

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 6 April 2025

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 96:1-3

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

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: Romans 6:23

Psalm of Preparation: 42B As Pants the Deer for Flowing Streams 1-5

Old Covenant Reading: Psalm 42

New Covenant Reading: Matthew 26:36-46

Sermon Title: A Prayer of Distress and Dedication

Hymn of Response: 344 'Tis Midnight; and on Olive's Brow

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

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Closing Psalm: 42B As Pants the Deer for Flowing Streams 6-11

PM Worship

60 You, O God, Reject and Spurn Us 1-5

97A The LORD Our God Is King!

60 You, O God, Reject and Spurn Us 6-11

Old Covenant Reading: Psalm 60

New Covenant Reading: 2 Timothy 2:1-13

Sermon Title: *Under His Banner*

Adult Sunday School: Inaugurated Eschatology – the Holy Spirit

Suggested Preparations

Monday (3/31) Read and discuss Matthew 26:36–46

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, “Sit here, while I go over there and pray.” And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.” And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.” And he came to the disciples and found them

sleeping. And he said to Peter, “So, could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.” And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again. Then he came to the disciples and said to them, “Sleep and take your rest later on. See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.” (ESV)

Jeffrey Gibbs writes:

After all of the disciples rejected Jesus’ prediction that they would all fall away on that night, Matthew relates in simple fashion that Jesus came to Gethsemane with His disciples. As the story unfolds, however, it will become clear that they are not really with Jesus in spirit and that they are in no way prepared for what is going to happen. Jesus is there to pray as no many has ever prayed before. The disciples are not there to do as Jesus does, to imitate His example. He seeks the solace of their presence, but He does not lay on them any responsibility to intercede for Him. He instead warns them of coming danger, of coming temptation, just as He has already predicted.

Two remarkable features of this text are precisely (1) the emphasis upon Jesus’ own praying, as well as (2) the depiction of His internal struggle as He approaches the trial of passing through the door, if you will, that opens up for Him to do the Father’s will and carry out the scriptural plan. First, there is the emphasis upon Jesus praying. It is not the case, of course, that Jesus never prays anywhere else in Matthew’s Gospel. He explicitly is said to do so in 14:23 after the feeding of the five thousand and before He meets the disciples in the storm on the lake, and there are other passages as well. It is the case, however, that Matthew has not painted a detailed portrait of Jesus at prayer until now. In the span of these eleven verses, Jesus is the subject of the verb “to pray” four times.

Moreover, Matthew not only repeatedly reports *that* Jesus was there to pray, but he also thrice gives the content of the prayer, twice in explicit wording and once by implication. The prayer here is not a prayer of praise or of thanksgiving or worship in some general sense. The prayer is a precise request of the Father, in the first place, “let this cup pass from Me,” and “let Your will be done.” Something unique is happening here, unlike anything in the course of the entire Gospel, Jesus is praying singularly.

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

Tuesday (4/1) Read and discuss Matthew 26:30–35

And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Then Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’ But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.” Peter answered him, “Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.” Jesus said to him, “Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.” Peter said to him, “Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!” And all the disciples said the same. (ESV)

Tom Wright comments:

The story that is about to unfold is the story from which the cockcrow gets the haunting, dark image it has in Western culture. The cock in this story doesn’t exactly wake someone up; or maybe that’s precisely what it does, rousing Peter from the moral slumber into which he’s fallen. Anyone who has walked around Jerusalem in the early morning – particularly in the early morning of Good Friday, commemorating the morning of Jesus’ trial before Pilate, and His crucifixion – will know that the sound of the cockcrow, repeated by dozens of roosters in the hours around dawn, sends shivers down the spine as we recall what the same noise, in the same city, meant for Peter two thousand years ago.

