

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 13 October 2024

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 105:1-3

Opening Psalm: 84A O LORD of Hosts, How Lovely

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: Jeremiah 31:31-34

Psalm of Preparation: 82 God Stands in the Great Assembly

Old Covenant Reading: Deuteronomy 10:12-22

New Covenant Reading: Matthew 22:15-22

Sermon: *Tax Questions?*

Psalm of Response: 72A O God, Your Judgments Give the King (1-4)

Confession of Faith: Nicene Creed (p. 852)

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Closing Psalm: 72A O God, Your Judgments Give the King (5-8)

PM Worship

59 O Save Me from My Foes (1-3)

61B O Hear My Urgent Cry

59 O Save Me from My Foes (4-6)

Old Covenant Reading: Psalm 59

New Covenant Reading: Romans 8:31-39

Sermon Title: *When the Dogs Prowl*

Adult Sunday School: Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 43 – Nathan Kreider teaching

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

A. That I
never give false testimony against anyone,
twist no one's words,
not gossip or slander,
nor join in condemning anyone
rashly or without a hearing.
Rather, I should avoid, under penalty of God's wrath,
every kind of lying and deceit
as the very works of the devil;
and, in court and everywhere else,

I should love the truth,
speak it candidly,
and openly acknowledge it.
And I should do what I can
to defend and advance my neighbor's honor and reputation.

Suggested Preparations

Monday (10/7) Read and discuss Matthew 22:15-22

Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his words. And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone's opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances. Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. And Jesus said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" They said, "Caesar's." Then he said to them, "Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." When they heard it, they marveled. And they left him and went away. (ESV)

Tom Wright comments:

Trick questions that put people on the spot have been around as long as there have been public issues and leaders offering new programs. This one, which the Pharisees put to Jesus, had an obvious edge. The issue of paying tax to the Roman emperor was one of the hottest topics in the Middle East in Jesus' day. Imagine how you'd like it if you woke up one morning and discovered that people from the other end of the world had marched in to your country and demanded that you pay them tax as a reward for having your land stolen! That sort of thing still causes riots and revolutions, and it had done just that when Jesus was growing up in Galilee.

One of the most famous Jewish leaders when Jesus was a boy, a man called Judas, had a revolt precisely on this issue. The Romans had crushed it mercilessly, leaving crosses around the countryside, with dead and dying revolutionaries on them, as a warning that paying the tax was compulsory, not optional. The Pharisees' question came, as we would say, with a health warning. Tell people they shouldn't pay, and you might end up on a cross.

At the same time, of course, anyone leading a kingdom-of-God movement would be expected to oppose the tax or face the ridicule and resentment of the people. Surely the whole point of God becoming king was that Caesar wouldn't be? If Jesus wasn't intending to get rid of the tax and all that it meant, what had they followed Him from Galilee for? Why had they all shouted Hosanna a few days earlier? If Jesus had been a politician on a television program, you can imagine the audience's delight, and the

producer's glee, when someone ask this question. This one will really give Him a hard time.

Before Jesus answers, He asks them for a coin. Or rather, asking them for a coin is really the beginning of His answer, the start of a strategic outflanking move. When they produce the coin, the dinar that was used to pay the tax, they are showing that they themselves are handling the hated currency.

Among the reasons it was hated was what was on the coin. Jews weren't allowed to put images of people, human faces, on their coins; but Caesar, of course had his image stamped on his. And around the edge of the coin, proclaiming to all the world who he was, Caesar had words that would send a shudder through any loyal or devout Jew. 'Son of God ... high priest' – was that who Caesar thought he was? How could any Jew be happy to handle stuff like that?

We watch the scene as Jesus takes the coin from them, like someone being handed a dead rat. He looks at it with utter distaste. 'Whose is this ... image? And who is it who gives himself an inscription like that?' He's already shown what He thinks of Caesar, but He hasn't said anything that could get Him into trouble. He has turned the question around and is ready to throw it back at them.

'It's Caesar's' they reply, stating the obvious, but admitting that they themselves carry Caesar's coinage.

'Well then,' says Jesus, 'you'd better pay Caesar back in his own coin, hadn't you?' Astonishment. What did He mean? 'Paying Caesar back in his own coin' sounded like revolution; but standing there with the coin in His hand it sounded as though He was saying you should pay the tax ... 'and you'd better pay God back in His own coin, too!' More astonishment. Did He mean that the kingdom of God was more important than the kingdom of Caesar, after all? Or what?

Let's be clear. Jesus wasn't trying to give an answer, for all time, on the relationship between God and political authority. That wasn't the point. He was countering the Pharisees challenge to Him with a sharp challenge in return. Was it, after all, they would were compromised? Had they really given full allegiance to their God? Were they themselves playing games, keeping Caesar happy while speaking of God?

