

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 28 July 2024

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 98:1-3

Opening Hymn: 369 Worship Christ, the Risen King!

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: Romans 5:6-8

Hymn of Preparation: 262 One There Is, above All Others

Old Covenant Reading: Psalm 32

New Covenant Reading: 1 Timothy 1:12-17

Sermon Title: *Jesus Came to Save Sinners*

Psalm of Response: 32A What Blessedness Belongs to Him

Confession of Faith: Nicene Creed (p. 852)

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Closing Hymn: 224 Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise

PM Worship

485 Like a River Glorious

297 Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates!

239 Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven

Old Covenant Reading: Isaiah 26

New Covenant Reading: Philippians 3:20-4:1

Sermon Title: *Heavenly Citizenship*

No Sunday School: Extended Time of Fellowship

Suggested Preparations

Monday (7/22) Read and discuss Psalm 32

Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.

Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.
For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah

I acknowledged my sin to you,
and I did not cover my iniquity;
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,"
and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah

Therefore let everyone who is godly
offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found;
surely in the rush of great waters,
they shall not reach him.
You are a hiding place for me;
you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with shouts of deliverance. Selah

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.
Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding,
which must be curbed with bit and bridle,
or it will not stay near you.

Many are the sorrows of the wicked,
but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD.
Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous,
and shout for joy, all you upright in heart! (ESV)

Today's passage is a Psalm of instruction about confessing our sins. In order to grasp the message, we need to think clearly about the different aspects of sin. In verses 1-2 we see David use three different words that bring out aspects of the problem: (1) Sin; (2) Transgression; and (3) Iniquity:

Blessed is the one whose **transgression** is forgiven, whose **sin** is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no **iniquity**, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

1. First, the term translated "sin" means missing the mark or falling short of a standard. God establishes a standard and whenever we fail to measure up to that standard *that* is sin. In the broad sense, God's standard for us is perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience. When we think about that standard we realize that our failure to meet God's requirement is not like getting a 98 or a 99 out of 100 on an exam. Compared to God's requirement that we have perfect, personal, and

perpetual obedience it should be clear that we fail to measure up every hour of every day – and that we are in serious trouble. “Sin” is falling short of the standard established by God.

2. Second, the term translated “transgression” involves a rebellion against God’s standards and therefore against the LORD Himself. For example, the LORD commands us not to steal – we know that stealing is wrong – but we refuse to listen to what God has commanded. That is transgression. The LORD tells us that sexual relations outside of marriage are wrong. But many people go and do it anyway. That is transgression. Regretfully, we are increasingly living in a culture that insists that nobody – not even God – has a right to tell you what to do ... particularly in terms of your own thoughts, your own choices, and your own body. In the political sphere that might make sense. Just because something is a bad idea, or even morally wrong, doesn’t mean that it should be a crime. So you might favor decriminalizing drug use because you don’t want the civil government preventing people from making such choices or using vast resources to investigate, arrest, and punish people who do make such choices. That’s a perfectly reasonable position. But we have undergone a radical shift in our society over the past half century where we have moved not simply to the place where people argue that such personal choices should be legal but that such choices are by definition moral and that nobody – not even God – can tell you what you have to do with your own body. In this way our culture is actually encouraging – or at least greasing the skids – for people to engage rebellion against the divine Law giver. The Bible calls such rebellion against God’s revealed will “Transgression.”

If you are familiar with the very helpful definition of “sin” in the Shorter Catechism you may have noticed that it is built on the meaning of these two words translated “sin” and “transgression.” The Catechism says: “Sin is any want of conformity unto or transgression of the law of God.”

3. That’s an excellent definition, and it is one worth memorizing, but David goes on to use a third word: “Iniquity.” Iniquity carries the idea of being twisted or bent. It is a word that helpfully reminds us that sin is not merely something “out there” but something that distorts who we were created to be.

David uses all three terms – sin, transgression, and iniquity – **because He wants to make clear that God’s solution for sin is as comprehensive as the problem.** If sin were a minor problem we could get by with a modest response. But sin is a radical problem, so the LORD has provided an even more radical solution.

Read or sing Hymn 369 Worship Christ, the Risen King!

Tuesday (7/23) Read and discuss Read and discuss Matthew 19:16-26

And behold, a man came up to him, saying, “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?” And he said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.” He said to him, “Which ones?” And Jesus said, “You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” The young man said to him, “All these I have kept. What do I still lack?” Jesus said to him, “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

And Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, “Who then can be saved?” But Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” (ESV)

The rich young ruler approached Jesus as a good and authoritative teacher, but he refused to entrust himself to Jesus as his Savior and Lord. Therefore, when he received the answer that he was seeking after ... he went away sorrowful because he was not willing to part with his great wealth.

