

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 2 February 2025

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 98:1-3

Opening Hymn: 528 Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart

Confession of Sin

O great and everlasting God, Who dwells in unapproachable light, Who searches and knows the thoughts and intentions of the heart; We confess that we have not loved You with all our heart, nor with all our soul, nor with all our mind, nor with all our strength; Nor our neighbors as ourselves. We have loved what we ought not to have loved; We have coveted what is not ours; We have not been content with Your provisions for us. We have complained in our hearts about our family, about our friends, about our health, about our occupations, about Your church, and about our trials. We have sought our security in those things which perish, rather than in You, the Everlasting God. Chasten, cleanse, and forgive us, through Jesus Christ, who is able for all time to save us who approach You through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for us. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: Zechariah 3:1-5

Psalm of Preparation: 67A O God, to Us Show Mercy

Old Covenant Reading: Isaiah 12:1-6

New Covenant Reading: Matthew 25:14-30

Sermon Title: *Well Done*

Hymn of Response: 502 All for Jesus!

Confession of Faith: Apostles Creed (p. 851)

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Closing Hymn: 477 By Grace I Am an Heir of Heaven

PM Worship

154 This Day at Thy Creating Word

151 Lord of the Sabbath, Hear Us Pray

491 Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee

Old Covenant Reading: Genesis 1:26-2:3

New Covenant Reading: Hebrews 4:9-13

Sermon Title: Eager to Enter His Rest

Adult Sunday School – *The Promise of the Future*

In this week's adult Sunday school class, we will be starting a study of biblical eschatology.

Suggested Preparations

Monday (1/27) Read and discuss Matthew 25:14–30

“For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. So also he who had the two talents made

two talents more. But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have made five talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here, I have made two talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.' But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' (ESV)

Terry Johnson writes:

In the Parable of the Talents, Jesus continues His exhortation to vigilance. ... But as France points out, this parable takes the exhortation a step further than it had gone in the Parable of the Ten Virgins. It 'takes up the question which that of the bridesmaids left unanswered: what is "readiness?" ... Readiness, according to this parable, is faithfully responding to what we'll call 'gospel opportunities.' The commentators agree about this. The preparedness, readiness, or watchfulness commended by this parable is a matter of 'actual diligence in our present work and service,' says Matthew Henry. It 'is not a matter of passively 'waiting' but of responsible activity, producing results which the coming 'master' can see and approve,' says France. The period of delay (our era), France continues, 'is a period of opportunity to put to good use the 'talents' entrusted to his "slaves".' Carson says watchfulness leads not to 'passivity but to doing one's duty, to growing, to husbanding and developing the resources God entrusts to us.' It 'consists in having already faithfully discharged our responsibilities as disciples, whether they have been small or great.'

Properly understood, this parable asks us to examine our response to our 'gospel opportunities:' have we acted upon the gospel word that we have heard, believing, obeying, and serving in response? Have we acted upon all our providential capacities, gifts, and opportunities as well, wisely employing them to the glory of God?

Read or sing Hymn 528 Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart

Tuesday (1/28) Read and discuss Matthew 25:1–13

“Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise answered, saying, ‘Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.’ And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ But he answered, ‘Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour. (ESV)

Jeffrey Gibbs writes:

The groom’s delay in the parable signals that there will be an (undetermined) interval of time between the Son’s exaltation to God’s right hand and His return to glory. That glorious return will happen suddenly. You cannot *get* ready; you just need to *be* ready. Entrance into the wedding feast with the bridegroom refers to entering the fullness of eschatological life and salvation, and exclusion from that feast represents eternal rejection and damnation. ...

A general interpretation, however, does seem to stand in line with the spirit of the parable’s story-world, and I suggest the following: *the oil in the parable represents whatever it takes for you to be ready to honor the Bridegroom when He comes again in glory*. This means that, depending on a person’s situation and spiritual need, the oil may stand now for this Christian truth, now for that important reality. Repentance is obviously need if one is to be ready to welcome Christ Jesus when He returns, and so is true and humble faith. Perseverance and courage will be the needed gifts at times, and many will be the times when humility will keep me ever watching. Willingness to suffer for the name of Christ and to deny myself are key. Sorrowful awareness of the world’s brokenness and a longing for God’s name to be hallowed on the earth – these, too, can be the oil, ever ready in our vessels. And the list can go on. Whatever it takes to be ready to receive and honor the King when He comes – the parable teaches us to desire those things.

Read or sing Psalm 67A O God, to Us Show Mercy

Wednesday (1/29) Read and discuss Isaiah 12

You will say in that day:

“I will give thanks to you, O LORD,
for though you were angry with me,
your anger turned away,
that you might comfort me.

“Behold, God is my salvation;
I will trust, and will not be afraid;
for the LORD GOD is my strength and my song,
and he has become my salvation.”

