

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 1 June 2025

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 96:1-3

Opening Hymn: 287 Lift High the Cross

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: Titus 3:4-7

Hymn of Preparation: 336 O Sacred Head, Now Wounded

Old Covenant Reading: Psalm 69:14-36

New Covenant Reading: Matthew 27:27-38

Sermon Title: *The King Crucified*

Hymn of Response: 215 Give to Our God Immortal Praise

Confession of Faith: Apostles Creed (p. 851)

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Closing Hymn: 340 There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood

PM Worship

278 Nothing but the Blood

460 Thy Works, Not Mine, O Christ

457 Jesus, Thy Blood and Righteousness

Old Covenant Reading: Exodus 24:1-8

New Covenant Reading: Hebrews 9:15-22

Sermon Title: *Christ and Covenant*

Adult Sunday School – Personal Eschatology, Part II

Suggested Preparations

Monday (5/26) Read and discuss Matthew 27:27–38

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before him. And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. And when they had

mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him.

As they went out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. They compelled this man to carry his cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots. Then they sat down and kept watch over him there. And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.” Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. (ESV)

Jeffrey Gibbs writes:

Matthew sets the scene by narrating that Jesus was taken to some part of the complex outside of which Pilate has pronounced his sentence. Matthew says that “the whole cohort” in parody arrayed Jesus in royal symbols and mockingly spoke to Him as if He were a king. They took off His clothing, likely reduced to bloody rags after his whipping, and put a soldier’s cloak on Him. They put on Him a sardonic, painful crown made out of thorns and placed the pathetic scepter of a reed in His hand. The soldiers have grasped the charge on which Jesus will be executed (“the King of the Jews,”); perhaps they already have heard that it will be written on the *titulus* above His head. They make Him look like a pathetic king.

And then they pretend that He is a king. They kneel before Him, “bending the knee.” Once before, at the foot of the mountain on which Jesus had been transfigured, a father, in his helplessness, had approached Jesus, imploring Jesus’ aid on behalf of his stricken son. That man had grasped that Jesus had the authority to help him, and so he approached Jesus, “bending the knee.” Many of these Gentile soldiers now pretend that Jesus has authority, and they greet Him as royalty: “Hail, you King of the Jews!” Once before, strangers had come from the East unexpectedly to Jerusalem, seeking the one born “the King of the Jews.” The Magi had come to pay homage to the King. The soldiers have come to put the King to death.

Read or sing Hymn 287 Lift High the Cross

Tuesday (5/27) Read and discuss Matthew 27:11–26

Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus said, “You have said so.” But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he gave no answer. Then Pilate said to him, “Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?” But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted. And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. So when they

had gathered, Pilate said to them, “Whom do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?” For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up. Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, “Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream.” Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. The governor again said to them, “Which of the two do you want me to release for you?” And they said, “Barabbas.” Pilate said to them, “Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?” They all said, “Let him be crucified!” And he said, “Why? What evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Let him be crucified!”

So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood; see to it yourselves.” And all the people answered, “His blood be on us and on our children!” Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified. (ESV)

Tom Wright comments:

When Pilate washes his hands, Matthew doesn’t think for a moment that he is any the less guilty. The point is not that guilt is in fact transferred to the crowd, and to their children – the children who would grow up to be the next generation of brigands, to be cut down or crucified in their thousands by Pilate’s heirs and successors as Jerusalem lurched towards its final downfall in AD 70. The point for Matthew is that *all* are guilty: the chief priests and elders who have handed Jesus over; Pilate the weak bully; and the crowds themselves. And part of the reason for stressing universal guilt is that, with the death of Jesus, redemption is offered to all. What happened, close up and in sharp focus, to Barabbas is now open to all. When Jesus dies as King of the Jews, He draws on to Himself the guilt and death of Israel, and thence also the world.

All the time there are voices whispering, “He’s innocent! He’s innocent!” Pilate’s wife sends him a message, picking up intuitively that there is something deeply wrong about sending this man to His death. “He’s innocent,” she says, and Pilate knows in his bones both that she’s right and that he’s not going to take any notice.