How should we apply this passage in our own lives. Three things:

1. First, we need to make sure that we are in Christ through faith. As John Calvin famously put it:

As long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separate from him, all that He has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless ... and of no value for us.

My dear friends, are you still treating Jesus as an Advisor in your life? Do you merely admire Jesus ... accepting many of the things He says as wise ... with the hope that He will make your life in this present world happier or perhaps more successful?

If so, then “all that [Jesus] has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless [to you].” You are still dead ... in your sins.

Yet, even now, Christ is stretching out His hands to you and He is calling you to move beyond viewing Him as a Good Teacher to entrusting yourself to Him as Your Savior and as Your Lord.

2. Second, if you are amazed by the grace that the Living God has poured out on you. If you recognize that what you and I could never do ... Almighty God has already done in and through Jesus Christ ... then this passage is calling you to respond with a grateful heart. May not only your lips, but also your life, offer up a song of continuous thanksgiving and praise.
3. Third, the grace you have received and the truths that Jesus has taught us this passage ... ought to lead us to look at everyone we meet in a new light.

At the end of the day ... what every single person whom we will ever meet needs most is the same thing:

- It is not good advice.
- It is not a helping hand.
- What every single person you ever meet needs most ... is to be rescued from themselves ... and from the guilt of their own sins. What people need most ... is Jesus!

Read or sing Hymn 262 One There Is, above All Others

Wednesday (7/23) Read and discuss 1 Timothy 1:12-17

I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. (ESV)

John Piper comments:

1 Timothy 15 is a great summary statement of Christmas good news: “The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” His humble birth, obedient life, substitutionary death, and powerful resurrection covers the sins of his people and saves us from the loss of any good and precious thing and from the bondage of any evil and undesirable thing.

And notice the context of this great saying. It’s Paul’s own personal testimony of how he had been changed. Verse 13: “I formerly blasphemed and persecuted and insulted Christ.” Why did Christ choose the chief persecutor of the church to become the chief missionary of the church? The

answer to that question is given very clearly in verse 16: he did it so that this morning you would grasp the message of Christmas—that no one who trusts Christ is beyond the reach of change. “I received mercy for this reason, that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience for an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.” Christ picked the chief of sinners to demonstrate to you today what his mercy and power can do in your life. Don’t belittle the mercy of God by saying that you cannot be changed!

When Paul calls the power of Christ which changed him from great sinner to great apostle—when he calls this power “mercy,” he exalts not himself but the Savior. The Christmas gift of change is always a gift, and never a wage. It can never be boasted in. It can be sought after the way a helpless, hungry man seeks food; and it can be accepted by faith. But it can never be earned. And so none of the changes God gives can be the basis of pride. The more like Christ you become, the more you exalt Christ and not yourself. What God did on the first Christmas and what he does in forgiving and changing people today he did and does in utterly free, sovereign mercy, so that all his people will end the paragraphs of their lives with the words like verse 17: “To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.” We are not saved from sin and changed into righteousness for the sake of pride but for the sake of praise. And when God’s work on us is done and we stand perfected before Christ in the last day, we will not exult in our worth but will sing with millions of angels: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and honor and glory and blessing.” Praise to you, O Lord. Amen.

Sing or Read Psalm 32A What Blessedness Belongs to Him

Thursday (7/24) Read and discuss Isaiah 26

In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah:

“We have a strong city;
 he sets up salvation
 as walls and bulwarks.
Open the gates,
 that the righteous nation that keeps faith may enter in.
You keep him in perfect peace
 whose mind is stayed on you,
 because he trusts in you.
Trust in the LORD forever,
 for the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock.
For he has humbled
 the inhabitants of the height,
 the lofty city.

He lays it low, lays it low to the ground,
casts it to the dust.
The foot tramples it,
the feet of the poor,
the steps of the needy.”

The path of the righteous is level;
you make level the way of the righteous.
In the path of your judgments,
O LORD, we wait for you;
your name and remembrance
are the desire of our soul.
My soul yearns for you in the night;
my spirit within me earnestly seeks you.
For when your judgments are in the earth,
the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.
If favor is shown to the wicked,
he does not learn righteousness;
in the land of uprightness he deals corruptly
and does not see the majesty of the LORD.
O LORD, your hand is lifted up,
but they do not see it.
Let them see your zeal for your people, and be ashamed.
Let the fire for your adversaries consume them.
O LORD, you will ordain peace for us,
for you have indeed done for us all our works.
O LORD our God,
other lords besides you have ruled over us,
but your name alone we bring to remembrance.
They are dead, they will not live;
they are shades, they will not arise;
to that end you have visited them with destruction
and wiped out all remembrance of them.
But you have increased the nation, O LORD,
you have increased the nation; you are glorified;
you have enlarged all the borders of the land.

