

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 8 September 2024

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 100:1-3

Opening Psalm: 138A With All My Heart My Thanks I Bring

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: 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Psalm of Preparation: 122A I Was Filled with Joy and Gladness

Old Covenant Reading: Jeremiah 7:1-15

New Covenant Reading: Matthew 21:12-17

Sermon: *Cleaning House*

Hymn of Response: 270 At the Name of Jesus

Confession of Faith: Apostles Creed (p. 851)

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Closing Hymn: 402 Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation

PM Worship

63A O God, You Are My God Alone

491 Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee

477 By Grace I Am an Heir of Heaven

Old Covenant Reading: Psalm 63

New Covenant Reading: John 6:35-40

Sermon Title: *Better Than Life*

Adult Sunday School: Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 39

Q. What is God's will for you in the fifth commandment?

A. That I show honor, love, and faithfulness to
my father and mother
and all those in authority over me;
submit myself with proper obedience
to all their good teaching and discipline;
and also that I be patient with their failings—
for by their hand God wills to rule us.

Suggested Preparations

Monday (9/2) Read and discuss Matthew 21:12-17

And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.”

And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” they were indignant, and they said to him, “Do you hear what these are saying?” And Jesus said to them, “Yes; have you never read,

“‘Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies
you have prepared praise’?”

And leaving them, he went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there. (ESV)

Jeffrey Gibbs writes:

When Jesus entered the temple precincts and carried out His action that symbolized judgment, where was He and what sort of impact would His actions have had? In the first place, there seems to be a consensus that Jesus’ action took place in the outer court and perhaps the extreme southern end of the precincts. Second, in all likelihood the event was, humanly speaking, of limited scope and duration. The southern portion of the outer court (almost three hundred yards wide and at least some dozen yards deep) was likely the location of market activities, sales, and purchases directly related to the sacrificial system. In such a large and busy area, an action that the Gospels agree was carried out by Jesus Himself (no participation by any of the disciples is mentioned) would not necessarily even be noticed by everyone. If the action was symbolic, then it was not necessary for the symbol to be of a certain size. To be sure, at least some of the religious authorities took note and disapproved of what Jesus had done (21:15); presumably His action in large part prompted the question asked the next day by the chief priests and the elders in 21:23: “by what sort of authority are you doing these things?” In addition, scholars reasonably guess that Jesus’ action in the outer court galvanized high-priestly opposition to Him and was a noteworthy part of the motivation behind the desire of the chief priests to eliminate Jesus. ...

Nevertheless, it is easy to imagine that, given the presumably crowded conditions in the days leading up to Passover, Roman forces never saw the incident take place; they were, after all, garrisoned in the Antonia Fortress almost five football fields (half a kilometer) away, with the sanctuary and the inner courts blocking their view. So as the commentary will now attempt to argue, to refer to this incident as “the temple cleansing” or something like

that can give rise to at least two misunderstandings. The first error would assume that the entire temple complex was affected in a massive way, and I have suggested above that such was likely not the case. The second misunderstanding would be to characterize Jesus' action as a symbolic "cleansing" of the temple. As I shall now try to show, Jesus is not "cleansing" something so that it may then be restored and used. Rather, Jesus is judging an institution because its leaders and caretakers are apostate and divine judgment is going to come upon them.

Read or sing Psalm 138A With All My Heart My Thanks I Bring

Tuesday (9/3) 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)

Matthew's focus on the colt may seem disproportionately long. What's the big deal about this colt? There are two key points that we shouldn't miss. First, we should notice that Jesus is in complete command of the situation. He gives clear directions. When His directives are carried out things transpire exactly as Jesus says they will. It is important to recognize how unusual it is to simply go up and take someone else's colt (If you have seen many "Westerns" you will know that on the American frontier horse thieves were shot). Jesus anticipated the problem the Disciples would face and gave them exact directions: "say, 'The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.'" This could also be translated, "It's Lord has need (of it) and will send it back immediately". Jesus is reminding us that, ultimately, He owns everything. The person who had title to this colt only held it as a steward of the Lord's property. This is an astonishing claim of authority on the part of Jesus. He was claiming to be the true owner of everything and therefore to be Yahweh Himself. Second, by choosing to ride into Jerusalem on a colt Jesus was self-consciously identifying with the prophesied Messianic King of Zechariah 9:9. The crowd will prove

remarkably fickle, and even the Disciples will not fully understand until after He is raised from the dead, but Jesus never wavers in His vocation. He enters Jerusalem with the knowledge that He is the true King of Israel.

