

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 7 July 2024

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 105:1-3

Opening Psalm: 66B Come, All Ye People, Bless Our God

Confession of Sin

Most holy and merciful Father; We acknowledge and confess before You; Our sinful nature prone to evil and slothful in good; And all our shortcomings and offenses. You alone know how often we have sinned; In wandering from Your ways; In wasting Your gifts; In forgetting Your love. But You, O Lord, have pity upon us; Who are ashamed and sorry for all wherein we have displeased You. Teach us to hate our errors; Cleanse us from our secret faults; And forgive our sins for the sake of Your dear Son. And O most holy and loving Father; Help us we beseech You; To live in Your light and walk in Your ways; According to the commandments of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: Hebrews 8:10-12

Psalm of Preparation: 119C Do Good to Me and I Will Live

Old Covenant Reading: Jeremiah 3:6-10

New Covenant Reading: Matthew 19:1-12

Sermon: *God's Way for Marriage*

Hymn of Response: 548 Oh, Blest the House

Confession of Faith: Q/A 1 Heidelberg Catechism (p. 872)

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Closing Hymn: Hymn 528 Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart

PM Worship

245 Great Is Thy Faithfulness

131B Not Haughty Is My Heart

429 Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing

Old Covenant Proverbs 30:1-9

New Covenant 1 Timothy 6:1-10

Sermon Title: *Finding Contentment*

Sunday School: OPC Missions

Suggested Preparations

Monday (7/1) Read and discuss Matthew 19:1-12

Now when Jesus had finished these sayings, he went away from Galilee and entered the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. And large crowds followed him, and he healed them there.

And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are

no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” They said to him, “Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?” He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.”

The disciples said to him, “If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry.” But he said to them, “Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it.” (ESV)

Tom Wright comments:

Last time we bought a car I was startled to notice, in the book of instructions, a list of things to do if you were involved in an accident. Call the police. Make a note of exactly what happened, where and how. Write down the registration numbers of other cars involved. And so on. There was also a section on how to cope if the car began to skid or did other dangerous things.

Such a section is surprising because you don’t really expect the manufacturers of a car to want you to have an accident, to skid, to drive dangerously. And of course, they don’t. They want you to drive safely, free of trouble, anxiety and danger. But sometimes people do get into difficult situations, and it’s important to know what to do if the occasion arises. It would be absurd to suggest that the people who wrote the instruction book were either hoping for such things to happen or even encouraging people to make them happen.

The Pharisees seem to have thought that the very existence of legislation about divorce, within the law of Moses, meant that Moses was quite happy for it to take place. Since there’s a law which tells you how to do it, they seem to have reasoned, that must mean it’s all right. Jesus shows the flaw in their thinking by pointing them back to the original intention. Just as a car is made to drive safely on the road, not to skid around colliding with other cars, so marriage was made to be a partnership of one woman and one man for life, not something that could be split up and reassembled whenever one person wanted it (often, in that world and in ours, this would be men, though this would not always be the case). Moses didn’t say, as it were, ‘when you drive a car, take care not to have an accident; but if, tragically, an accident occurs, this is how to deal with it.’

Read or sing Psalm 66B Come, All Ye People, Bless Our God

Tuesday (7/2) Read and discuss 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)

Although the first servant had been forgiven an unimaginably great debt, when he encountered a fellow slave who owed him money ... he was merciless toward him.

We need to grasp is how much money this second slave owed. A denarius is a day’s wage so 100 denarii was equal to a third of year’s salary – and that is if you work six days per week! If you are working full-time, think about how much a third of your salary for a year actually is. This is a LOT of money, and it is an amount that would have a meaningful impact on your life if it were never paid back.

Many preachers and other commentators get this point *wrong* by imagining that this debt was minuscule and that the man who had been forgiven by the King was being incredibly vengeful by going after such a tiny sum. But that is mistaken. In telling this story, Jesus understands that sometimes our brothers and sisters in Christ are going to harm us profoundly and that forgiving them will be genuinely costly to us.