But Jesus’ innocence is the key to Matthew’s meaning. Had He been another rabble-rouser, another Barabbas, what would be gained by swapping one such for another? There is guilt and shame all around: Peter and Judas are now left behind, the chief priests and other leaders have done their worst, the crowds have cheerfully implicated themselves, and now the Roman administration shows what sort of a thing its much-prized ‘justice’ really was, coming in for its own load both of guilt and of stomach-turning hypocrisy. The human systems that carve up the world between them conspired to put Jesus on the cross. But His innocence of the charges laid against Him is the clue to the meaning that Matthew wants us to find there.

Jesus dies in the place of the sinner. His great Passover action makes a way through the Red Sea of sin and death, inviting Barabbas, and an increasing multitude ever since, to walk through to freedom.

Read or sing Hymn 336 O Sacred Head, Now Wounded

Wednesday (5/28) Read and discuss Psalm 69:14–36

Deliver me
 from sinking in the mire;
let me be delivered from my enemies
 and from the deep waters.
Let not the flood sweep over me,
 or the deep swallow me up,
 or the pit close its mouth over me.

Answer me, O LORD, for your steadfast love is good;
 according to your abundant mercy, turn to me.
Hide not your face from your servant,
 for I am in distress; make haste to answer me.
Draw near to my soul, redeem me;
 ransom me because of my enemies!

You know my reproach,
 and my shame and my dishonor;
 my foes are all known to you.
Reproaches have broken my heart,
 so that I am in despair.
I looked for pity, but there was none,
 and for comforters, but I found none.
They gave me poison for food,
 and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink.

Let their own table before them become a snare;
 and when they are at peace, let it become a trap.
Let their eyes be darkened, so that they cannot see,
 and make their loins tremble continually.
Pour out your indignation upon them,
 and let your burning anger overtake them.
May their camp be a desolation;
 let no one dwell in their tents.
For they persecute him whom you have struck down,
 and they recount the pain of those you have wounded.
Add to them punishment upon punishment;
 may they have no acquittal from you.
Let them be blotted out of the book of the living;
 let them not be enrolled among the righteous.

But I am afflicted and in pain;
let your salvation, O God, set me on high!

I will praise the name of God with a song;
I will magnify him with thanksgiving.
This will please the LORD more than an ox
or a bull with horns and hoofs.
When the humble see it they will be glad;
you who seek God, let your hearts revive.
For the LORD hears the needy
and does not despise his own people who are prisoners.

Let heaven and earth praise him,
the seas and everything that moves in them.
For God will save Zion
and build up the cities of Judah,
and people shall dwell there and possess it;
the offspring of his servants shall inherit it,
and those who love his name shall dwell in it. (ESV)

Tim Keller writes:

David continues to pray, begging God to hear him not because of his own goodness but because of God's goodness and mercy (v. 16). He asks God to deliver him quickly and used high emotional language ("Do not let the pit close its mouth over me. ... Rescue me."). However, he recognizes that God will answer "in the time of [His] favor" (verse 13). Whenever we pray, it is appropriate for us to be passionate and desperate but also willing to wait for God's timing. Nothing makes us dependent on God's sovereign love and wisdom like having to persevere in prayer and wait for the time of His favor. "Unbelief talks of delays; faith knows that properly there can be no such thing (John Newton)."

Read or sing Hymn 215 Give to Our God Immortal Praise

Thursday (5/29) 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)

Christopher Wright comments:

This was a unique and unrepeatable moment, sealing the covenant relationship in the context of the reading of the law, sacrifice, blood ritual, and then a covenant meal with a theophanic vision of the God of Israel [verses 9-18]. Of course, there would be occasions in the future when Israel would be summoned to renew their covenant commitment. But this event in itself was a historic moment that ratified and defined Israel's relationship with God, founded on the promise of God to Abraham, following upon the redeeming act of God in the exodus, and involving the willing commitment of the people to covenant loyalty and obedience - a unique moment within the story of God.