We can only fully understand what Jesus was doing when we see His answer in the light of the whole story. Jesus knew – He had already told the disciples – that He was Himself going to be crucified, to share the fate of the tax-rebels of His boyhood. He wasn't trying to wriggle out of personal or political danger. He was continuing to walk straight towards it. But He was doing so on His own terms. His vocation was not to be the sort of

revolutionary they had known. The kingdom of God would defeat the kingdom of Caesar, not by conventional means, but by the victory of God's love and power over the even greater empire of death itself.

Read or sing Psalm 84A O LORD of Hosts, How Lovely

Tuesday (10/8) Read and discuss Matthew 22:1-14

And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. Again he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.'" But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.' And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests.

"But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. And he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen." (ESV)

Jeffrey Gibbs writes:

What is Jesus teaching in this second part of the parable of the Wedding Feast? Two realities about the present reign of God in Him emerge. In the first place, the parable reveals that God's plan to have guests who will honor and worship His Son will not be nullified or set aside. Those who hated and dishonored the Son in His earthly ministry and thus showed themselves to be unworthy of the feast cannot stop God's plan; divine judgment will surely come upon them. Nevertheless, the gracious divine invitation goes out again with a prodigal and wasteful plenitude. All who can be found and invited will be. There are no restrictions on the invitation to come and believe in and follow God's Son. Jews and Gentiles, "both the evil and the good" (22:10) – all will be sought and called to the feast.

At the same time, this expression of divinely extravagant grace must not be misinterpreted. Yes, the parable proclaims a gracious reign of God that will be offered to all the nations in the generations to come. The parable also contains, however, a warning for those who think they have a place at the feast. The warning is this: participation in the banquet is not automatic, just because others have been rejected and judged. The solitary figure of the man

without a wedding garment is likely a sort of synecdoche. Despite the king's gracious invitation, this is the type of person who will, on the Last Day, find himself in the outer darkness where torment and hatred for the King and His Son become the controlling reality forever; there will be sorrowful weeping and gnashing of teeth in rage there.

Read or sing Psalm 82 God Stands in the Great Assembly

Wednesday (10/9) Read and discuss Deuteronomy 10:12–22

“And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD, which I am commanding you today for your good? Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it. Yet the LORD set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day. Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn. For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. You shall fear the LORD your God. You shall serve him and hold fast to him, and by his name you shall swear. He is your praise. He is your God, who has done for you these great and terrifying things that your eyes have seen. Your fathers went down to Egypt seventy persons, and now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars of heaven. (ESV)

Adolph Harstad writes:

The overwhelming love and faithfulness of Yahweh – so Moses reasons – will lead Israel to “revere ... walk ... love ... serve ... keep.” Believers want, and are given, the attitudes and actions that their loving God desires them to have. They desire this according to their new nature. They act from that nature in step with the Spirit, who created that new Adam. But the faithful in this life still retain their old Adam, against which they continue to battle even after their conversion to faith in Christ. Thus, even though the old Adam has been crucified with Christ ..., the obedience of God's people to His commands will always be imperfect. That truth is obvious from the following phrase in Deuteronomy 10:12: “with all your heart and with all your soul.” Which sinner, still carrying the old flesh, can love God without any hesitation and with 100 percent of his being? Still, the believer wants what God wants. Failures are covered by the shed blood of the Seed of Abraham, who fulfilled all the righteous demands of the Father. The sacrifices commanded by the Law for Israel were efficacious for forgiveness because they were prefiguration of the once-for-all sacrifice of the coming Seed. For further motivation, there are the promised blessings that accompany obedience to what God wants and commands, as the last words of 10:13 show: “for your good.”

Read or sing Psalm 72A O God, Your Judgments Give the King (1-4)

Thursday (10/10) Read and discuss Psalm 59

Deliver me from my enemies, O my God;
protect me from those who rise up against me;
deliver me from those who work evil,
and save me from bloodthirsty men.

For behold, they lie in wait for my life;
fierce men stir up strife against me.
For no transgression or sin of mine, O LORD,
for no fault of mine, they run and make ready.
Awake, come to meet me, and see!
You, LORD God of hosts, are God of Israel.
Rouse yourself to punish all the nations;
spare none of those who treacherously plot evil. Selah

Each evening they come back,
howling like dogs
and prowling about the city.
There they are, bellowing with their mouths
with swords in their lips—
for “Who,” they think, “will hear us?”

But you, O LORD, laugh at them;
you hold all the nations in derision.
O my Strength, I will watch for you,
for you, O God, are my fortress.
My God in his steadfast love will meet me;
God will let me look in triumph on my enemies.