Our Lord’s point is not that what He is calling us to do is easy because the debts that we are forgiving will all be so small. If that were the point of the story, what would you do when one of your brothers or sisters in Christ sins against you in a manner that hurts you deeply? Well, that **isn’t** the point of this parable. Jesus is talking about a really significant offense one that is represented by the loss of a third of a year’s salary. Jesus isn’t saying that this sin against you is small. He is reminding us that for Christ’s sake our Father in heaven has forgiven us of a debt that is incomparably greater!

In our Lord's story, although the first slave had been forgiven an unimaginably great debt he refused to be transformed into someone who would show this same sort of mercy to others. He was unaffected by the grace which he had received. Jesus is telling this parable to make abundantly clear that the failure to respond to the King's grace is entirely unacceptable to God.

To call ourselves Christians while refusing to be Christlike is to contradict ourselves – and the Judge of all the earth will hold us accountable for our hypocrisy.

Read or sing Psalm 119C Do Good to Me and I Will Live

Wednesday (7/3) Read and discuss Jeremiah 3:6-10

The LORD said to me in the days of King Josiah: “Have you seen what she did, that faithless one, Israel, how she went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and there played the whore? And I thought, ‘After she has done all this she will return to me,’ but she did not return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it. She saw that for all the adulteries of that faithless one, Israel, I had sent her away with a decree of divorce. Yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but she too went and played the whore. Because she took her whoredom lightly, she polluted the land, committing adultery with stone and tree. Yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah did not return to me with her whole heart, but in pretense, declares the LORD.” (ESV)

Terence Fretheim writes:

This section is a private divine communication to Jeremiah and includes a report of a divine soliloquy (v. 7). In [the written book of Jeremiah which is part of Scripture], this section is a word of God to its readers; it enables them to see something of the content of the communication between God and the prophet, in this case a glimpse into the internal divine agony regarding the unfaithfulness of the people.

This segment compares Israel and Judah regarding issues of fidelity, rehearsed in language that is similar to 2:1-3:5. Israel's failure to repent resulted in God giving her a bill of divorce, that is, destruction and exile (721 BC). But the pathos of God (v. 7) in relation to Israel continues, for the call to repentance implies (found in vv. 12-13) implies that the divorce, while real, is not final. The assumption is that northerners had not been annihilated; they continued to live in the North, in exile, and as refugees in the South. ...

The summary of northern experience is then compared to that of the South (Judah). Though Judah saw what had happened to Israel, Judah did not learn from this experience and continued in its unfaithful ways. Judah did engage in rituals of repentance, but they were not wholehearted. Judah cannot even repent properly! Judah is adjudged to be more guilty than Israel. This must

have been startling, even subversive language for the typical Judean (at any time). After all, the North had fallen long ago and rightfully so, given the weight of its idolatries.

Sing or Read Hymn 548 Oh, Blest the House

Thursday (7/4) Read and discuss 1 Timothy 6:1-10

Let all who are under a yoke as bondservants regard their own masters as worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled. Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful on the ground that they are brothers; rather they must serve all the better since those who benefit by their good service are believers and beloved.

Teach and urge these things. If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain. But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. (ESV)

“Godliness with contentment is great gain.” Who doesn’t want to enjoy great gain? But what exactly does Paul mean by “godliness with contentment”? Let’s take them in reverse order. As the Lutheran New Testament scholar Lenski has observed about Christian contentment, “This is not the Stoic virtue that goes under this name but is distinctively Christian, for it rests on God’s provident care.” The Stoics believed that you really couldn’t do anything about your circumstances in the world. Since, in their worldview, the only thing you could control is how you felt about your circumstances – you might as well learn to not let the pains of this life bother you. Stoic contentment was contentment in one’s circumstances. Christian contentment, on the other hand, is in the Lord Jesus Christ who loved us and gave Himself for us. Christian contentment recognizes that life is filled with trials and pain but trusts that God is using these for His own good purposes. Furthermore, Christian contentment recognizes that our current sufferings are temporary. As Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians 4:17-18: “For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.” Therefore, Christian contentment is not only focused on God and eternity in contrast to the Stoic focus of right now and self, but it also manifests itself in efforts to actually impact the world for the sake of the gospel. Contentment in Christ can go hand-in-hand with a discontentment with respect to our own sanctification or the world around us that is in rebellion against our King. Stoicism encourages a dampening of the

