

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 1 September 2024

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 105:1-3

Opening Hymn: 325 All Glory, Laud, and Honor

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: 2 Corinthians 5:1-5

Hymn of Preparation: 328 When His Salvation Bringing

Old Covenant Reading: Zechariah 9:9-17

New Covenant Reading: Matthew 21:1-11

Sermon: *The King Has Come*

Psalm of Response: 148B Hallelujah, Praise Jehovah

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

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Closing Hymn: 333 Hosanna, Loud Hosanna

PM Worship

32B How Blest Is He Whose Trespass

457 Jesus, Thy Blood and Righteousness

492 How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds

Old Covenant Reading: Psalm 32:1-11 (Sermon Text)

New Covenant Reading: Romans 4:1-12

Sermon Title: *Living and Worshiping as Justified Sinners*

No Sunday School: Extended Time of Fellowship

Suggested Preparations

Monday (8/26) Read and discuss Matthew 21:1-11

Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, “Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them at once.” This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying,

“Say to the daughter of Zion,
‘Behold, your king is coming to you,
humble, and mounted on a donkey,

on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.””

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, “Who is this?” And the crowds said, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.” (ESV)

The air was electric. Vast crowds were making the pilgrimage to Jerusalem to celebrate the most important holiday in the Jewish calendar. There would be family reunions, there would be feasting, but most importantly there would be the celebration of the Exodus. If past is prologue, the celebration of the LORD’s mighty deliverance of Israel out Egypt – the greatest empire of its day – naturally turned Jewish hearts to long for national deliverance from their Roman overlords. How long would they have to wait? When would the Kingdom of God truly come? Some of the pilgrims thought they had a candidate in mind. “You don’t spread cloaks on the road – especially in the dusty, stony Middle East! – for a friend, or even a respected senior member of your family. You do it for royalty (N.T. Wright).” Suddenly people start shouting, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Hosanna” is a prayer to God meaning “save us” – but it had through use also taken on overtones of praise. As Jesus prepares to enter Jerusalem the crowd treats Him like Israel’s true king who is about to deliver them. Could it be that many would recognize Jesus for who He really was? Sadly, this turns out to be nothing more than a moment of enthusiasm without any real substance. By the time Jesus arrives at the Temple He seems to be either alone or simply with His closest Disciples. The shouts of adoration quickly faded and within a week the crowd would be shouting, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” This is the way that it has always been with those who have not yet received new life from God. On the one hand, everyone is happy to celebrate a “messiah” who will bless their agenda. After all, who doesn’t want to be delivered from bad health, financial woes, or eternal punishment? But what happens when people discover that, instead of blessing our agendas, Christ calls us to adopt His agenda? The fickleness of the crowds reminds us not to confuse religious enthusiasm with true faith – even if the enthusiasm is ours.

Read or sing Hymn 325 All Glory, Laud, and Honor

Tuesday (8/27) Read and discuss Matthew 20:29-34

And as they went out of Jericho, a great crowd followed him. And behold, there were two blind men sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, “Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!” The crowd rebuked them, telling them to be silent, but they cried out all the more, “Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!” And stopping, Jesus called them and said, “What do you want me to do for you?” They said to him, “Lord, let our eyes be opened.” And Jesus in pity touched their eyes, and immediately they recovered their sight and followed him. (ESV)

Intriguingly, Jesus also healed two blind men early in His ministry but due to the timing, our LORD goes about the two healings in radically different ways. In the first healing, Jesus seems to be ignoring the blind men as He walks on into the privacy of a house. It is only in private that He opens their eyes and then our Lord strictly charges them to not make the matter known.

Now, as the climax of His ministry is drawing near, Jesus takes His stand in the middle of the road with a great crowd of people all around Him. The blind men cry out to Him in Messianic terms as the Son of David and Jesus performs the dramatic and distinctly Messianic miracle of restoring their sight the miracle which makes clear that He is who they say that He is!

