheep of your pasture,
will give thanks to you forever;
from generation to generation we will recount your praise. (ESV)

Allen P. Ross writes:

This is another lament psalm, but it is no ordinary lament; the occasion for the lament is catastrophic: the temple had been destroyed, people had been slaughtered in the streets, and the name of the LORD mocked by the enemies. Moreover, the people who prayed this psalm knew that the disaster had come because of their great sins. The way back would therefore include confession along with the plea for help.

Down through the history of the faith the people of God have experienced similar disasters, and even today in places in the world there is such devastation and death that the saints are filled with gloom and bewilderment. And it seems that all the saints in the rest of the world can do is pray for and encourage the persecuted Church.

But how does this psalm speak to people who have not experienced such a catastrophe? The passage certainly would prompt believers to strengthen

their faith to meet such a challenge and to pray more earnestly for those who suffer. But in addition to that, if the principles we find in this psalm concern the greatest catastrophe, they would certainly also apply to lesser troubles. And so persecution and opposition and mockery from the world in any degree would be occasion for the people to pray this psalm.

The point that the psalm makes is that because God has committed Himself to His people and will vindicate His holy name, the believers appeal to God to act in accordance with His revealed person and plan, and not as they deserve. There are times when the trouble that comes is not due to the sins of the people – but the concern of this psalm is when they are. So we may form a central idea for the exposition of Psalm 79 in this way: *When the people of God are devastated by the persecution of the wicked, they must pray for forgiveness for their sins as they make their appeal for God to fulfill His plan and vindicate His name.*

Read or sing Hymn 179 Forgive Our Sins, as We Forgive

Saturday (6/22) Read and discuss Matthew 18:15-20

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.” (ESV)

Jeffrey Gibbs writes:

Matthew 18:19 should not be read as a sort of blanket promise regarding all or any prayer that a disciple may utter. This saying of Jesus is given to us in a context, and to that context it belongs. It is a word of comfort and authority as Christians and the pastor and the Christian congregation seek how to best reach out in love to straying fellow disciples. As they love and pray, the promise is that God Himself will hear their request and be present in their common efforts.

In their labors to care for [those] in their midst, Christians should not despair that they are only a few in number. Employing a kind of reverse hyperbole, Jesus takes the smallest group possible (“two of you”) and promises that the heavenly Father will hear their cries for help and wisdom and guidance. Jesus (as well as Matthew) intends of the words “if two of you agree together on earth concerning any matter” (18:19) to encourage the church.

Jesus is not specifying a quorum for answered prayer. He is rather emphasizing just how attentive the Father in heaven is to His children as they reach out in love to the little ones in need. After all, it is not the Father's will that any of them perish!

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