

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 30 June 2024

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 98:1-3

Opening Hymn: 175 Your Law, O God, Is Our Delight

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: Leviticus 26:44-45

Hymn of Preparation: 435 Not What My Hands Have Done

Old Covenant Reading: Exodus 34:1-9

New Covenant Reading: Matthew 18:21-35

Sermon: *Forgiving and Forgiveness*

Psalm of Response: 51C God, Be Merciful to Me (1-4)

Confession of Faith: Nicene Creed (p. 852)

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Closing Psalm: 51C God, Be Merciful to Me (5-8)

PM Worship

131B Not Haughty Is My Heart

422 We Rest on Thee

1B How Blest the Man

Old Covenant Reading: Psalm 131

New Covenant Reading: Philippians 3:12-16

Sermon Title: Toward Maturity

Suggested Preparations

Monday (6/24) Read and discuss Matthew 18:21-35

Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.

“Therefore, the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed

him ten thousand talents. And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.' So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart." (ESV)

Leon Morris writes:

Jesus does not always make an application of the truth taught in His parables, but on this occasion He does. So does not mean "exactly like this," but it does mean that the severity we discern in the punishment of the man in the parable is all that unforgiving sinners can look for from the hand of God. God might, of course, be more merciful than the king, but that is not the point. The point is that the man deserved no more; any unforgiving sinner, by the fact that he refuses to forgive, is inviting God to withhold forgiveness from him. Jesus refers to God here as "*My heavenly Father*," stressing His special relationship to God and at the same time something of the majesty of God. The certainty that God will be our final Judge underlies the statement that He will *do* to the unforgiving as they have done to others. The lesson that is driven home is that the followers of Jesus must *each* (the word is important; there are no exceptions) *forgive*. And the final expression brings home the truth that we must forgive wholeheartedly, not grudgingly. It is easy to skimp on forgiveness, refraining from outward evidence of an unforgiving heart but nursing up a grudge against one who has offended us. "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us" is a prayer that we must pray with due searching of heart.

Read or sing Hymn 175 Your Law, O God, Is Our Delight

Tuesday (6/25) Read and discuss 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)

In today’s passage, Jesus brings us to the very difficult matter of dealing with sin in our relationships with one another. If we wrongly imagine that grace is the helping hand that the LORD gives to basically good people we will never be able to do what Jesus is calling us to in this passage. If we think like that, whenever someone sins against us in a particularly painful way we will either be unwilling to take the initiative in seeking reconciliation or we will be paralyzed by the memory of our own sins and therefore ashamed to confront a brother or sister over *their* sin.

Thankfully, God’s grace is greater than even our most vile of sins.

Consider these words that the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians. This is from First Corinthians chapter 6, beginning at verse 9. Paul writes:

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers ... will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. (ESV)

Paul isn’t talking about that time when you were not quite as kind to your neighbor as you should have been. According to the Law: Adultery, Idolatry, and Practicing Homosexuality are all offenses that are worthy of the death penalty. And let us remember, that in Romans chapter 1, Paul continues to affirm that those who practice homosexuality are deserving of death.

Paul is not talking about minor blemishes. He is talking about grave sins that are morally scandalous. Then Paul goes on to say:

And such were some of you.
But you were **washed**,
you were **sanctified**,
you were **justified**
... in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Many Christians are paralyzed by the memory of their past sins. Yet, here is the plain truth from God’s word:

No matter how dark the stains your sins had once left upon your life Jesus Christ has washed you whiter than snow. And no matter how plagued you are by the memory of your past sins, in Christ God has cast all your guilt into the sea of forgetfulness.

What does this have to do with church discipline? Much in every way!

- First, this same awesome grace in Christ is absolutely sufficient for those who have horrendously sinned against you.
- Second, the LORD's amazing grace toward you liberates you to be the very instrument by which Christ leads this brother or sister who sinned against you to genuine repentance and full reconciliation.
- And third, God's grace in Christ, empowers you to come alongside both the sinner and the person sinned against to work toward forgiveness and the holiness of Christ's Church.

Needless to say, all of this is *very, very* hard.

We are never going to deal effectively with the sins of fellow believers if the LORD only gives us a brief word of encouragement. What we need is grace upon grace.

- Grace for the offender.
- Grace for the offended. And critically ...
- Grace for those who come alongside in order to seek repentance, reconciliation, and the glory of Jesus Christ in the midst of our human sinfulness.

Thankfully, as Richard Sibbs reminds us, "There is more grace in Christ than there is sin in us!"