The cockcrow, and Peter’s denial, are all the more poignant because of what has just happened. Though the disciples probably didn’t understand it much at the time – it was all too bewildering and unexpected – the meal they shared with Jesus has echoed down the centuries like that insistent cockcrow, remind us not just of our own failings (though it may do that as well) but of Jesus’ coming to meet us, failing as we were, and inviting us to a banquet in which His own self was the food and drink.

Read or sing Psalm 42B As Pants the Deer for Flowing Streams 1-5

Wednesday (4/2) Read and discuss Psalm 42

As a deer pants for flowing streams,
so pants my soul for you, O God.
My soul thirsts for God,
for the living God.
When shall I come and appear before God?
My tears have been my food
day and night,
while they say to me all the day long,
“Where is your God?”
These things I remember,
as I pour out my soul:
how I would go with the throng

and lead them in procession to the house of God
with glad shouts and songs of praise,
a multitude keeping festival.

Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you in turmoil within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my salvation [6] and my God.

My soul is cast down within me;
therefore I remember you
from the land of Jordan and of Hermon,
from Mount Mizar.
Deep calls to deep
at the roar of your waterfalls;
all your breakers and your waves
have gone over me.
By day the LORD commands his steadfast love,
and at night his song is with me,
a prayer to the God of my life.
I say to God, my rock:
“Why have you forgotten me?
Why do I go mourning
because of the oppression of the enemy?”
As with a deadly wound in my bones,
my adversaries taunt me,
while they say to me all the day long,
“Where is your God?”

Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you in turmoil within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my salvation and my God. (ESV)

Tim Keller writes:

The psalmist has lost not belief in God but the experience of meeting with the *living* God (v. 2). Human beings need the sense of God’s presence and love as much as the body pants after water. His first response to this dryness is to simply remind himself that it will not last. “This too shall pass” is a fact about any condition in this changeful world. While often painful, the truth can be used for comfort too. Though our good things will inevitably be shaken, a believer’s difficult times will always end as well. Only when we are safe in heaven, surrounded by love unshakable, will all fear of change be gone. Hope in God, for we shall again praise Him.

As the psalm proceeds we see that the phrase “I will yet praise Him” is not a mere prediction of change but an active exercise. When we are discouraged, we listen to the fearful speculations of our hearts. What if this happens?” “Maybe it’s because of that!” Here instead we see the psalmist not merely listening to His troubled heart but addressing it, taking his *soul* in hand, saying, “Remember this, O soul!” He reminds his heart of the loving things God has done. He also tells his heart that God is working within the troubles – the waves sweeping over him are “*Your*” waves. This self-communion is a vital spiritual discipline.

Read or sing Hymn 344 'Tis Midnight; and on Olive's Brow

Thursday (4/3) Read and discuss 2 Timothy 2:1–13

You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound! Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. The saying is trustworthy, for:

If we have died with him, we will also live with him;
if we endure, we will also reign with him;
if we deny him, he also will deny us;
if we are faithless, he remains faithful—
for he cannot deny himself. (ESV)

R. Kent Hughes writes:

The theological grounds for suffering were more than theory for Paul. His own present experience bore witness to the reality of the Resurrection and the availability of power to stand and suffer. So Paul had a right to affirm the gospel's power in suffering: “This is my gospel, for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained.” Paul's circumstances were humiliating and personally repugnant to him because he was considered to be a criminal. The word translated “criminal” is a strong one, a technical term used for violent people – murders thieves, traitors, who were punished by torture.

Nero had just burned Rome and blamed the Christians, of whom Paul was a leader. Thus Paul was chained and treated like criminal scum. All this for the gospel.

But there was no hint of self-pity in Paul. Rather, there was confident power: “But God’s word is not chained.” A famous picture in the convent library in Erfurt, Germany, depicts young Martin Luther poring over a copy of Scripture in the morning light. The dawn steals through the open lattice illuminating the bible and his eager face. A broken chain hangs from the Bible. Such has been the experience of the church, even in darkest times.

