

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 29 September 2024

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 105:1-3

Opening Psalm: 118A O Thank the LORD for All His Goodness (1-4)

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: Psalm 78:38-39

Hymn of Preparation: 415 We Gather Together

Old Covenant Reading: Psalm 118

New Covenant Reading: Matthew 21:33-46

Sermon: *The Peril of Rejection*

Hymn of Response: 397 Breathe on Me, Breath of God

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

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Closing Psalm: 118A O Thank the LORD for All His Goodness (5-8)

PM Worship

377 Join All the Glorious Names

506 Weary of Earth, and Laden with My Sin

459 My Hope is Built on Nothing Less

Old Covenant Reading: Genesis 19:1-25

New Covenant Reading: Jude 5-7

Sermon Title: *Learning to Fear the LORD*

Adult Sunday School: **Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 41**

**Q. What is God's will for us
in the seventh commandment?**

A. That God condemns all unchastity,
and that we should therefore detest it wholeheartedly
and live decent and chaste lives,
within or outside of the holy state of marriage.

**Q. Does God, in this commandment,
forbid only such scandalous sins as adultery?**

A. We are temples of the Holy Spirit, body and soul,
and God wants both to be kept clean and holy.

That is why God forbids
all unchaste actions, looks, talk, thoughts, or desires,
and whatever may incite someone to them.

Suggested Preparations

Monday (9/23) Read and discuss Matthew 21:33-46

“Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants, and went into another country. When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit. And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first. And they did the same to them. Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.’ And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” They said to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons.”

Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:

“‘The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
this was the Lord’s doing,
and it is marvelous in our eyes’?”

Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.”

When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them. And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet. (ESV)

Grant Osborne writes:

Jesus as God’s Son is the rejected stone who will become the head of the corner and destroy the enemies of God. The Christological element is primary. Jesus is the son who will be killed and yet the rejected stone who will be vindicated. ... The vindication will take the form of Jesus as Judge, probably with an inaugurated thrust that begins with the imminent destruction of Jerusalem and ends with the eschatological Judge of the final [judgment]. There is a central theme of imminent judgment in the parable

that points to the destruction of Jerusalem (Ch. 24) for killing the prophets and the Son. Yet there is a redemptive side to the judgment as well. With the reign of God shifted to the church, the church becomes God's source of blessing for the nation by bringing the message of salvation back to the Jewish people.

Read or sing Psalm 118A O Thank the LORD for All His Goodness (1-4)

Tuesday (9/24) 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)

The chief priest and the elders had challenged Jesus asking Him "By what authority He was doing these things?" And "Who had given Him this authority?" The answers are now clear: As to His Divinity Jesus always had absolute and unquestionable authority over Creation. As to His humanity God the Father had anointed Jesus as Messiah making Him both LORD and Christ.

If the Religious Leaders simply wanted evidence:

1. God was testifying to Jesus through the Old Testament prophets.
2. God had commissioned and sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for the LORD. Anyone who accepted the Holy Spirit's testimony through John would necessarily embrace and submit to Jesus. And ...
3. The works that God gave Jesus to perform these very works testified to who Jesus is.

The obvious application for us is for us to confess that Jesus is Lord over heaven and earth. Yet, this application is also very personal. For Jesus isn't just in charge of the Temple. Jesus is in charge of me!

Now at last we can see that the necessity of Repentance and the question about "Who is in charge" are really two sides of the same coin. Repentance is about being turned to embrace the mercy of God in Jesus Christ and to joyfully submit to Him not only as the LORD over Israel and the Temple but as the LORD over every aspect of my life.

Read or sing Hymn 415 We Gather Together

Wednesday (9/25) Read and discuss Psalm 118

Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures forever!

Let Israel say,
"His steadfast love endures forever."
Let the house of Aaron say,
"His steadfast love endures forever."
Let those who fear the LORD say,
"His steadfast love endures forever."

Out of my distress I called on the LORD;
the LORD answered me and set me free.
The LORD is on my side; I will not fear.
What can man do to me?
The LORD is on my side as my helper;
I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.

It is better to take refuge in the LORD
than to trust in man.
It is better to take refuge in the LORD
than to trust in princes.

All nations surrounded me;
in the name of the LORD I cut them off!
They surrounded me, surrounded me on every side;
in the name of the LORD I cut them off!
They surrounded me like bees;
they went out like a fire among thorns;
in the name of the LORD I cut them off!
I was pushed hard, so that I was falling,
but the LORD helped me.

The LORD is my strength and my song;
he has become my salvation.