emotions while Christian contentment ranges from great joy to godly grief. After all, Jesus was known as a man of sorrows who was acquainted with grief. Finally, a contentment which stops pursuing godliness is not worthy to be called Christian contentment at all. Yet, genuine “godliness with contentment is great gain” – so let’s pursue that together in faith.

Friday (7/5) Read and discuss Proverbs 30:1-9

The words of Agur son of Jakeh. The oracle.

The man declares, I am weary, O God;
I am weary, O God, and worn out.
Surely I am too stupid to be a man.
I have not the understanding of a man.
I have not learned wisdom,
nor have I knowledge of the Holy One.
Who has ascended to heaven and come down?
Who has gathered the wind in his fists?
Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment?
Who has established all the ends of the earth?
What is his name, and what is his son’s name?
Surely you know!

Every word of God proves true;
he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.
Do not add to his words,
lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar.

Two things I ask of you;
deny them not to me before I die:
Remove far from me falsehood and lying;
give me neither poverty nor riches;
feed me with the food that is needful for me,
lest I be full and deny you
and say, “Who is the LORD?”
or lest I be poor and steal
and profane the name of my God. (ESV)

Commenting on verse 9, Andrew Steinman writes:

Agur’s two requests are related to one another. On one hand, if a believer receives more than he needs and becomes rich, he faces the temptation to rely on his own success and riches and “deny” God, saying, “Who is Yahweh?” that is, “Who needs Yahweh?” Those who deny the Son will be denied by Him before His Father on the last day. On the other hand, if a believer has too little to provide for the needs of himself and his family, he

faces the temptation to abandon his trust in God and take matters into his own hands by becoming a thief or a swindler. Since God's people bear his name, their sinful actions can also profane his name, thereby breaking the Second Commandment. Therefore Agur, who confesses Yahweh as "my God," asks that he be kept from poverty.

It is important to note the obvious: The wisdom of Agur flows out of the fact that he views wealth in terms of his relationship with the LORD and whether or not he is glorifying the LORD. This is a practical application of the truth that will many centuries later be summarized in the first question and answer of the Westminster Shorter Catechism: "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." Knowledge is memorizing the catechism. Wisdom is applying this truth to the practical matters of life.

Read or sing Hymn 528 Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart

Saturday (7/6) Read and discuss Matthew 19:1-12

Now when Jesus had finished these sayings, he went away from Galilee and entered the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. And large crowds followed him, and he healed them there.

And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?" He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery."

The disciples said to him, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry." But he said to them, "Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it." (ESV)

Grant Osborne writes:

The gift of celibacy is a valid option in the church. The disciples made an ironic statement that it would be better to be single (v. 10), but Jesus turns that on its head and says [that for some people who have been gifted with celibacy, that is in fact an excellent option]. For [some] in ministry, it would be better to remain single and thereby have more time for kingdom business.

This is as valid today as it was in the time of Jesus or Paul. We are all aware of those leaders who have chosen the path of celibacy (e.g., John Stott) and of the ministries they had as a result. Pioneer missionaries, evangelists, itinerant teachers, and many others should consider this gift as part of their calling. Most importantly, it is a calling and is not for everyone; Jesus does not elevate single status above marriage but rather says it is a valid calling for those in ministry.

We should notice that North American Protestantism largely assumes that pastors should be married. It is in fact common for churches to make “married” one of the criteria for their next pastor when doing a pastoral search. No matter what pragmatic arguments are put forward to justify this practice, we should reject it as being contrary to God’s word.

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