Friday (4/4) Read and discuss Psalm 60

O God, you have rejected us, broken our defenses;
you have been angry; oh, restore us.
You have made the land to quake; you have torn it open;
repair its breaches, for it totters.
You have made your people see hard things;
you have given us wine to drink that made us stagger.

You have set up a banner for those who fear you,
that they may flee to it from the bow. Selah
That your beloved ones may be delivered,
give salvation by your right hand and answer us!

God has spoken in his holiness:
“With exultation I will divide up Shechem
and portion out the Vale of Succoth.
Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine;
Ephraim is my helmet;
Judah is my scepter.
Moab is my washbasin;
upon Edom I cast my shoe;
over Philistia I shout in triumph.”

Who will bring me to the fortified city?
Who will lead me to Edom?
Have you not rejected us, O God?
You do not go forth, O God, with our armies.
[Oh, grant us help against the foe,
for vain is the salvation of man!
With God we shall do valiantly;
it is he who will tread down our foes. (ESV)

Tim Keller writes:

Israel had been attacked. David discerns that the real threat to his people is not military force but the judgment of God. Therefore the only “banner” of defense is prayer. To pray is to unfurl the ultimate royal colors. In prayer David says they have been “rejected” yet at the same time are “those you love. God’s anger is that of a father who is unconditionally committed to His children but *because of that* is furious at their sin. There is nothing that affects us like the displeasure of one we love and adore. This fatherly anger, full of unfailing love, when understood, is a transforming motivation that makes us willing and able to change.

Israel used literal weapons to visit God’s wrath on evil nations. But Jesus bore the divine wrath against sin on the cross (Romans 3:24-26) and will return to put down all evil. Meanwhile Christians fight not flesh-and-blood enemies but spiritual ones. To fight discouragement, doubt, suffering, temptation, uncontrollable emotions, pride, guilt, shame, loneliness, persecution, false doctrine, spiritual dryness, and darkness – Paul says we must “put on” the armor of salvation, of the Gospel, of faith. Like David, we are to remind ourselves in prayer of who we are in Christ – accepted, pardoned, and adopted into the family – given the Spirit, access in prayer, and assurance of resurrection. With this “aid against the enemy” we will gain the victory.

Read or sing Psalm 42B As Pants the Deer for Flowing Streams 6-11

Saturday (4/5) Read and discuss Matthew 26:36–46

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, “Sit here, while I go over there and pray.” And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.” And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.” And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, “So, could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.” And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again. Then he came to the disciples and said to them, “Sleep and take your rest later on. See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.” (ESV)

Jeffrey Gibbs writes:

The prayer “let this cup pass from Me” is qualified not only by “if it is possible” but even more importantly by the contrasting second main clause, “but [I will do] not as *I* desire but as *You* desire.” Jesus continues on His path to worship and serve the LORD His God *alone*. His grief and distress

are real and should not be explained away. He trembles - but He does not falter. And importantly, the Lord's deep distress then requires that we identify the "cup" that He so earnestly does not desire. ...

I [argue], agreeing with others, that Jesus understands His coming suffering and death in terms of the OT metaphor of the cup of God's wrath. The image is fairly common, found in varying degrees of development in at least fourteen OT texts. In all of these other texts, of course, it is God's enemies who are given (or forced to take) the cup and drink its terrible contents to their own ruin. Here the stunning, salvific reversal in Gethsemane proclaims that the innocent Son of God faces the cup of God's wrath to give His life in exchange for the many, on behalf of others. Here, in a way that develops the OT citation of Zech 13:7 in Mt 26:31, God's striking of the messianic Shepherd is fleshed out as the divine wrath coming against Jesus. Here, in a way that anticipates the most profound meaning attached to Jesus' cry from the cross, God in wrath will turn away from His Son. This, Jesus knows, is what awaits Him on the morrow. Before this vocation to bear God's wrath against the sin of the people, Jesus trembles, desiring it not. But He does not falter, and He does not turn back.

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