Glad songs of salvation
are in the tents of the righteous:
“The right hand of the LORD does valiantly,
the right hand of the LORD exalts,
the right hand of the LORD does valiantly!”

I shall not die, but I shall live,
and recount the deeds of the LORD.
The LORD has disciplined me severely,
but he has not given me over to death.

Open to me the gates of righteousness,
that I may enter through them
and give thanks to the LORD.
This is the gate of the LORD;
the righteous shall enter through it.
I thank you that you have answered me
and have become my salvation.
The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.
This is the LORD’s doing;
it is marvelous in our eyes.
This is the day that the LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Save us, we pray, O LORD!
O LORD, we pray, give us success!

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!
We bless you from the house of the LORD.
The LORD is God,
and he has made his light to shine upon us.
Bind the festal sacrifice with cords,
up to the horns of the altar!

You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;
you are my God; I will extol you.
Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures forever! (ESV)

James Mays writes:

Through the centuries of Scripture interpretation in the church, two points in the psalm have received repeated emphasis. The first is the grateful cry in verse 17, “I shall not die, but live.” That is just the reverse of the natural human condition. The normal human predicament is that, because we must die, the expectation of our final negation infects our living in all kinds of conscious and subliminal ways. The

church has found in verse 17 the expression of the transformation worked by the resurrection in one's fundamental stance in life. The way in which believers face every threat and crisis and need is colored by the knowledge that God has not given us over to death. "We whose life is hid with Christ in God ought to meditate on this psalm all the days of our lives (Calvin)."

The second point of repeated emphasis has been verses 22-24, which portray Easter as the day for celebrating God's deed in making the rejected stone the chief cornerstone. These verses teach the church that the risen Christ is the crucified Jesus and warn us against separating Easter from its context in the passion of our Lord. It was not the free choice and approval of the human community that established the Crucified as foundation and keystone of God's coming kingdom but God's raising Him from the dead (Acts 4:11). He is present in the world as the One contradicted and rejected by every way that human beings go about building their world. The risen Christ is not the acceptable Christ; rather, it is in all the ways that He differs from us that He calls us to the transformations of repentance that answer God's deed in Him. Luther, in commenting on verse 22, observed that in the Gospel story, people became angry and condemned Jesus because they did not know how to use Him, and then wrote: "It is no different today. The stone is rejected and stays rejected." ... The marvelous thing is that the One whom our human instincts and wisdom reject, God has nevertheless, in spite of us and for our salvation, made the chief cornerstone.

Read or sing Hymn 397 Breathe on Me, Breath of God

Thursday (9/26) Read and discuss Genesis 19:1–26

The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed himself with his face to the earth and said, "My lords, please turn aside to your servant's house and spend the night and wash your feet. Then you may rise up early and go on your way." They said, "No; we will spend the night in the town square." But he pressed them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house. And he made them a feast and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.

But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house. And they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them." Lot went out to the men at the entrance, shut the door after him, and said, "I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. Behold, I have two daughters who have not known any man. Let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please. Only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof." But they said, "Stand back!" And they said, "This fellow came to sojourn, and he has become the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them." Then they pressed hard against the man Lot, and drew near to break the door down. But the men reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them and shut the door. And they struck with blindness the men who were at the entrance of the house, both small and great, so that they wore themselves out groping for the door.

Then the men said to Lot, “Have you anyone else here? Sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone you have in the city, bring them out of the place. For we are about to destroy this place, because the outcry against its people has become great before the LORD, and the LORD has sent us to destroy it.” So Lot went out and said to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, “Up! Get out of this place, for the LORD is about to destroy the city.” But he seemed to his sons-in-law to be jesting.

As morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, “Up! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be swept away in the punishment of the city.” But he lingered. So the men seized him and his wife and his two daughters by the hand, the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city. And as they brought them out, one said, “Escape for your life. Do not look back or stop anywhere in the valley. Escape to the hills, lest you be swept away.” And Lot said to them, “Oh, no, my lords. Behold, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have shown me great kindness in saving my life. But I cannot escape to the hills, lest the disaster overtake me and I die. Behold, this city is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one. Let me escape there—is it not a little one?—and my life will be saved!” He said to him, “Behold, I grant you this favor also, that I will not overthrow the city of which you have spoken. Escape there quickly, for I can do nothing till you arrive there.” Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar.

The sun had risen on the earth when Lot came to Zoar. Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the LORD out of heaven. And he overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. But Lot’s wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt. (ESV)

Tremper Longman writes:

Lot’s experience is one with which many of us can identify. Let’s remember that, as Calvin said, the Bible is a mirror of the soul. As we read it, we discover how we are doing in terms of our relationship with God. Are we moving toward God or away from him?

