

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 9 March 2025

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 98:1-3

Opening Hymn: 497 More Love to Thee, O Christ

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: 1 John 2:1

Hymn of Preparation: 506 Weary of Earth, and Laden with My Sin (1-3)

Old Covenant Reading: Exodus 24:1-8

New Covenant Reading: Matthew 26:14-25

Sermon Title: *The Darkness Grows*

Hymn of Response: 506 Weary of Earth, and Laden with My Sin (4-6)

Confession of Faith: Ten Commandments

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Closing Psalm: 99A The LORD God Reigns on High

PM Worship

172 Speak, O Lord

119M O How I Love Your Holy Law

170 God, In the Gospel of His Son

Old Covenant Reading: Psalm 119:97-104

New Covenant Reading: Hebrews 5:11-6:3

Sermon Title: Solid Food for Mature Disciples

Adult Sunday School: Inaugurated Eschatology I: The Kingdom of God

Suggested Preparations

Monday (3/3) Read and discuss Matthew 26:14–25

Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, “What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?” And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him.

Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover?” He said, “Go into the city to a certain

man and say to him, ‘The Teacher says, My time is at hand. I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.’” And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover.

When it was evening, he reclined at table with the twelve. And as they were eating, he said, “Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” And they were very sorrowful and began to say to him one after another, “Is it I, Lord?” He answered, “He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me. The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.” Judas, who would betray him, answered, “Is it I, Rabbi?” He said to him, “You have said so.” (ESV)

Jeffrey Gibbs writes:

Jesus now predicts again the coming betrayal. Mt 26:23 could be understood to specify which of the Twelve will betray Him (“the one who dips [his] hand in the dish with me – this one will hand me over”), but this seems unlikely. All were dipping their hands in the dish with Jesus, and Judas is singled out only through his response in 26:25.

What Jesus does with this second prediction, then, is to underscore the infamy of the betrayal. Yes, it is going to be one of the Twelve. Indeed, it is going to be one of those who is eating the Passover with Jesus, a member of the true family who shares the meal that remembers and longs for God’s deliverance from bondage.

How terrible will the act of betrayal be? Ponder this contrast. Nothing can derail God’s plan for this unexpected royal Messiah who calls Himself “the Son of Man;” He will go to His betrayal as the Scriptures have said. How differently things will turn out for the man who hands over the Son of Man! For such a treason, the outcome will be so terrible that it would have been better for him not to have been born.

Read or sing Hymn 497 More Love to Thee, O Christ

Tuesday (3/4) Read and discuss Matthew 26:6–13

Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came up to him with an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head as he reclined at table. And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, “Why this waste? For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor.” But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial. Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.” (ESV)

Knox Chamblin writes:

Before Judas's betrayal of Jesus, ..., Jesus is anointed by a woman at Bethany. The woman's extravagance springs from love – a contrast to the Jews' equally extravagant action (vv. 3-5) motivated by hate. She pours out her wealth for Jesus; money turns Judas against Him (v. 15). The disciples interpret the prodigality of her love as a colossal waste.

Whether or not the woman is thinking of Jesus' burial, He interprets her action this way, thus underscoring the prophecy in verse 2. While Jesus remains, no expression of genuine love for Him could possibly be excessive. Far from being a cynical admission of the inevitability of poverty, verse 11a tacitly instructs disciples to offer help. Once Jesus has departed, Christians show love for Him by loving their neighbors, including the poorest; conversely, it is questionable how far a person who does not love God can love his neighbor.

Read or sing Hymn 506 Weary of Earth, and Laden with My Sin (1-3)

Wednesday (3/5) Read and discuss Exodus 24:1–8

Then he said to Moses, "Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship from afar. Moses alone shall come near to the LORD, but the others shall not come near, and the people shall not come up with him."

Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the rules. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do." And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. He rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD. And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient." And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words." (ESV)

R. Reed Lessing writes:

Access to God's presence comes through the blood.

Satan knows about God's gift of access. That's why he whispers "Access is for others. Guild is for you." Wrong! Blood breaks down every barrier between God and people. "Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, 'Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with these words.'" Blood is how the Israelites get out of

Egypt – the Passover lamb’s blood. Blood is also how the Israelites gain access to God. ...

Blood, though, is no simile. Literal blood provides access – for Moses and crew, as well as for you. I’m talking now about Christ’s blood. Calvary wasn’t a sudden tragedy. Christ’s execution wasn’t God’s kneejerk reaction to a world spinning out of control. No. Revelation 13:8 states, “The Lamb was slain from the creation of the world.”