Read or sing Psalm 122A I Was Filled with Joy and Gladness

Wednesday (8/28) Read and discuss Jeremiah 7:1–15

The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: “Stand in the gate of the LORD’s house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all you men of Judah who enter these gates to worship the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place. Do not trust in these deceptive words: ‘This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.’

“For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly execute justice one with another, if you do not oppress the sojourner, the fatherless, or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own harm, then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your fathers forever.

“Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail. Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, [and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, ‘We are delivered!’—only to go on doing all these abominations? Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I myself have seen it, declares the LORD. Go now to my place that was in Shiloh, where I made my name dwell at first, and see what I did to it because of the evil of my people Israel. And now, because you have done all these things, declares the LORD, and when I spoke to you persistently you did not listen, and when I called you, you did not answer, therefore I will do to the house that is called by my name, and in which you trust, and to the place that I gave to you and to your fathers, as I did to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I cast out all your kinsmen, all the offspring of Ephraim. (ESV)

True or False: “America needs more religion”? Of course the answer depends entirely upon what is meant by religion. We do need the Holy Spirit to grant new life to millions of our neighbors. We do need Churches that will be enthusiastically faithful to the Word of God. But mere religion for religion’s sake is a stench in the nostrils of the LORD who commanded: “You shall have no other gods in my presence.” Oddly, many Americans assume that religion is intrinsically good – and that there is safety for society in people becoming more religious. In Jeremiah’s day many Jews came to trust in religious forms. In particular, the people of Israel had come to believe that the Temple was inviolable. Surely God would protect His house where He had put His name – wouldn’t He? “The theological problem was that the Temple itself became an object of trust and was thought to be a talisman – a charm, a rabbit’s foot, a medal of St. Christopher on the dashboard – capable of averting any harm that might threaten their way of life (Terence E. Fretheim).” They didn’t realize that it was their crass unfaithfulness to God that had put them in harm’s way. The LORD graciously sent prophet after prophet to warn the people and to give them an

opportunity to turn back. In today's passage the LORD reminds the people that He had previously established His Tabernacle at Shiloh – yet He had abandoned that location. They shouldn't be surprised that He would soon abandon His Temple in Jerusalem if they continued their immorality and idolatry. We who live in the New Covenant have received far more numerous warnings than those in Jeremiah's day. The destruction of the Second Temple in 70 A.D. as well as the disappearance of many early great churches in Asia Minor should remind us that the only security comes from a vital relationship with Jesus grounded by faith in His life and work.

Read or sing Hymn 270 At the Name of Jesus

Thursday (8/22) Read and discuss Psalm 63:1-11.

O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you;
my soul thirsts for you;
my flesh faints for you,
as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.
So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary,
beholding your power and glory.
Because your steadfast love is better than life,
my lips will praise you.
So I will bless you as long as I live;
in your name I will lift up my hands.

My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food,
and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips,
when I remember you upon my bed,
and meditate on you in the watches of the night;
for you have been my help,
and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy.
My soul clings to you;
your right hand upholds me.

But those who seek to destroy my life
shall go down into the depths of the earth;
they shall be given over to the power of the sword;
they shall be a portion for jackals.
But the king shall rejoice in God;
all who swear by him shall exult,
for the mouths of liars will be stopped. (ESV)

Tim Keller writes:

David wrote when he was in a literal desert, driven by the betrayal of his son Absalom. Despite the pain of physical thirst and lost love, David knows that his deepest longings are for God (verse 1) – they can be met only by

God's presence and by experiencing His love, which is better than good circumstances and even than life itself (verse 3). This spiritual thirst, unrecognized as such in nonbelievers, is in all of us. Beholding God's power and glory and worship should be our first care, not only because it is right but also because only a relationship with God lasts "as long as [we] live" (verse 4) – and beyond – and satisfies our deepest need. ...