When we read historical narrative, it is typical for us to identify with the characters and often find that our own experience is reflected in their actions. The best character in the story of Sodom and Gomorrah is Lot, and he is only relatively better. We certainly can question his integrity as he offers his virgin daughters in place of the “strangers” to whom he offers hospitality. Lot stands out from his fellow citizens, but he has ... been influenced by the company he has kept. God promised Abraham that he would not judge Sodom if there were ten righteous in the city. But there are not even ten, and even Lot cannot be described as righteous except in relative terms.

That said, God graciously, and because of Abraham, determined to remove Lot and his family (wife and daughters) from the judgment that was about to fall on the city. Even so, Lot is surprisingly reluctant to be rescued! When God's angels tell him to hurry and get out of the city (v. 15), he hesitates, and the angels have to forcibly drag him out of the city. He also does not trust the angels to take him to safety but begs them to let him go to a small nearby town. Zoar.

The angels react by grabbing Lot by the wrist and dragging him out of town. They even acceded to his request to go to the small nearby town.

Many of us can identify with Lot. God saves us, but we are reluctant to leave the pleasures of our previous life even when we know that to stay means we will be destroyed. The story of Lot points out the folly of a life that wants to dwell in sin. If Lot had stayed, he would have died in the conflagration of judgment that came on the city. And thereby we too are warned against keeping one foot in our previous life when God wants to bring us to safety.

Friday (9/27) Read and discuss Jude 5–7

Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day—just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire. (ESV)

Simon Kistemaker writes:

Jude remarks that the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah “serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.” The literal translation of the verb *serve* is “exposed to public view.” The evidence of God's judgment on the cities of the plain has been open to view since the day fire and sulfur destroyed the area. “Sodom never occurs again in the Bible as a living city, but the memory of its sin and consequent destruction was kept alive by Moses, the prophets, Jesus, and the authors of the New Testament. Sodom and Gomorrah have become bywords and tokens of God's wrath on sin (Robert Alden).”

Read or sing Psalm 118A O Thank the LORD for All His Goodness (5-8)

Saturday (9/28) Read and discuss Matthew 21:33-46

“Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants, and went into another country. When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit. And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first. And they did the same to them. Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.’ And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” They said to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons.”

Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:

“‘The stone that the builders rejected
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Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.”

When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them. And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet. (ESV)

Jeffrey Gibbs writes:

What, then, will be taken away from the religious elites who are standing before Jesus as He speaks? The reign of God, that is, the blessings and salvation that Jesus Himself is bringing! Before their eyes, the Christ, God’s Son and the true King, has worked marvels. Even as God did through John the Baptizer, so now through Jesus, to whom John pointed, God has declared His claim over the leaders and over the people whom they were supposed to shepherd and care for faithfully.

But the chief priests and elders of the people have rejected Jesus. They will kill him. They deny that Christ’s ministry is carried out in the power of God’s Spirit, and so they will be rejected on account of the sin for which there is no forgiveness either in this age or the age to come – the sin of persistent unbelief. The blessings of the reign of God will be taken away from them. Others will receive those blessings and that reign. As a result, the vineyard will produce fruit and those who tend the vineyard will offer the fruit to the Father through the Son, in the Spirit.

The eleven apostles will be the first to receive that reign once the son becomes the head of the corner. As the patriarchs of the true vineyard, they will begin to tend the true Israel, Jews who have believed the scriptural testimony and have begun to follow Jesus. The reign of God will not be taken away from Jews as such or from the nation of Israel per se; Jesus' parable should not be read in that way. To be sure, Jesus will predict severe judgment to come upon "this generation," which is not limited to the Jewish religious leaders. It is a misreading of the parable, however, to conclude the "the time of the Jews" is over and that "the times of the Gentiles" have now come. Historically, of course, the disciples of Jesus quickly become largely Gentile, although perhaps not as quickly as is sometimes assumed. The apostle Paul will wrestle mightily with this reality in his own ministry, and the theme is central to his letter to the Romans. This parable, however, does not directly concern itself with that reality.

At this moment in the narrative, however, standing before the religious leaders of the people is the Son, who is also the stone and who brings the reign of God. Because they are rejecting Him, they will be rejected and will fall short of the blessing that Jesus [brings]. They will fall in unbelief upon this stone and will be crushed. This stone will fall upon them, and they will be scattered.

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