

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 27 April 2025

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 105:1-3

Opening Hymn: 498 I Will Sing of My Redeemer

Confession of Sin

Most merciful God, Who are of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and hast promised forgiveness to all those who confess and forsake their sins; We come before You with a humble sense of our own unworthiness, acknowledging our manifold transgressions of Your righteous laws. But, O gracious Father, Who desires not the death of a sinner, look upon us, we beseech You, in mercy, and forgive us all our transgressions. Make us deeply sensible of the great evil of them; And work in us a hearty contrition; That we may obtain forgiveness at Your hands, Who are ever ready to receive humble and penitent sinners; for the sake of Your Son Jesus Christ, our only Savior and Redeemer. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: Deuteronomy 4:29-31

Hymn of Preparation: 285 Hail, Thou Once Despised Jesus!

Old Covenant Reading: Isaiah 50:1-11

New Covenant Reading: Matthew 26:57-75

Sermon Title: *Faithful for the Faithless*

Hymn of Response: 505 My Sins, My Sins, My Savior!

Confession of Faith: Nicene Creed (p. 852)

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Closing Hymn: 236 To God Be the Glory

PM Worship

416 Your Hand, O God, Has Guided

275 Arise, My Soul, Arise

277 Before the Throne of God Above

Old Covenant Reading: Psalm 110

New Covenant Reading: Hebrews 7:20-28

Sermon Title: *A Better Priest*

Adult Sunday School – The Holy Spirit & the Messiah

Suggested Preparations

Monday (4/21) Read and discuss Matthew 26:57–75

Then those who had seized Jesus led him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had gathered. And Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and going inside he sat with the guards to see the end. Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death, but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward and said, “This man said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days.’” And the high priest stood up and said, “Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?” But Jesus remained silent. And the

high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your judgment?" They answered, "He deserves death." Then they spit in his face and struck him. And some slapped him, saying, "Prophecy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck you?"

Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came up to him and said, "You also were with Jesus the Galilean." But he denied it before them all, saying, "I do not know what you mean." And when he went out to the entrance, another servant girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth." And again he denied it with an oath: "I do not know the man." After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Certainly you too are one of them, for your accent betrays you." Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know the man." And immediately the rooster crowed. And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly. (ESV)

Jeffrey Gibbs writes:

The interaction between Peter and the first maidservant drips with irony. She approaches Peter and states with emphasis, "*You* also were with Jesus the Galilean!" On one level, she likely means to say only that Peter was (or had been) one of Jesus' disciples. That she is speaking without deep understanding is also indicated by her naming of Jesus simply as "the Galilean." Jesus is that, of course, but much more!

On another level, her words to Peter are an indictment: "you also *were* with Jesus." Matthew's readers/hearers know this to be true on a far deeper level. If Peter were still with Jesus as His loyal disciple, he would not be "outside." He *was* "with" Jesus - but he is no longer with Him. He has left Jesus, as if the Master were in truth only a "Galilean" and not the Messiah, "the Christ" and "the Son of God." Even worse, Matthew declares now that "peter denied [Him] before all." Jesus had warned of the danger of denying Him (10:32-33). He had predicted that Peter would do it. Now Peter begins to make Jesus' prediction come true.

Peter's own words participate in the verbal irony. When he replies, "I do not know what you are saying," he is publicly disavowing the maidservant's accusation. At the same time, however, Matthew wants us to hear Peter's words on a theological level. He does not understand the implications of what the maidservant has said to him. He is not aware that he is no longer "with" Jesus. He does not know what she is saying. The implication may be that he no longer "knows" Jesus aright.

Read or sing Hymn 498 I Will Sing of My Redeemer

Tuesday (4/22) Read and discuss 1 Corinthians 15:20–28

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” But when it says, “all things are put in subjection,” it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all. (ESV)

Tom Wright comments:

The resurrection of Jesus was the moment when the one true God appointed the man through whom the whole cosmos would be brought back into its proper order. A human being had got it into this mess; a human being would get it out again. The story of Genesis 1-3 – the strange haunting [account] of a wonderful world spoiled by the rebellion of God’s image-bearing-creatures – is in Paul’s mind throughout this long chapter. But his more pressing concern is with the job that the Messiah had been given to do. This passage is near the heart of Paul’s understanding of Jesus, God, history and the world. It’s near the heart of what Jesus Himself spent His short public career talking about, too. It’s about the coming of God’s kingdom.