David longs not just for belief but for experience of God. It is possible to "see" the LORD, not with our physical eyes but by faith. This is delighting in God not for what He gives us in life but for who He is in Himself (verse 3). The result of David's experience is the reassertion of his identity. "But [I] the king will rejoice in God" (verse 11). This joyful, strengthened grounding in who we are in Him is always the fruit of spiritual experience. Christians too are all kings and priests in Jesus (Revelation 1:6).

Friday (8/23) Read and discuss John 6:35-59.

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" Jesus answered them, "Do not grumble among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me—not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever

feeds on me, he also will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.” Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum. (ESV)

Those listening to Jesus were appalled at His teaching that He was the bread of life. Yet as William Hendrickson observes ...

In his answer Jesus does not try to tone down his earlier statements. He strengthens them, so that what seemed impossible at first seems absurd now. Instead of speaking merely about the necessity of *eating his flesh*, Jesus now speaks about the necessity of *eating his flesh and drinking his blood*. To the Jews drinking blood was very repulsive. Nevertheless, had they known their scriptures thoroughly, they would also have recognized the symbolism which Jesus employed. They would have known that the blood, viewed as the seat of life, represents the soul and is without intrinsic value for salvation apart from the soul. The language of Lev. 17:11 is very clear on this point: “For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that maketh atonement *by reason of the life*.” It is clear, therefore, that when Jesus speaks about eating his flesh and drinking his blood he cannot have reference to any physical eating or drinking. He must mean: “He who accepts, appropriates, and assimilates my vicarious sacrifice as the only ground of his salvation, remains in me and I in him.”

Read or sing Hymn 402 Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation

Saturday (8/17) Read and discuss Matthew 21:12-17

And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.”

And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” they were indignant, and they said to him, “Do you hear what these are saying?” And Jesus said to them, “Yes; have you never read,

“‘Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies
you have prepared praise’?”

And leaving them, he went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there. (ESV)

Jeffrey Gibbs writes:

Representatives of the temple authorities have been watching and listening. Matthew describes Jesus' deeds as 'marvels' [ESV 'wonderful things'], and he notes that weak and helpless witnesses are echoing the cries at Jesus' entrance into the city. The authorities are indignant and they implicitly demand that Jesus object to what the children are saying: "Hosanna to the Son of David!" They ask Him, "Do you hear what these are saying?"

Jesus barely replies, and only to a literal understanding of their question. "Yes[, I hear]." He hears, but does He reject what the children are saying? Far from it, for Jesus responds with a question of His own that explicitly cites the text of [Psalm 8:2] and implicitly confronts His accusers with the real issue at hand, namely, the significance of Jesus Himself. As Jesus does so often with His opponents, He accuses them of not having read the Scriptures correctly, or even at all. "Have you never read: 'Out of the mouth of babies and nursing children You have prepared praise'?" What counter-understanding of these events is Jesus offering by means of this OT citation?

Psalm 8, a creation psalm, extolls God's majesty revealed in the world that He has made and His choosing humanity to have dominion over His world. On more than one occasion, writers of the NT documents put aspects of this psalm to use Christologically. Here in Matthew, Christ Himself interprets the children's voices, "hosanna to the Son of David," as a valid manifestation of [Psalm 8:2]. We should not be surprised that this move also has (at the least) Christological implications. In the psalm, babies and nursing children are raised up by God to bear testimony to His strong acts, praising Him with their voices and silencing the objections of God's enemies. That day long ago in Jerusalem, God was at work in Christ Jesus, manifesting His reign on earth. The children who called out, "Hosanna," are praising God for His mighty deeds; indeed, they are praising Jesus, the Son of David, for His presence in Jerusalem. **With this OT citation, Jesus locates Himself in the place of God in the psalm** [emphasis added]. Shockingly, the indignant chief priests and scribes stand in the place of God's enemies, being silenced by the cries of the children!

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