Lenski puts it like this:

The period of comparative retirement to the borders of the land, as much as possible away from the crowds, and [our Lord's] reluctance to accept Messianic titles that might stir up political and nationalist feelings, are **now** in the past. Let the whole nation know that He goes up to Jerusalem as the Son of David – to die.

William Lane adds:

The “messianic secret” is relaxed because it must be made clear to all the people that Jesus goes to Jerusalem as the Messiah, and that He dies as the Messiah.

When we come to the Triumphal Entry, we should remember that it is Christ Himself who has stirred up enthusiasm for the fact that He is Israel's true King. When the people cry out:

“Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”

Let's remember, they will be doing so, at least in part, based upon the clear evidence they have witnessed when they saw Jesus open the eyes of two blind men on the road to Jerusalem from Jericho.

Read or sing Hymn 328 When His Salvation Bringing

Wednesday (8/28) Read and discuss Zechariah 9:9-17

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your king is coming to you;
righteous and having salvation is he,
humble and mounted on a donkey,

on a colt, the foal of a donkey.
I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
and the war horse from Jerusalem;
and the battle bow shall be cut off,
and he shall speak peace to the nations;
his rule shall be from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth.
As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you,
I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.
Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope;
today I declare that I will restore to you double.
For I have bent Judah as my bow;
I have made Ephraim its arrow.
I will stir up your sons, O Zion,
against your sons, O Greece,
and wield you like a warrior's sword.

The LORD Will Save His People

Then the LORD will appear over them,
and his arrow will go forth like lightning;
the Lord GOD will sound the trumpet
and will march forth in the whirlwinds of the south.
The LORD of hosts will protect them,
and they shall devour, and tread down the sling stones,
and they shall drink and roar as if drunk with wine,
and be full like a bowl,
drenched like the corners of the altar.

On that day the LORD their God will save them,
as the flock of his people;
for like the jewels of a crown
they shall shine on his land.
For how great is his goodness, and how great his beauty!
Grain shall make the young men flourish,
and new wine the young women. (ESV)

When we come to a passage like this without any background, it can be a bit difficult to understand. In situations like this we will want to do three things: (1) Remember the context. Zechariah 9:1-8 was significantly fulfilled when God judged three civilizations around Jerusalem through the army of Alexander the Great. Therefore we should be alert to the possibility that Zechariah 9:11-17 may also relate to the Greek conquest of the land of Palestine. (2) We should attempt to identify any incidents in the text which are clear. This can serve as a type of anchor to our interpretation. In verse 13 we find what we are looking for when God declares that He will stir up the sons of Zion against Greece. If we can know when that happened, this will be very helpful in providing a

context to the passage. If you aren't immediately aware of what this is referring to, then you should go to the third step: (3) You should consult a good study bible or a one volume commentary. Here is the entire note from the generally superb ESV Study Bible:

The oppressors of the **sons of Zion** (or Israel) are identified as the **sons of Greece** (v. 13). God promises to make Zion **like a warrior's sword**, defeating the Greeks. This is best understood as a predictive prophecy regarding future events, much like the mention of "the king of Greece" in **Dan. 8:21**. Zechariah was writing between 520 and perhaps 480 b.c., but the Greek ruler Alexander the Great did not conquer Palestine until 333. Then the Jewish people did not successfully rebel against domination by the Seleucids (the Greek-speaking successors to Alexander's rule) until the Maccabean period (the revolt was 166–160 b.c.; they gained full independence in 142). Some interpreters, not allowing the possibility of such predictive prophecy, see this as a later insertion added into the text, but there is no manuscript support for this idea, and it is not necessary. The name "Greece" (Hb. *Yawan*) was known at the time of Zechariah, for the Greeks had defeated the invading Persian armies of King Darius at the battle of Marathon in 490 b.c., but Greece was never an enemy of Israel or a conquering world power until Alexander the Great.