With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. [4] And you will say in that day:

“Give thanks to the LORD,
call upon his name,
make known his deeds among the peoples,
proclaim that his name is exalted.

“Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously;
let this be made known in all the earth.
Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion,
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.” (ESV)

Read or sing Hymn 502 All for Jesus!

Thursday (1/30) Read and discuss Genesis 1:26–31

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his

work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation. (ESV)

Tremper Longman writes:

The first creation account not only shapes a worldview, but it also points to a practice that was extremely important for later Israel and still informs our thought and action today. The creation week culminates in Sabbath. On the seventh day, God “rested” or perhaps better, “ceased” from the creation work. Granted the human creatures are not commanded to observe this Sabbath, still God “consecrated” the seventh day. In other words, He set it apart and made it holy, different from the other six ordinary days. While it is true that God’s human creatures are neither invited nor commanded to observe the Sabbath at this time, the fourth commandment, which does mandate Sabbath observance, gives the creation week as the reason:

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but He rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. (Exod 20:8-11)

Friday (1/31) Read and discuss Hebrews 4:9–13

So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.

Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. (ESV)

Stephen Whitmer writes:

The author’s reading of Gen 2 and Psalm 95 together in this passage has great ... significance, because it shows that God’s rest (called in this passage “My rest” or “His rest”) refers not merely to the rest that God *provides*, but also the rest that God Himself *enjoys*. According to the author, entering into true rest means entering into the rest that God Himself is experiencing, and this means that entering into true rest entails communion with God, a participation with Him in His own perfect rest. It’s worth emphasizing this point ... because it greatly increases the attractiveness of the promised rest. True rest is communion with God.

Read or sing Hymn 477 By Grace I Am an Heir of Heaven

Saturday (2/1) Read and discuss Matthew 25:14–30

“For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master’s money. Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have made five talents more.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me two talents; here, I have made two talents more.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.’ But his master answered him, ‘You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ (ESV)

Jeffrey Gibbs writes:

The parable has a strong hortatory aspect to it, and in that sense it aligns closely with the Faithful and Wise Slave. What, then, is that exhortation? Here is where the contrast between the two kinds of slaves for which I have argued above becomes helpful once again. Two things stand out. First, the parable **in no way** puts forth any answer to this question: have the slaves been faithful *enough*? The first two slaves differ only as to the number of talents; otherwise, they are identical, and both double their number. The contrast is between those who acted and the one who did not. Second, through its artistry, the parable explains why the two kinds of slaves chose what they chose. Yes, an explanation in the case of the first two slaves can only be inferred. But the case of the third case is given so much weight that this inference is not difficult. The first two slaves did not fear or loathe their master. They knew him rightly, and they believed that they were supposed to serve him without fear. The third slave feared and rejected his master.

Somehow completely ignorant of the master's true character, he refused to serve him in any way.

Accordingly, the parable's exhortation is this: Do not forget who your Master is. And do not forget who you are – the slave of a particular Master. As you wait for His return, serve Him. He has entrusted to you a life of relationships and opportunities and resources. Use your life for Him and His will. When He returns, He will treat you the same way that He treats all His slaves who serve Him. He will say to you, "Well done, good and faithful slave."

If I may take a little homiletical license at this point, I would like to underscore a point I made in the prior paragraph. This parable is not an attempt to pose and answer a quantitative question: based on the talents I have, *how many more do I need to gain?* Nor a *comparative* question: what does it mean to serve faithfully *enough*? The danger is not that a disciple would not try hard enough or be productive enough. It is that somehow, the disciple would lose sight of the Master's character and his own identity and not serve at all. If a long time transpires and people grow weary and the vicissitudes of life in a fallen world begin to choke the Word, well, it can prove to be utterly unfruitful. Tragedy and pain and plain old temptation can lure us away from identity and therefore also from our calling. We do not know when the Master will return. We simply need to reckon with the fact that He will reckon with us and ask us, "Have you lived as My slave? Have you served Me?"

I imagine a conversation like this on the Last Day. One slave approaches the Master and says, "Lord, you entrusted these things to me, and I have gained this much. ... But there was so much more that I could have done!" The Master replies, "Yes, I am well aware that there was more that you could have done. Well done, good and faithful servant! Enter into the joy of your Master." A second slave approaches the Master and says, "Lord, you entrusted this to me, and I have gained an additional amount. ... But I was timid too often. I failed to take advantage of all the opportunities presented to me." The Master replies, "Yes, I recall every detail of all the times when you were a coward. Well done, good and faithful servant! Enter into the joy of your Master."

The same verdict and divine joy await *every* Christian, not just those who served productively or faithfully *enough*, whatever that might conceivably mean. In the end – and at the End – it matters only that Christ is my Master who has purchased me and I have been His slave.

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