

## **Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 22 September 2024**

### **AM Worship**

#### **22 September**

Call to Worship: Psalm 98:1-3

Opening Hymn: 288 We Come, O Christ, to You

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: John 14:1-3

Hymn of Preparation: 284 Ye Servants of God, Your Master Proclaim

Old Covenant Reading: Psalm 62

New Covenant Matthew 21:23-32

Sermon Title: *A Question of Authority*

Psalm of Response: 62A My Soul in Silence Waits for God

Confession of Faith: Nicene Creed (p. 852)

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Closing Hymn: 266 Thou Art the Way

### **PM Worship**

540 Soldiers of Christ, Arise

542 Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus

544 Lead On, O King Eternal

Old Covenant Reading: Proverbs 16:1-4

New Covenant Reading: Jude 3-4 (Sermon Text)

Sermon Title: *The Necessity of Contending for the Faith*

Adult Sunday School: **Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 40**

**A. Q. What is God's will for you  
in the sixth commandment?**

**A.** I am not to belittle, hate, insult, or kill my neighbor—  
not by my thoughts, my words, my look or gesture,  
and certainly not by actual deeds—  
and I am not to be party to this in others;

rather, I am to put away all desire for revenge.  
I am not to harm or recklessly endanger myself either.  
Prevention of murder is also why  
government is armed with the sword.

**Q. Does this commandment refer only to murder?**

**A.** By forbidding murder God teaches us  
that he hates the root of murder:  
envy, hatred, anger, vengefulness.  
In God's sight all such are disguised forms of murder.

**Q. Is it enough then  
that we do not murder our neighbor  
in any such way?**

**A.** No.  
By condemning envy, hatred, and anger  
God wants us  
to love our neighbors as ourselves,  
to be patient, peace-loving, gentle,  
merciful, and friendly toward them,  
to protect them from harm as much as we can,  
and to do good even to our enemies.

**Suggested Preparations**

**Monday (9/16)** Read and discuss Matthew 21:23-32

And when he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" Jesus answered them, "I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?" And they discussed it among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'From man,' we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet." So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

"What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' And he answered, 'I will not,' but afterward he changed his mind and went. And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, 'I go, sir,' but did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you

did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him. (ESV)

Leon Morris writes:

The questioners doubtless thought of themselves as taking action from a position of strength. Jesus must, they would have reasoned, cite some source of authority, and since they represented temple authority, it could not be any authority that justified Him in acting in the way He did in the place He used. Any human authority He claimed must necessarily be inferior. And if He claimed to have God's authority, they would be able to accuse Him of blasphemy. But Jesus was not disposed to answer along the lines they expected. He doubtless could have cited His authority, but that would have led to endless argument since His opponents would not have conceded that He had the authority He claimed. So Jesus countered with just one question of His own, and promised to answer their two questions if they would first answer His. His use of "these things" shows that He understood what the questioners meant by this expression even though they have not defined it.

"The baptism of John," He says, and leaves the expression without syntactical connections. It stands there in lonely isolation, thus marking it out as something he views as significant and important. He asks where it came from and suggests two possibilities: "From heaven" and "from men." This was not a red herring to lead them away from their questions, for if they had answered it honestly they would have had the answer to their own since John had borne witness to Jesus. But they found the question a difficult one to answer. They do not seem to have been concerned with the truth or otherwise of either of Jesus' alternatives. Their reasoning covers the consequences of each of the possible answers, and they give not attention whatever to the actual source of John's baptism. They reasoned *among themselves*; this was not for public hearing. They saw straightaway that if they said, "From heaven," they had lost their case. Jesus would immediately ask why they did not believe him; and, of course, had they believed him they would not have been engaging in the inquisition that was their present task. They would have become followers of Jesus. That was unthinkable for these men, so there was no trouble in rejecting that as a possible answer.

Read or sing Hymn 288 We Come, O Christ, to You

**Tuesday (9/17)** Read and discuss Matthew 21:18-22

In the morning, as he was returning to the city, he became hungry. And seeing a fig tree by the wayside, he went to it and found nothing on it but only leaves. And he said to it, "May no fruit ever come from you again!" And the fig tree withered at once.

When the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, “How did the fig tree wither at once?” And Jesus answered them, “Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ it will happen. And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.” (ESV)

Knox Chamblin writes:

Jesus uses a withering fig tree to teach an important lesson. “Because it was not the season for figs” (Mark 11:13), Jesus expected *not* to find fruit. His act is terribly shocking. Jesus wants the act to unsettle His disciples. This is a visible parable meant to jolt witnesses into an awareness of reality. Israel is the tree in question. As Jesus – “God with us” – curses the tree so that it immediately withers, never to bear fruit again, so God is about to answer Israel’s unfruitfulness and unbelief with sudden and irretrievable catastrophe.

Read or sing Hymn 284 Ye Servants of God, Your Master Proclaim

**Wednesday** (9/18) Read and discuss Psalm 62

For God alone my soul waits in silence;  
from him comes my salvation.  
He alone is my rock and my salvation,  
my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken.

How long will all of you attack a man  
to batter him,  
like a leaning wall, a tottering fence?  
They only plan to thrust him down from his high position.  
They take pleasure in falsehood.  
They bless with their mouths,  
but inwardly they curse. Selah

For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence,  
for my hope is from him.  
He only is my rock and my salvation,  
my fortress; I shall not be shaken.  
On God rests my salvation and my glory;  
my mighty rock, my refuge is God.

Trust in him at all times, O people;  
pour out your heart before him;  
God is a refuge for us. Selah

Those of low estate are but a breath;

those of high estate are a delusion;  
in the balances they go up;  
they are together lighter than a breath.  
Put no trust in extortion;  
set no vain hopes on robbery;  
if riches increase, set not your heart on them.