This note helps us realize that the only time the Jews successful waged war against Greece was during the Maccabean revolt more than three hundred years after the time of Zechariah's prophecy. Now that we have fixed this portion of the passage we can understand what God is saying to Israel: (1) Some of the nations around you look so prosperous and powerful at the moment, but I am going to bring them into judgment at the hands of Alexander the Great and the Greek army (Zechariah 9:1-8). (2) Does this mean that Israel will be a vassal state to Greece? Yes, for a little while. Yet the day is coming when I the LORD of Hosts will cause you to rise up against Greece and cast off her yoke (Zechariah 9:11-17). (3). At the center of these two prophesies is the promise that God will send the Messiah who will rule the whole earth and ultimately bring warfare itself to an end (Zechariah 9:9-10).

Read or sing Psalm 148B Hallelujah, Praise Jehovah

Thursday (8/22) Read and discuss Romans 4:1-12

What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:

“Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven,
and whose sins are covered;
blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.”

Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised. (ESV)

Michael Middendorf writes:

An important caveat about judging ought to be stated, particularly in a postmodern culture where any and all judging, particularly by followers of Jesus, is deemed to be contrary to statements by Jesus and Paul. The fundamental point pertains to who judges. Jesus makes it emphatically clear that we humans do not. However, God has expressed His own judgments regarding numerous things quite clearly in His word. Thus, while it would be wrong for believers to make judgments based upon their own standards, *it is not wrong to pronounce God's revealed judgments when appropriate*. Indeed, we must do so if we are to remain salt and light in this world. Augustine expresses this distinction well:

Paul says this [Rom 14:4] so that, when something might be done with either good or bad motives, we should leave the judgment to God and not presume to judge the heart of someone else, which we do not see. But when it comes to things which obviously could not have been done with good and innocent intentions, it is not wrong if we pass judgment. ... In the case of the abominable immorality where a man has taken his stepmother, Paul taught us to judge [1 Cor 5:15]. For that man could not possibly claim that he committed such a gross act of indecency with good intentions. So we must pass judgment on things which are obviously wrong.

Friday (8/23) Read and discuss Psalm 32:1-11

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 333 Hosanna, Loud Hosanna

Saturday (8/17) Read and discuss Matthew 21:1-11

Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, “Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to

me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them at once.” This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying,

“Say to the daughter of Zion,
‘Behold, your king is coming to you,
humble, and mounted on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’”

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, “Who is this?” And the crowds said, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.” (ESV)

There is a profound irony in the fact that the Church has called this day *Palm Sunday*. In the church I [Pastor Booth] grew up in, every year we would be given palms so that we could wave them in celebration of the Christ’s triumphal entry – when it turns out that the people waving the palms were missing the whole point of what Christ was doing. We have dueling symbols here. Jesus chose to ride on a donkey – yet many in the crowd were wishing that He had come on a stallion for war. Perhaps that is still true today. Perhaps many Christians really want a Messiah who will “make America great again,” a Messiah “who will defeat the communists,” and a Messiah “who will give them physical security and abundant crops.” The largest churches – if you can call them churches – the largest churches in many parts of the world, are those which are promising health and wealth. Beloved, those churches aren’t promising too much. They are proclaiming a Messiah who promises far too little. For Jesus would ride into Jerusalem so that ... “though your sins be like scarlet, He would wash you whiter than snow.” Jesus came so that you would be forgiven, justified, and adopted into God’s family. He came so that you would be filled with God the Holy Spirit. And He came to establish a Kingdom that would never end. Those waving the Palm Branches wanted a Messiah who would merely trample the Roman occupiers under His feet. Jesus came to trample Satan, sin, and death under His feet so that you would be His sister or His brother forever. When Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon, he plunged the Roman Empire into a bloody civil war. Many people in and around Jerusalem would have feared a similar fate for their city if a Messianic King was acclaimed. But, as Jesus takes the dramatic steps towards His decisive battle against Satan, sin, and death; the only blood He plans on spilling will be His own.

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