Read or sing Hymn 435 Not What My Hands Have Done

Wednesday (6/26) Read and discuss Exodus 34:1-9

The LORD said to Moses, "Cut for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke. Be ready by the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself there to me on the top of the mountain. No one shall come up with you, and let no one be seen throughout all the mountain. Let no flocks or herds graze opposite that mountain." So Moses cut two tablets of stone like the first. And he rose early in the morning and went up on Mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and took in his hand two tablets of stone. The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the

children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation." And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped. And he said, "If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, please let the Lord go in the midst of us, for it is a stiff-necked people, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance." (ESV)

R. Reed Lessing writes:

Twenty-six times, Psalm 136 celebrates that divine [steadfast love] endures forever. We've all listened to people repeat themselves; it gets old. Not this word. Not this gift. Not this psalm. Not ever. God's [steadfast love] is never ill-timed; it never disappoints, and it never fails. And God's [steadfast love] is form fitted for you – your pain, your temptations, your tests, your trials, your heart-crushing disappointments.

"Abounding" announces that God's [steadfast love] isn't limited. God is like the federal government. Whenever there's a need, God just prints of more [steadfast love] to cover all the currency He prints. His infinite resources of steadfast love will never run out! God go in debt? God go bankrupt? Never!

Finally, in Exodus 34:7 is God's action of "forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." There are only three Hebrew words for sin and God uses all three right here. What's He up to? Yahweh announces that He forgives every type of sin.

Moses then pleads with God – affirming that Israel "is a stiff-necked people." Not "was." Not "used to be." And Moses doesn't promise Israel will begin a regimen to increase their devotion to God. Moses calls it as he sees it. Israel is stiff necked. God's people, ourselves included, never graduate from their need for grace.

Sing or Read Paste 51C God, Be Merciful to Me (1-4)

Thursday (6/27) Read and discuss Psalm 131

O LORD, my heart is not lifted up;
my eyes are not raised too high;
I do not occupy myself with things
too great and too marvelous for me.
But I have calmed and quieted my soul,
like a weaned child with its mother;
like a weaned child is my soul within me.

O Israel, hope in the LORD
from this time forth and forevermore. (ESV)

Tim Keller writes:

There can be an inordinate desire for greatness and accomplishment (v. 1). “Should you then seek great things for yourself? Do not seek them” (Jeremiah 45:5). This self-seeking creates great restlessness and discontent – but the psalmist has left all that behind. A nursing child, held by its mother, is highly aware of the milk she can offer and will squirm and cry if denied. A child who has been “weaned” (v. 2), however, [who] no longer nurses, is content just to be with its mother, enjoying her closeness and love without wanting anything else. We so often approach God only for what He can give, rather than simply to rest in His presence. Do *that* now, through the Word and prayer, in Jesus’s name.

Friday (6/28) Read and discuss Philippians 3:12-16

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained. (ESV)

James Montgomery Boice writes:

Paul says that he forgets those things that are behind. What are they? Well, he certainly did not forget his knowledge of the Bible and Christian doctrine; the letter he had just written proves that. Some of the greatest truths of the Christian faith are given in this very chapter in shorthand form. Moreover, he certainly did not forget God’s grace and God’s great mercies, because he had been talking about them throughout the letter. He knew that all he had of value in his life came through the grace of God manifested in Jesus Christ.

What is the nature of this forgetting then? I believe that it is the kind of forgetting that occurs when we cease to let things that in the past overshadow the present, that lets the past be past, both the good and the bad, and that constantly looks forward to the work that God still has for us.

There is an illustration of the opposite of this attitude in the Old Testament. When God led the people of Israel out of Egypt toward the promised land, He provided everything that they needed for their journey. They had shade by day and light by night. They had water to drink and manna to eat. The time came, however, when the people ceased to look forward to the land that God was giving them and instead looked back to their life in Egypt. They said, “We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic.

But now our soul is dried away; there is nothing at all besides this manna, before our eyes” (Num. 11:5, 6). The people of Israel began to hunger for these things, and God taught them a great lesson by giving them the things they asked for. He gave them quail until they grew sick of it. The point of the illustration, however, is that they began to look back and failed to trust God for their present and future blessings. You and I are not to do that as Christians.

Read or sing Psalm 51C God, Be Merciful to Me (5-8)

Saturday (6/29) Read and discuss Matthew 18:21-35

Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.

“Therefore, the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’ So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also My heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.” (ESV)

Grant Osborne writes:

In the parable the first slave’s debt to the king was 600,000 times as great as his fellow slave’s debt to him was. That percentage is probably close to our own situation [in terms of the number of sins] over our lifetime. Think about it this way: say you are forty years old, which means you have lived 14,600 days and 350,400 hours. How many sins do you suppose you committed in that time? At least two per hour? Because Christ gave Himself as the atoning sacrifice on the cross, all of those sins have been forgiven, not because of who you are or what you have accomplished but because of His infinite love and forgiveness. Of course this has been only an

illustration; it is not about counting our sins but about the incredibly great debt our sins have produced.

God expects us to apply our experience of divine forgiveness to our relationships and to show mercy and forgiveness to others even when they don't deserve it. After having been forgiven of at least 600,000 sins, to refuse to forgive one sin against us by another member of the community is a serious transgression. A willingness to forgive must be labeled a basic characteristic of true discipleship. Christ is unequivocal on this point.

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