

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 14 July 2024

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 100:1-3

Opening Psalm: 150B Praise the LORD God in His Temple

Confession of Sin

Almighty God, Who are rich in mercy to all those who call upon You; Hear us as we humbly come to You confessing our sins; And imploring Your mercy and forgiveness. We have broken Your holy laws by our deeds and by our words; And by the sinful affections of our hearts. We confess before You our disobedience and ingratitude, our pride and willfulness; And all our failures and shortcomings toward You and toward fellow men. Have mercy upon us, Most merciful Father; And of Your great goodness grant that we may hereafter serve and please You in newness of life; Through the merit and mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: Ephesians 1:7-10

Hymn of Preparation: 328 When His Salvation Bringing

Old Covenant Reading: Genesis 17:1-14

New Covenant Reading: Matthew 19:13-15

Sermon: *Let the Little Children Come!*

Psalm of Response: 119B How Shall the Young Direct Their Way?

Confession of Faith: Apostles Creed (p. 851)

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Diaconal Offering

Closing Hymn: 550 Let Children Hear the Mighty Deeds

PM Worship

405 I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord

519 I Asked the LORD That I Might Grow

119L Eternal Is Your Word, O LORD

Old Covenant Reading: Proverbs 4:20-27

New Covenant Reading: James 1:12-15

Sermon Title: *Wisdom for Righteous Living*

Suggested Preparations

Monday (7/8) Read and discuss Matthew 19:13-15

Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." And he laid his hands on them and went away. (ESV)

William Hendriksen writes:

Not only has Jesus rebuked the disciples for their attempt to prevent the little ones from being brought to Him, but He has also actually called to

Himself these infants together with those who wanted to bring them to Him (Luke 18:16). And now each mother or father, etc., carries his little child into the very presence of Jesus; that is, each does this in turn. The Master takes the first child into His arm and places the hand of His other arm upon its head. Then he tenderly – or fervently – blesses it, by means of uttering a brief but earnest prayer to the Father, that His blessing may be bestowed on it. While He does this, His heart, filled with love and compassion, goes out to this little one. Finished, he returns the child to the one who had brought it. He then treats the next little one in the same manner, and the next, until all have been blessed. It must have been a most impressive, comforting, and memorable scene.

The fact that the Lord regarded these little children that were brought to Him as being already “in” the kingdom, as being even now members of His church, must not escape our attention. He definitely did not view them as “little heathen,” who were living outside of the realm of salvation until by an act of their own they would “join the church.” He regarded them as “holy seed” (see I Cor. 7:14). How wonderful that in later years believing parents would be able to say to such a child, now arrived at the age of understanding, “Think of it, when you, my child were just a suckling, Jesus took you in His arms and blessed you. Then already you were the object of God’s tender love. And He has been with you ever since. What, then, is your response?”

Read or sing Psalm 150B Praise the LORD God in His Temple

Tuesday (7/9) Read and discuss 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)

Living as sinners in a sinful world for the sake of the Kingdom of God is hard. It is hard to have a marriage to the glory of God and it is hard to remain single to the glory of God. Jesus doesn't try to sugar coat how challenging it is going to be rather He says that each of us should walk in the path that our Father in heaven has called us to walk.

Married people sometimes imagine that the single life is carefree while single people can imagine that married life is nothing but domestic tranquility with the comfort and mutual encouragement of a shared life.

The reality is that living for the glory of God is going to be difficult no matter what your external circumstances might be; because you are a sinner living in a sinful and broken world. I said that it will be difficult, but that isn't the whole story. The reality is that living for the glory of God will be utterly impossible if you attempt to do so in your own wisdom and in your own power.

Thankfully, Jesus is not calling you to live the Christian life in your own power. He is calling you to live in His power ... *by* His grace and *for* His glory! The LORD who calls you also gives you grace for the journey.

As Leon Morris puts it:

Jesus is not saying that [singleness] is a higher calling than others or that all His followers should seek to serve in this way; that would be a contradiction of Genesis 1 and 2. He is simply saying that the claims of the Kingdom override all other claims and that some are called to serve in the path of celibacy (just as others are called to serve in marriage). There is no one path of service, but whatever a person's calling is, grace will be given so that that calling ... may be fulfilled.

Will the path the LORD is calling you to follow be difficult. Yes! Yes it will!

Thankfully, His "grace is sufficient for you." Indeed, His "power is made perfect in your weakness."

Read or sing Hymn 328 When His Salvation Bringing

Wednesday (7/10) Read and discuss Genesis 17:1-14

When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly." Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, "Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish my covenant between me and you

and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.”