O LORD, in distress they sought you;
they poured out a whispered prayer
when your discipline was upon them.
Like a pregnant woman
who writhes and cries out in her pangs
when she is near to giving birth,
so were we because of you, O LORD;
we were pregnant, we writhed,
but we have given birth to wind.
We have accomplished no deliverance in the earth,

and the inhabitants of the world have not fallen.
Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise.
You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy!
For your dew is a dew of light,
and the earth will give birth to the dead.

Come, my people, enter your chambers,
and shut your doors behind you;
hide yourselves for a little while
until the fury has passed by.
For behold, the LORD is coming out from his place
to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity,
and the earth will disclose the blood shed on it,
and will no more cover its slain. (ESV)

Alec Moyter writes:

Inheriting as we do the classification of the Bible into two ‘testaments’, people still ask – and quite a few people at that – why we need to bother with the Old Testament. It is one of the greatest, most important and most thrilling discoveries to find that the Bible is not two testaments but one book – one Jesus people, one divine purpose in Christ, one consistent revelation of God, one world, and (oh what joy!) one way of salvation. Isaiah 26 is a good place to start in order to feel the truth of all this. The citizens of the City of Salvation are those who are ‘right with God’, a relationship which shows itself in a reliable life-style (v. 2). Those who are right with God enjoy his peace, because they have put their trust in him (v. 3), and this faith gives them eternal security (v. 4). The people of faith are, in themselves, without resources (poor) and without strength (downtrodden) but because their God has cast down the strong city of the enemy they can enter into his victory and trample down their foes (vv. 5-6). Their life in this world is one of the changes and chances – they have security, not immunity (vv. 8a, 16-17) – but they know that their life is not ‘chance’ but ruled by divine decision (‘judgment’ v. 8), and through thick and thin their deepest longing is to know God (v. 8). They live in a hostile, unresponsive world (v. 10), but their eternal expectation is sure. By contrast with unbelievers (v. 14), the people of the city, the people of peace and faith, look forward to a resurrection that is resurrection indeed, not the shadowy life of the soul dislocated from the body, but the whole person resurrected (v. 19). And until that day comes, they are the Passover people, safe under the blood of the lamb (v. 20).

Friday (7/25) Read and discuss Philippians 3:20–4:1

But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved. (ESV)

Richard Melick, Jr. writes:

[In these verses, Paul] specifically [contrasts] the earthly with the heavenly. Paul stated that “our citizenship is in heaven.” The metaphor had rich meaning to the Philippians. Immediately their thoughts would have turned to an analogy with their earthly citizenship. They were proud of their Roman citizenship, but the analogy would have conveyed more. Philippi was an outpost colony, and, interestingly, Paul was at the home base in Rome. Regularly they awaited news from the capital to know how to conduct their business. When Paul said that they belonged to a city, the political entity spanned several geographical areas. Similarly, the church was an outpost of an entity which had its own capital, heaven. Although “citizenship” may call to mind a place, Paul used it of a people. They awaited the Savior from that citizenship. He would come with power sufficient to subdue everything and with ability to transform their bodies to be like His. They would naturally associate subduing power with a roman emperor, but transforming power was unique to Christ. Once again, Paul spoke of the resurrection as the climax of his Christian experience. By implication, the false teachers would not share in the resurrection of the just because their expectations were earthly rather than heavenly.

Read or sing Hymn 224 Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise

Saturday (7/26) Read and discuss Psalm 32

Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.

Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.
For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah

I acknowledged my sin to you,
and I did not cover my iniquity;
I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,”

and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah

Therefore let everyone who is godly
offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found;
surely in the rush of great waters,
they shall not reach him.
You are a hiding place for me;
you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with shouts of deliverance. Selah

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.
Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding,
which must be curbed with bit and bridle,
or it will not stay near you.

Many are the sorrows of the wicked,
but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD.
Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous,
and shout for joy, all you upright in heart! (ESV)

Allen Ross writes:

The first two verses announce the grand theme of this contemplative poem: “Blessed is the one who is forgiven by God.” The composition to follow develops the theme through a crisis, a crisis that everyone has experienced and will continue to experience, namely the refusal to confess sin until the feelings of guilt and the disruption of their lives brings them to their knees. And then, to their amazement, God is quick to forgive. There are few feelings that are as troubling and crippling as guilty fears over unconfessed sin; and there are few that are as freeing and relieving as knowing that all has been set right with God. The principle is also true in human relationships; a refusal to apologize for wrongs committed leaves wounds and tensions and divisions that depress the spirit and hinder worship and service.

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