On Good Friday, the Jews wanted Barabbas. Herod wanted a show. Pilate wanted out. Caiaphas wanted death. The soldiers wanted to have some fun. And the executioners? All they wanted was Christ’s blood.

Their strategy was singular: beat Jesus within an inch of death and then stop. With His back lacerated by lashes, they shove the crossbeam on His shoulders. When He comes to Calvary, they nail Him to wood. And there He hangs. “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” All is not right with the world because God is in His heaven. All is right with the world because Christ was on the cross.

Hebrews 10:19 is an apt application of [this passage]. “Therefore, brothers, we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus.” The word *confidence* appears thirty-one times in the Greek New Testament. From Matthew to Revelation, the message is singular. The blood of Jesus gives us confidence to life, confidence to speak, confidence when we suffer, confidence when we pray, and even confidence when we die. And by the blood of Jesus, we have confident access to the throne of Almighty God.

Read or sing Hymn 506 Weary of Earth, and Laden with My Sin (4-6)

Thursday (3/6) Read and discuss Psalm 119:97–104

Oh how I love your law!
It is my meditation all the day.
Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies,
for it is ever with me.
I have more understanding than all my teachers,
for your testimonies are my meditation.
I understand more than the aged,
for I keep your precepts.
I hold back my feet from every evil way,
in order to keep your word.
I do not turn aside from your rules,
for you have taught me.
How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!
Through your precepts I get understanding;

therefore I hate every false way. (ESV)

Tim Keller writes:

Wisdom is knowing the right path to take in every situation (verse 101). Nothing provides it like the Word of God. Neither scholarship and research nor sophistication and accomplishment can tell you as much about the human heart, human nature, and the ways of the world. Both Jesus and Paul point out that the Gospel tends to be rejected by the knowledgeable and high ranking but embraced by the needy and the humbled. Wisdom, then, comes not to people who merely learn the facts of the Bible. It appears to those who humbly receive it in love, obedience, and delight.

Friday (3/7) Read and discuss Hebrews 5:11–6:3

About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits. (ESV)

Robert Rayburn writes:

The exposition of Christ's high priesthood is interrupted in the interest of another exhortation to persevere in the faith. This section begins with a rebuke and more severe in tone. The author intends to say more of Christ's priesthood but must first prepare the audience to listen with understanding and appreciation. Their spiritual childishness shows itself in a disposition to content themselves with their theological and spiritual status quo, apparently since by further progress they would only put greater distance between themselves and their Jewish past and sharpen the opposition they were already suffering. But such spiritual stagnation is dangerous; spiritual life is sustained by the solid food of sound doctrine and it is protected by that spiritual and ethical discernment which is the fruit of an ever-deepening knowledge and constant exercise of faith.

Though in their present state of spiritual immaturity the process of digestion will be more painful, solid food is urgently required to invigorate their flagging faith. Each of the elementary teachings (6:1-2) mentioned had a place in Judaism but had been invested with new significance in Christian preaching. These basics are not to be discarded, but neither are they

sufficient. This sentence amounts to a ringing affirmation both of the obligation laid upon believers to cultivate their spiritual life and the importance of doctrine to sanctification. Knowledge feeds faith.

Read or sing Psalm 99A The LORD God Reigns on High

Saturday (3/8) Read and discuss Matthew 26:14–25

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Jeffrey Gibbs writes:

What should Matthew’s readers/hearers take away from this first scene at the Passover meal? How shall we apply it? Commentators suggest that we should be sobered by the figure of the disciples and even of Judas and ask the question ourselves: “Is it I who betrays the Master?” There will be some profit in this scrutiny, no doubt. It cannot be literally true, of course, that we have denied Jesus or handed Him over in the same way that Judas did. We might say that our sins and failures make us “little Judases,” but that will be true only in a particular and limited sense. But again, there is profit to that sort of humility and self-examination. When one witnesses such sin and spiritual failure by another, at the very least the response can be, “there but for the grace of God go I.”

I would more strongly emphasize a different takeaway, however. We can marvel at no one other than Jesus. He knows what is coming; He knows the bitterness of being handed over by one of His handpicked Twelve, betrayed by one of His intimates who haws sung the psalms and prayed the prayers and invoked the name of God of Israel together with Him, the Son of that one and only God. Ignorant protestations and betrayal form the doorway into the gift of the new covenant meal that Jesus is about to institute.

Arrogant bluster and outright denial will be the doorway out of that moment of institution. In the middle (literarily and literally) of it all, there is Jesus, loving those who will love Him not, giving to those who will abandon Him to His enemies. The Son of Man will go “just as it is written of Him.” Matthew’s gospel here – and everywhere – invites us to keep our eyes on Jesus.

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