God’s kingdom was what many Jews of Paul’s day longed for, and we are right to assume that he grew up longing for it too. They imagined that God would become King over the whole world, restoring Israel to glory, defeating the nations that had oppressed God’s people for so long, and raising all the righteous dead to share in the new world. Quite *how* this would all happen was seldom clear; *that* it would have to happen, if God really was God, there could be no doubt. And the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth had revealed to Paul that it had happened at last, though not in the way he had imagined.

Instead of all God’s people being raised at the end of history, one person had been raised in the middle of history. That was the shocking, totally unexpected thing. But this meant that the coming of God’s kingdom was happening in two phases. When Paul talks about things happening ‘in their proper order’ in verse 23, he has two things in mind: the ‘order’ of events, and the eventual ‘order,’ of putting-into-shape, that God intends to bring to the world.

Read or sing Hymn 285 Hail, Thou Once Despised Jesus!

Wednesday (4/23) Read and discuss Isaiah 50

Thus says the LORD:
“Where is your mother’s certificate of divorce,
 with which I sent her away?
Or which of my creditors is it
 to whom I have sold you?
Behold, for your iniquities you were sold,
 and for your transgressions your mother was sent away.
Why, when I came, was there no man;
 why, when I called, was there no one to answer?
Is my hand shortened, that it cannot redeem?
 Or have I no power to deliver?
Behold, by my rebuke I dry up the sea,
 I make the rivers a desert;
their fish stink for lack of water
 and die of thirst.
I clothe the heavens with blackness
 and make sackcloth their covering.”

The Lord GOD has given me
 the tongue of those who are taught,
that I may know how to sustain with a word
 him who is weary.
Morning by morning he awakens;
 he awakens my ear
 to hear as those who are taught.
The Lord GOD has opened my ear,
 and I was not rebellious;
 I turned not backward.
I gave my back to those who strike,
 and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard;
I hid not my face
 from disgrace and spitting.

But the Lord GOD helps me;
 therefore I have not been disgraced;
therefore I have set my face like a flint,
 and I know that I shall not be put to shame.
He who vindicates me is near.
Who will contend with me?
 Let us stand up together.
Who is my adversary?
 Let him come near to me.
Behold, the Lord GOD helps me;
 who will declare me guilty?
Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment;

the moth will eat them up.

Who among you fears the LORD
and obeys the voice of his servant?
Let him who walks in darkness
and has no light
trust in the name of the LORD
and rely on his God.
Behold, all you who kindle a fire,
who equip yourselves with burning torches!
Walk by the light of your fire,
and by the torches that you have kindled!
This you have from my hand:
you shall lie down in torment. (ESV)

R. Reed Lessing writes:

While Zion is unconvinced of Yahweh's love and suffers for her iniquity and rebellion (49:14; 50:1), the Servant listens to Yahweh (50:4-5) and suffers for His obedience (50:6). Zion is given every reason to trust Yahweh but she does not. The Servant, on the other hand, continues to trust in Yahweh despite His acute suffering (50:6-9).

When He recounts His commissioning (49:1-6), Israel's substitute Servant indicates that His mission might appear to have been a wasted effort because of humanity's antipathy. In the Third Servant Song, the disappointment grows into physical pain and torture. He willingly surrenders His back, cheeks, and face to His tormenters (50:6), yet He is fiercely determined to accomplish the Lord Yahweh's will.

It is easy to begin it is tough to finish. We are great at beginning. Unbridled enthusiasm, high energy, a never-say-die spirit. Like hot knives into butter, we tear into new projects, new classes, and new relationships. But as time goes on, we get weary and fatigued. "It's a bore, a snore, a chore," until we say, "No more!"

The Suffering Servant began strong, and He finished strong. He set His face like flint (50:7). And for Him it was tougher than nails. Because in addition to the nails, there was scourging, mocking, spitting, beating, slapping, sweating, and bleeding. Still, He finished valiantly and victoriously – despite His disciple's kiss of betrayal, His friends running for cover, His countrymen clamoring for His death, and even the temporary abandonment by His Father while He hung on the cross.

Read or sing Hymn 505 My Sins, My Sins, My Savior!

Thursday (4/24) Read and discuss Psalm 110

The LORD says to my Lord:
 “Sit at my right hand,
until I make your enemies your footstool.”