Kill them not, lest my people forget;
make them totter by your power and bring them down,
O Lord, our shield!
For the sin of their mouths, the words of their lips,
let them be trapped in their pride.
For the cursing and lies that they utter,
consume them in wrath;
consume them till they are no more,
that they may know that God rules over Jacob
to the ends of the earth. Selah

Each evening they come back,
howling like dogs
and prowling about the city.

They wander about for food
and growl if they do not get their fill.

But I will sing of your strength;
I will sing aloud of your steadfast love in the morning.
For you have been to me a fortress
and a refuge in the day of my distress.
O my Strength, I will sing praises to you,
for you, O God, are my fortress,
the God who shows me steadfast love. (ESV)

Tim Keller writes:

We are intimidated by the world, but God is not. He laughs at all forces that oppose Him (verse 8). Yet God's laughter is not the whole story. While He is not impressed by sinful rebellion, He is not indifferent to it. Sin also cause Him grief. Genesis 6:6 says God looked on the evil of the world and "His heart was deeply troubled." He ties His heart so much to us that our sin [grieves] Him. Only on the cross do we learn how much. If we see Jesus both weeping over sin and denouncing it, then we can follow God in neither being overawed by wrongdoers nor hardening our hearts toward them.

In contrast to the snarling, howling dogs is the singing, praising psalmist. Though still under attack (the dogs are still howling), he praises God in his heart for being his fortress and refuge. "Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee," is a line from Augustus Toplady's famous hymn. Jesus is the place we run to when under any kind of attack, and we can hide in Him for safety. The psalmist calls God "my God on whom I can rely" and, literally, "my unconditional love" (Psalm 144:2). Christians know that love must be unconditional, not based on our worthiness, because Jesus was "cleft," split apart, to make a hiding place for us.

Friday (10/11) Read and discuss Romans 8:31–39

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written,

"For your sake we are being killed all the day long;

we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (ESV)

Michael Middendorf writes:

A pastor friend often asks, “If you were left alone on a desert island and could only have one chapter of the Bible, which one would you choose?” It is difficult to argue with his choice, “Romans 8.” Indeed, the entire chapter is something of a merism. Romans 8 begins with the declaration that “nothing [is] condemnation for the ones in Christ Jesus” (8:1); it ends with the assurance that nothing, that is no “other created entity,” will be able to separate us from His love, as well as the love of a God who is most certainly “for us” in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In between those two poles, everything else is included in Romans 8 as well. This means the following: we are freed from the Law of sin and death; the Spirit of God, who is the Spirit of Christ, is dwelling within us; the Spirit grants life and peace; the Spirit, poured out in Baptism, effects our adoption and sonship into God’s family, which establishes us as fellow heirs with Christ; and the Spirit pleads to God in our behalf. We also then have hope that the God who knew us relationally and chose us before creation and who called and declared us righteous here in time will also “graciously give all things to us together with” Christ. “All things” encompasses the restoration of all creation, the redemption of our bodies, and our being glorified along with our firstborn brother, Jesus Himself.

Read or sing Psalm 72A O God, Your Judgments Give the King (5-8)

Saturday (10/12) Read and discuss Matthew 22:15-22

Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his words. And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone’s opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances. Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?” But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, “Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin for the tax.” And they brought him a denarius. And Jesus said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” They said, “Caesar’s.” Then he said to them, “Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” When they heard it, they marveled. And they left him and went away. (ESV)

Jeffrey Gibbs writes:

What is the will of God with regard to paying tax to the Romans, the most recent in a depressing series of godless empires that had overrun and oppressed God's holy land? I should emphasize once again that the Pharisees (and the Herodians) do not really want to know the answer to this question; presumably, they have their own opinions even if we cannot be sure as to what those opinions are. These interrogators have only one desire, and that is trap Jesus into saying something that will discredit Him and lead to His downfall. ...

Pushing aside the designs of His opponents, Jesus' last words carry the weight of His response: pay God's things to God! What can this mean? In this context of controversy in Jerusalem, the answer is relatively clear. After all, to do the Father's will is to repent and believe the preaching of John the Baptist, especially concerning the One who came in the way of fulfilling all righteousness. Tenant farmers will care faithfully for the owner's vineyard by acknowledging that the vineyard and its fruit belong to God and to His Son, the rightful heir of all things (21:33-44). To have a place in His eschatological feast both now and forever is to honor the King by accepting His invitation and paying homage to the Son (22:1-14). To pay to God what belongs to God is to behold the man who stands in their midst and to know whose son He truly is and. To follow Him because in Him the reign of God has come near. To give to God what is God's is to repent and to follow His Son in trusting and obedient discipleship.

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