

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 26 January 2025

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 96:1-3

Opening Hymn: 479 Jesus, I Am Resting, Resting

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: 1 John 1:6-9

Psalm of Preparation: 93 The LORD Reigns over All

Old Covenant Reading: Psalm 37:1-9

New Covenant Reading: Matthew 25:1-13

Sermon Title: Wisdom In Waiting

Hymn of Response: 530 Teach Me Thy Way, O Lord

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

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Closing Psalm: 43A Vindicate Me, O God

PM Worship

159 Abide with Me

532 Be Still, My Soul

272 I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say

Old Covenant Reading: Leviticus 23:26-32

New Covenant Reading: Hebrews 4:1-8

Sermon Title: The Necessity of Trusting the LORD

Adult Sunday School – Lord’s Day 52

Q. What does the sixth petition mean?

A. “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” means:
We are so weak that we cannot stand on our own for a moment, and our sworn enemies—the devil, the world, and our own flesh—never stop attacking us.
And so, Lord, uphold us and make us strong by the power of your Holy Spirit,

so that we may not be defeated
in this spiritual fight,
but may firmly resist our enemies
until we finally win the complete victory.

Q. How do you conclude this prayer?

A. “For yours is the kingdom
and the power
and the glory forever.”
This means
we have made all these petitions of you
because, as our all-powerful king,
you are both willing and able
to give us all that is good;
and because your holy name,
and not we ourselves,
should receive all the praise, forever.

Q. What does that little word “Amen” express?

A. “Amen” means:
This shall truly and surely be!
For it is much more certain
that God has heard my prayer
than I feel in my heart
that I desire such things from him.

Suggested Preparations

Monday (1/20) 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)

This famous parable is surprisingly difficult to interpret. The mainstream interpretation is well represented by Terry Johnson who writes:

Our understanding is that the Parable of the Ten Virgin provides “further reinforcement,” as France puts it, “of the same call for constant readiness for a ‘coming’ which will be at a time no one can predict.” It contrasts the wise and the foolish from among those anticipating the groom’s return. Consequently, it should be read as ‘a warning addressed specifically to those inside the professing church who are not to assume that their future is unconditionally assured,’ argues France (p. 350). All ten bridesmaids are anticipating the banquet. All ten bridesmaids are anticipating the banquet. All may be identified as members of the visible church. The difference between them is that some are ready and some are not.

As far as it goes, this is a perfectly fine explanation of the parable. Yet, there is another question that must be asked: “For those virgins who were not ready, why weren’t they?” The common assumption in modern evangelicalism is that they weren’t ready because Jesus came back *sooner* than they thought He would. These virgins imagined that they would have more time to get ready. The problem with this understanding is that it is exactly the opposite of what the parable says. The oil in the lamps was beginning to run out right before the bridegroom arrived. If he had returned *sooner* ... they would have been just fine. It turns out that, in the parable, the foolish virgins were those who only planned for the bridegroom to come quickly and who had made no provision for any delay. This fits well with the fact, that back in verse 36 of the previous chapter, Jesus had transitioned from talking about the destruction of the Temple which would take place in the generation that He was speaking to. The parable is told in conjunction with His teaching about the Second Coming and Jesus may have been warning His disciples that they needed to prepare for the possibility that He might not return for longer than they imagined.

We may want to leap to the important question: “Am I ready to meet Jesus if He comes back today?” That is a vital question to answer but it doesn’t seem to be the point of our Lord’s parable. Rather, Jesus is pressing the equally vitally question: “Are you prepared to trust Me and follow Me for the long haul in case I return later than you hope?”

Read or sing Hymn 479 Jesus, I Am Resting, Resting

Tuesday (1/21) Read and discuss Matthew 24:36–51

“But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. But if that wicked servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed,’ and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (ESV)

Jeffrey Gibbs writes:

At times interpreters have highlighted the feature of being appointed by the Master over one’s fellows and concluded that parts of the Eschatological Discourse are addressed to church leaders or teachers, missionaries or pastors. There is surely that element in Matthew, and not least in the final teaching about the coming of the Son of Man. Such believers are not the exclusive topic of the teaching, however, but perhaps a centrally located subset of it. All disciples are appointed to care for their fellow slaves, each according to vocation and in obedience to Jesus’ command to love you neighbor as yourself.

Such lives of service happen because we are aware of identity as slaves owned by the Master who went and sold all and bought us (13:44-46; 20:28). Such lives of service also flow out of the awareness that this Master will return and desires at that time to find that we are thus occupied. Blessing awaits such faithful and wise slaves.