Once God has spoken;  
twice have I heard this:  
that power belongs to God,  
and that to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love.  
For you will render to a man  
according to his work. (ESV)

Allen P. Ross writes:

This Psalm is a beautiful display of confidence in the LORD. The psalmist is in a life-threatening crisis, but he is not filled with fear or anxiety. Instead, he trusts in the LORD and waits silently for the LORD to deliver him. He knows that the LORD can provide the strength and security to deliver him from his destructive foes – he knows that only the LORD can do this. And he is confident that the LORD will do it because he is the savior of his people. The point this psalm is making can be stated this way: *God alone is able to deliver the faithful from destructive enemies and make them safe and secure because he alone is both savior and judge.* Because he is the savior, he will save his faithful servants; and because he is the judge, he will reward everyone in accordance with what they have done – and for the malicious enemies of the people of God that means judgment, perhaps now, but certainly at the end of the age. New Testament believers also know that they cannot save themselves on any level, and so they trust in the LORD and wait for the day of deliverance. Paul in his letter to the Philippians instructs believers to rejoice in the LORD (praise), and not be anxious (calm confidence), but pray (faith), and the peace of the LORD will guard their hearts and minds (Phil. 4:4-7).

And the theme of judgment in accordance with works is most clearly presented in Jesus' teaching on Matthew 25:31-46. Those who demonstrated their faith by their good works enter into the kingdom; but those who did not show any kindness or care about Jesus' brethren demonstrated their rejection of him. They will be cast out. The household of faith has known from ages past that there is coming a day of judgment when the LORD will save those who have found forgiveness but condemn those who rejected him and opposed his saints.

Read or sing Psalm 62A My Soul in Silence Waits for God

**Thursday** (9/19) Read and discuss Proverbs 16:1–4

The plans of the heart belong to man,  
but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.

All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes,  
but the LORD weighs the spirit.  
Commit your work to the LORD,  
and your plans will be established.  
The LORD has made everything for its purpose,  
even the wicked for the day of trouble. (ESV)

John Goldingay writes:

Suppose an individual's decisions are pure in their eyes (v. 2). They believe they are making arrangements that count as walking in God's ways. The problem is that more or less everybody thinks that their plans and their actions are justifiable. Even people doing wicked things have rationalizations for their actions. So having a clear conscience says nothing about whether one's roads are pure. That word overlaps with the word *clean*. It can refer to pure olive oil or pure incense or the shining brightness of the stars, but it more often refers to a life shining clear and bright in faithfulness and straightness. As Paul notes (1 Cor 4:4), the question is not whether our roads look that way to us, but what happens when *Yahweh measures spirits*. We can fool ourselves about the propriety of our actions and hide from what we know in our heart of hearts, but Yahweh is not so fooled. That might paradoxically be a worrying or an encouraging fact. ...

A related positive implication of Yahweh's sovereignty (v. 3) is that you can *roll your actions* or turn things over to Yahweh. Here again there is a general point: you can give your worry over and throw your lot onto God. But the context refers to your plans rather than your anxiety.

**Friday (9/20)** Read and discuss Jude 3–4

Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. (ESV)

Gene Green writes:

The body of Jude's letter begins with a disclosure formula that outlines his purpose for writing. Though the author has planned to address his readers about the great theme of their "common security," he is strongly pressed by circumstances to change tack. Outsiders have come among the congregation, promoting an altered doctrine of grace that promotes sexual vice and that, in the end, is a denial of the authority of Christ. Jude urgently calls his readers to take action and enter into the struggle against their teaching, standing by the sacred tradition that was handed down to them and the rest of the people of God. ... His goal is not merely to inform but also

to exhort his readers to enter into the struggle for the faith against its detractors.

Read or sing Hymn 266 Thou Art the Way

**Saturday** (9/21) Read and discuss Matthew 21:23-32

And when he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said, “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?” Jesus answered them, “I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?” And they discussed it among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ But if we say, ‘From man,’ we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet.” So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.” And he said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

“What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ And he answered, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he changed his mind and went. And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, ‘I go, sir,’ but did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him. (ESV)

Jeffrey Gibbs writes:

If one asks which people today correspond most closely with the addressees in the text and have the greatest need to take the message of this parable to heart, it might very well be the religious leaders of today’s Israel, that is to say, the pastors and theologians and other leaders of the Christian church. The message of John came with a radical power in Israel long ago, and part of the hammer of his message was that there was a need for deep and broad repentance. No one – especially not the Pharisees and Sadducees – were to assume that they were “in” with God. To be sure, God would keep His promise to Abraham to raise up a people, but that same God could just as easily turn stones into spiritual children as turn the hardened hearts of some of the Pharisees and Sadducees to their God (3:7-9). Familiarity readily breeds contempt in all areas of the lives of sinful people, and those who deal with the Word of God day in and day out presumably face the same danger – that God’s Word would become something for us that no longer kills us and makes us alive each of our days and every single day. How would the pastors in my own church body respond – how would I respond – should the risen and living Christ send a fiery prophet to denounce sin and call us to repentance? The chief task of the leaders of God’s people may very well

be to believe the message of Christ and His ways ourselves and to be ever mindful of the danger that, having preached to others, we might ourselves forget to listen to God and thus not be saved (cf. 1 Cor 9:24-27).

In addition, and as a comfort to all, the parable also suggests that with the Lord Jesus Christ there is always the chance to repent and believe. Unlikely folk come to Him: tax gatherers and prostitutes, Gentiles and women, little children and sinners, Magi and centurions. God delights in such and in drawing all to Himself, if only they will come with their need in hand and in poverty of spirit. ... Anyone may come; everyone who is burdened and heavily laden. Outstretched are His wings; Jerusalem's children, and the children of every town and village, may find shelter under those wings.

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