The LORD sends forth from Zion
 your mighty scepter.
 Rule in the midst of your enemies!
Your people will offer themselves freely
 on the day of your power,
 in holy garments;
from the womb of the morning,
 the dew of your youth will be yours.
The LORD has sworn
 and will not change his mind,
“You are a priest forever
 after the order of Melchizedek.”

The Lord is at your right hand;
 he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath.
He will execute judgment among the nations,
 filling them with corpses;
he will shatter chiefs
 over the wide earth.
He will drink from the brook by the way;
 therefore he will lift up his head. (ESV)

Christopher Ash writes:

By inspiration of the Holy Spirit, David prophesies about a person of infinite greatness who will be his descendant according to His humanity but his Lord in virtue of His divinity. This greater David will be both king and priest, conquering the world with and for His people. ... Jesus directly quotes “The LORD said to my Lord” to demonstrate that the Christ is greater than David. Jesus’s argument depends on the belief (which He shares) that Psalm 110 is written by David, who speaks by inspiration about the Messiah. C.S. Lewis writes that when Jesus asked this question, He “clearly identified Christ and therefor Himself, with the ‘my Lord’ of Psalm 110 – [He] was in fact hinting at the mystery of the Incarnation by pointing out a difficulty which only it could solve.”

Friday (4/25) Read and discuss Hebrews 7:20–28

And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him:

“The Lord has sworn
and will not change his mind,
‘You are a priest forever.’”

This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.

The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever. (ESV)

John Kleinig writes:

The teaching of Christ’s perpetual intercession in 7:25 most evidently shapes the way we pray as people who live in the new covenant. ... Take, for example, the classical Collect of the Day by which we approach God to hear His word. In it we normally pray to the Father, the first person of the Trinity, “through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord.” Since the Lord Jesus prays for us and since He is with us, we pray to the Father together with Him. His intercession for us shapes our prayers and makes them pleasing to the Father. What’s more, since we pray together with our exalted High Priest, we can be sure that our prayers are received as from the lips of Jesus and heard by the Father as from Him.

In keeping with the teaching of 7:25, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession repeatedly emphasizes that we have “access” to God and His grace only through Jesus. We therefore come near to the Father through Him as our High Priest and mediator. He does not cease to be our mediator once we have been justified: He is our mediator continually. Whenever we pray, we rely on the mercy of God and our access to Him through Jesus, for “through His priestly mediation we are led to the Father.”

Read or sing Hymn 236 To God Be the Glory

Saturday (4/26) Read and discuss Matthew 26:57–75

Then those who had seized Jesus led him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had gathered. And Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and going inside he sat with the guards to see the end. Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might

put him to death, but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward and said, “This man said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days.’” And the high priest stood up and said, “Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?” But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, “I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.” Jesus said to him, “You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.” Then the high priest tore his robes and said, “He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your judgment?” They answered, “He deserves death.” Then they spit in his face and struck him. And some slapped him, saying, “Prophecy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck you?”

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Jeffrey Gibbs writes:

The third and final confrontation with Peter happens when “those who were standing” approach him. On the level of human interaction, the threat and intimidation will have been immeasurably greater than when a single maidservant spoke only to Peter or when another maidservant spoke to others about him.

The words of Peter’s accusers continue the painfully eloquent irony of this scene: “truly, also *you* are one of them.” Yes, he is a representative of all the disciples, just as he has been so often. He had bragged that he would be better, but there is nothing special about Peter now. All forsook Jesus and fled, and now Peter is in the process of denying his Master for the third time. He is, truly, just another one – “of them.”

Why do they know that Peter is a member of that band? “For even your speech is making you plain.” What they mean to say must be something like this: “You talk like a Galilean, from up north, and that is how we in Jerusalem, here in Judea in the south, are sure that you belong to that group that was with Jesus.” However, what Matthew wants his hearers/readers to receive is a message like this: “Your words are revealing what is in your heart. Who you really are in this moment is becoming evident through what you are saying.” Their adjective for him being made “plain” derives from a verb that means “to reveal, disclose, make plain.”

Peter's response in this third interaction is the most extreme of all. He not only adds an oath to his denial, but for the first time he also sprinkles in a liberal dose of whatever counted as profanity in that day. He repeats "I do not know," as well as the direct object – an impersonal, dissociating designation of Him whom he does not know – from 26:72: "I do not know the man." Indeed, his speech makes him plain: no, he does not. His fall is complete.

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