And God said to Abraham, “As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.” (ESV)

Dale Ralph Davies writes:

What is the significance of circumcision? If it is ‘a sign of the covenant’ what does it signify? Well, it’s hard to get away from the idea that it signifies promises. You note that Yahweh’s promises infect the whole context of the circumcision section. That is, verses 9-14 (circumcision) are surrounded with Yahweh’s promises (vv. 4-8 and 15-21), promises fore and aft, we might say. Alec Motyer said that whenever Abraham would look upon that sign in his body, he would say, ‘I am the man to whom God has made promises.’ That is true, and yet this circumcision is also Abraham’s response to the covenant promises and to Yahweh’s command and it would also indicate that he is marked out *for* the God who made the promises – he is ‘branded’ as belonging to the God who makes promises. Perhaps it’s something like a husband’s wedding band. On the one hand, he can look at it and say, ‘I am the man to whom promise have been made’; on the other, he could say, ‘I am marked out as belonging to another.’ In this latter sense, Abraham might say, ‘I am not my own; I belong to another, for I am branded with the identity mark of the covenant God.’

Sing or Read Psalm 119B How Shall the Young Direct Their Way?

Thursday (7/11) Read and discuss James 1:12-15

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. (ESV)

Doug Moo writes:

A trial is an outward circumstance that can pose difficulties to our faith. A temptation is the inner enticement to sin. What James is concerned about is that his readers will confuse these two and attribute temptation to God. Scripture indicates that God does “test” or put his people through trials (cf. Gen. 22:1). But, James emphatically asserts, God never tempts his people. He never entices them to sin or desires that they fail in the trials he may bring. Believers must never excuse their sin by blaming God for the temptation. Rather, James points out, the believer need look no further than within himself for the problem. It is our own “evil desire” that is the real source of temptation (v. 14). Like the bait that lures the fish and the hook that snares it, sin entices and seeks to entrap us. That James does not here mention Satan does not mean that he ignores the power of “the tempter” (see 4:7). His point here is to lay responsibility for sin clearly at the door of each individual.

As Professor Moo’s own language points out (Moo calls Satan “the tempter”), while James is focusing on temptation coming from within the person’s own fallen nature – it isn’t wrong to say that someone outside of us (e.g. the devil) is tempting us. A critical distinction that Moo doesn’t mention is motivation. The purpose of tempting someone is that they would fall. The purpose of the LORD, for example, testing Abraham in Genesis 22:1 was to reveal Abraham’s faith.

Friday (6/28) Read and discuss Proverbs 4:20-27

My son, be attentive to my words;
incline your ear to my sayings.
Let them not escape from your sight;
keep them within your heart.
For they are life to those who find them,
and healing to all their flesh.
Keep your heart with all vigilance,
for from it flow the springs of life.
Put away from you crooked speech,
and put devious talk far from you.
Let your eyes look directly forward,
and your gaze be straight before you.
Ponder the path of your feet;
then all your ways will be sure.
Do not swerve to the right or to the left;
turn your foot away from evil. (ESV)

Tim Keller writes:

In the Bible the heart is not primarily the seat of the emotions in contrast to the head as the seat of reason. Rather, the heart is the seat of your deepest trusts, commitments, and loves, from which *everything ... flows*. What the heart most loves and trusts, the mind finds reasonable, the emotions find desirable, and the will finds doable.

How do you guard your heart? The passage hints that, though ultimately the heart is the central control, our words, eyes, and feet can influence the heart. If we gaze longingly enough at an object, it may capture our heart through the imagination (as when Achan looked, desired, and finally stole the treasure in Joshua 7). If we speak bitterly against someone, we can sour our heart toward them. The best way to guard your heart for wisdom is worship, in which the mouth, the mind, the imagination, and even the body are all oriented to God.

PRAYER: LORD, help me to guard my heart. Just as I don't want to digest or take bad things into my body, give me the wisdom and self-control not to allow toxic images and beliefs into my heart through my imagination and thoughts. *Amen*

Read or sing Hymn 550 Let Children Hear the Mighty Deeds

Saturday (6/29) Read and discuss Matthew 19:13-15

Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." And he laid his hands on them and went away. (ESV)

Jeffrey Gibbs writes:

The fourth great discourse of Jesus in Matthew (18:1-35) ... afforded the opportunity of describing the place and status of children in the ancient world generally and in Israel particularly. To summarize briefly, in the ancient world, little children were lowly in status and regarded as powerless, foolish, and (at times) unimportant. The entire fourth discourse of Jesus is unified by the theme that the needy, dependent "child" is actually the greatest in the reign of heaven – and that a "child" is to be so regarded among the disciples of Jesus. However, in 19:13-15 Jesus' disciples show that they still share the common ancient view when they rebuke the unnamed people, presumably the fathers and/or mothers, who purpose to bring their children to Jesus for Him to put His hands on them and to pray a blessing.

Jesus however, sees things differently. The reign of heaven and its blessings do not prioritize people as the disciples do. There is no one in all of Israel who is more important than Jesus. Perhaps the disciples are thinking that

Jesus is too important to bother with such little ones. They have erred, however. The Christ turns them around and invites them to believe that it is precisely to people who are like these children – lowly, powerless, and without resources of their own – that He brings the reign of heaven already now. Such ones will also enter the reign of heaven on the Last Day (18:3).

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