Interestingly, the reward for faithful service, if you will, is greater and expanded service! The Master who had initially appointed the slave over his fellows now appoints him over all he has. One should not speculate too much about immortal life on the other side of the consummation of the age. It is a reasonable thought, however, that our calling to work and serve and love would not go away but be heightened and transformed into pure joy and satisfaction. The Master’s perfect love will be known perfectly; love for our brothers and sisters and for all the creation will (if you can imagine it) come naturally to us. In that day the Master’s appointment to serve “over all the things that are his” will become a gift and joy. There is apparently no retirement in the new creation.

Read or sing Psalm 93 The LORD Reigns over All

Wednesday (1/22) Read and discuss Psalm 37:1–9

Fret not yourself because of evildoers;
be not envious of wrongdoers!
For they will soon fade like the grass

and wither like the green herb.

Trust in the LORD, and do good;
dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.
Delight yourself in the LORD,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Commit your way to the LORD;
trust in him, and he will act.
He will bring forth your righteousness as the light,
and your justice as the noonday.

Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him;
fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way,
over the man who carries out evil devices!

Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath!
Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil.
For the evildoers shall be cut off,
but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land. (ESV)

Tim Keller writes:

“Fretting” is a common activity of our age. It is composed of worry, resentment, jealousy, and self-pity. It is dominant online. It chews us up inside while accomplishing nothing. David gives three practical remedies. Look forward (verse 2) – those whose main happiness is found in this world are living on borrowed time. Look upward (verses 3-5) – neither repress nor vent your frustrations but redirect them to God. Leave your burdens in His hand (“commit”) and learn to find your heart’s deepest desires in who He is and what He has done (“delight”). Finally, get busy with the things that must be done – “do good” (verse 3). Self-pity can lead you to cut corners ethically. Don’t add a bad conscience to a heavy heart.

Read or sing Hymn 530 Teach Me Thy Way, O Lord

Thursday (1/23) Read and discuss Leviticus 23:26–32

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Now on the tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. It shall be for you a time of holy convocation, and you shall afflict yourselves and present a food offering to the LORD. And you shall not do any work on that very day, for it is a Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the LORD your God. For whoever is not afflicted on that very day shall be cut off from his people. And whoever does any work on that very day, that person I will destroy from among his people. You shall not do any work. It is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwelling places. It shall be to you a Sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict

yourselves. On the ninth day of the month beginning at evening, from evening to evening shall you keep your Sabbath.” (ESV)

John Currid writes:

The ‘Day of Atonement’ is here firmly fixed in the Hebrew calendar on the tenth day of the seventh month. That is highlighted by the term ‘certainly,’ which is asseverative, often used in ritual laws to provide emphasis. The festival itself is literally called the ‘Day of Atonements’ – in Hebrew the plural sometimes signifies the superlative, as it does here to denote full and complete atonement on this day.

The Hebrews are to humble themselves on the Day of Atonement. This is an act of homage, submission, self-denial, and self-mortification. It is perhaps also a day of prayer and fasting. The command is given three times in the passage (verses 27, 29, and 32) and thus it is an essential response on the part of the people.

Friday (1/24) Read and discuss Hebrews 4:1–8

Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said,

“As I swore in my wrath,
‘They shall not enter my rest,’”

although his works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: “And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.” And again in this passage he said,

“They shall not enter my rest.”

Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, again he appoints a certain day, “Today,” saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted,

“Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts.”

For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. (ESV)

Tom Schreiner writes:

The author applies afresh, as he did in 3:12, the story of the wilderness generation to his readers, warning them to take seriously his words so that they don't fall short while the promise of entering God's rest remains. The "therefore" in verse 1 indicates that a conclusion or exhortation is drawn from the experience of the wilderness generation. The readers are summoned to fear lest they fail to enter God's rest. The rest certainly includes the notion of place. I would suggest that this view is strengthened if one accepts that the rest is also described as "the city that has foundations," as a "homeland," a "heavenly" one. It is "the city of the living God (the heavenly Jerusalem)," the "kingdom that cannot be shaken," and the city "to come." That the rest also includes the idea of state [since] there is an already-but-not-yet character to the rest. It seems that the rest cannot be limited to a place since God rests from His works, and such rest doesn't designate a place.

Read or sing Hymn 390 Christ Is Coming!

Saturday (1/25) 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)

Simon Kistemaker writes:

The five girls who are called foolish and who occupy the center of attention in the parable do not seem to be guilty of anything evil. They come with the best intentions and wish the bride and the groom years of matrimonial happiness. But they fail to do the wishes of the bride and the bridegroom, for they neglect to take the necessary oil along. "Does a maiden forget her jewelry, a bride her wedding ornaments?" (Jer. 2:32). The answer is, of course not. Yet these five girls forget to make adequate preparations for their appointed task. They come unprepared and for that reason are excluded from the wedding hall.

Nothing in the parable indicates that the ten girls were expected to stay awake. The wise as well as the foolish girls fell asleep while they were waiting. Watchfulness is therefore not the outstanding characteristic that is

taught in this parable. Rather, it is the quality of preparedness that is predominant.

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