Though unrepeatable as an event, it generated a metaphorical significance in Israel's hope for the future. As we well know, Israel would end up back in the slavery and "death" of exile and would once more stand in need of God's liberating power. Even after the "second exodus" – the return from exile – the small people of Israel felt themselves, in many ways, still in need of. Liberation. So Zechariah can turn to this phrase, "the blood of my covenant," as a way of symbolizing the hope of such liberation for all the "prisoners" of Israel.

As for you, because of the blood of My covenant with you,
I will free your prisoners from the waterless pit. (Zech 9:11)

The promise follows hard on the heels of Zechariah's prophecy in the same chapter that Zion's king would come, "righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey" (Zech 9:9).

And so, it came about one Sunday a young Galilean preacher, prophet, carpenter's son from Nazareth rode into Jerusalem on a donkey in a daring audio-visual fulfillment of that very prophecy. Four days later, when the whole nation was celebrating the exodus at Passover time, longing for that great and final liberation that their scriptures promised, Jesus speaks again the words of Exodus 24:8 and Zechariah 9:11 as He passes around one of the cups.

Except that He does not quite speak the precise words of those texts but introduces a subtle change and adds echoes of at least two other scriptures:

“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” (Matt 26:28)

Friday (5/30) Read and discuss Hebrews 9:15–22

Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive. Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, “This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you.” And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. (ESV)

Commenting on verse 22, Peter O’Brien writes:

The general principle of the necessity of blood for cleansing summarizes the previous verses and provides a transition to v. 23 with its following discussion about the heavenly sanctuary. This verse forms an important state in the transition from the inauguration of the first covenant to that of the second. Almost everything which needs to be cleansed under the Old Testament law must be *cleansed with blood*. There were certain exceptions: an Israelite who was too poor to purchase two doves could bring an offering of flour for his sin offering (Lev. 5:11-13), while metal objects captured in war were to be purified by fire and water (Num. 31:22-23). But these exceptions were rare, and our author quickly adds that for decisive cleansing blood was essential: *without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness*.

This statement climaxes a series in chapter 9 that has underlined the fundamental importance of sacrificial blood: it provides access, purges the conscience, inaugurates covenants, consecrates the people, cleanses cultic instruments, and purges many things under the Old Testament law. Our author recognizes that under the old covenant the *ritual* cleansing was real and effective as far as it went, even though it could not achieve perfection or cleanse the worshipper’s conscience. However, the principle that defilement is cleansed by blood, which was well known in Second Temple Judaism, is significant for the argument being developed within the context, for it provides the basis of comparison between animal sacrifices under the old covenant and Christ’s sacrifice that inaugurated the new.

Read or sing Hymn 340 There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood

Saturday (5/31) Read and discuss Matthew 27:27–38

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before him. And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him.

As they went out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. They compelled this man to carry his cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots. Then they sat down and kept watch over him there. And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. (ESV)\

Simon was a very common Jewish name. Simon had undoubtedly come from the Jewish synagogue in Cyrene, which is in modern day Libya in north Africa, in order to celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem. If Simon was a wealthy man, he may have come to Jerusalem on multiple occasions but this could also have been a "once in a lifetime" trip for Simon, and while he is standing outside the Praetorium he gets conscripted into Roman service and is forced to carry our Lord's cross.

QUESTION: Why is it significant that Simon of Cyrene is carrying our Lord's cross?

Note well: Simon was not one of our Lord's disciples. Look at verse 32 again with me. Matthew uses language which he intends us to connect with the words of Jesus from earlier on: "They compelled this man to carry his cross." In context, the "his" in "his cross" refers to Jesus. But our Lord had earlier said of His disciples: "whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me." In Greek, the wording is almost identical. Does that help? Let me ask the question a little differently, "Who isn't carrying his cross?" ... We are not intended to think of Simon as a disciple. Rather, we are to see that there are no disciples left. Where is Peter who had boldly proclaimed "Though everyone else abandon you, I will never abandon you ... even if I have to die for you"?

The fact that Simon of Cyrene needed to carry the cross highlights the brutal suffering and exhaustion that Jesus had already experienced. It also draws our attention to the tragic reality that Jesus had been completely abandoned by those who once called Him "teacher" and "Lord." The Son of God will go to the cross ... alone.

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