

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 18 May 2025

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 100:1-5

Opening Hymn: 524 Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

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: 2 Chronicles 7:14

Psalm of Preparation: 75 We Give You Thanks, O God

Old Covenant Reading: Zechariah 11:1-17

New Covenant Reading: Matthew 27:1-10

Sermon Title: *Hypocrisy and Hopelessness*

Hymn of Response: 507 Thy Mercy, Lord, Is What I Need

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

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Diaconal Offering

Closing Hymn: 508 Jesus, Priceless Treasure

PM Worship

220 Give Praise to God

265 In Christ Alone

216 Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

Old Covenant Reading: Jeremiah 31:31-34

New Covenant Reading: Hebrews 8:1-13

Sermon Title: *Our Merciful God*

Fellowship Lunch – No Sunday School.

Suggested Preparations

Monday (5/12) Read and discuss Matthew 27:1–10

When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. And they bound him and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate the governor.

Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” They said, “What is that to us? See to it yourself.”

And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself. But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, “It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is blood money.” So they took counsel and bought with them the potter’s field as a burial place for strangers. Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, “And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel, and they gave them for the potter’s field, as the Lord directed me.” (ESV)

Jeffrey Gibbs writes:

The Roman provincial authority retained for itself the power to execute. Pilate’s involvement is crucial, and Jesus Himself has predicted it indirectly when He had promised that He would be handed over to the Gentiles and die by crucifixion. This means that a thoughtful reading of Matthew’s Passion Narrative will give full weight to these creedal statements: Jesus “suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified” (Apostles Creed); He “was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate” (Nicene Creed).

This means that Pilate’s statement does not exonerate him: “I am *innocent* of this blood.” Pilate is *not* innocent; he holds the power of imperium, and he chooses to exercise it. In addition to being pronounced worthy of death by the Sanhedrin, Jesus is executed by Roman justice. All the world (Jew and Gentile) is against the one who came for the sake of the world.

Read or sing Hymn 524 Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

Tuesday (5/13) Read and discuss Matthew 26:69–75

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)

Douglas Sean O’Donnell writes:

Peter’s third denial is “immediately” met with the fulfillment of Jesus’ Last Supper prediction: [“The rooster crowed”]. Only then is Peter’s mind jogged: “And Jesus remembered how Peter had said to him, ‘Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.’ And he broke down and wept.” How fitting that a rooster, a creature known for its “cocky” strutting, reminds Peter of his own foolish boast.

Notice the irony. While Jesus stands strong and “calm in the midst of terrible opposition” from Israel’s leading men, Peter cowardly collapses under the “flimsiest of pressures” from a servant girl and some bystanders (Grant Osborne). While Jesus is being slapped and spit upon and mocked as a false prophet, His prophecy about Peter is fulfilled. As Jesus, who will soon be lifted up on a tree, testifies to the truth, so Peter, the rock (with all his lies), reaches rock bottom.

Read or sing Psalm 75 We Give You Thanks, O God

Wednesday (5/14) Read and discuss Zechariah 11

Open your doors, O Lebanon,
that the fire may devour your cedars!
Wail, O cypress, for the cedar has fallen,
for the glorious trees are ruined!
Wail, oaks of Bashan,
for the thick forest has been felled!
The sound of the wail of the shepherds,
for their glory is ruined!
The sound of the roar of the lions,
for the thicket of the Jordan is ruined!

Thus said the LORD my God: “Become shepherd of the flock doomed to slaughter. Those who buy them slaughter them and go unpunished, and those who sell them say, ‘Blessed be the LORD, I have become rich,’ and their own shepherds have no pity on them. For I will no longer have pity on the inhabitants of this land, declares the LORD. Behold, I will cause each of them to fall into the hand of his neighbor, and each into the hand of his king, and they shall crush the land, and I will deliver none from their hand.”

So I became the shepherd of the flock doomed to be slaughtered by the sheep traders. And I took two staffs, one I named Favor, the other I named Union. And I tended the sheep. In one month I destroyed the three shepherds. But I became impatient with them, and they also detested me. So I said, “I will not be your shepherd. What is to die, let it die. What is to be destroyed, let it be destroyed. And let those who are left devour the flesh of one another.” And I took my staff Favor, and I broke it, annulling the covenant that I had made with all the peoples. So it was annulled on that day, and the sheep traders, who were watching me, knew that it was the word of the LORD. Then I said to them, “If it seems good to you, give me my wages; but if not, keep them.” And they weighed out as my wages thirty pieces of silver. Then the LORD said to me, “Throw it to the potter”—the lordly price at which I was priced by them. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD, to the potter. Then I broke my second staff Union, annulling the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.

Then the LORD said to me, “Take once more the equipment of a foolish shepherd. For behold, I am raising up in the land a shepherd who does not care for those being destroyed,

or seek the young or heal the maimed or nourish the healthy, but devours the flesh of the fat ones, tearing off even their hoofs.

“Woe to my worthless shepherd,
who deserts the flock!
May the sword strike his arm
and his right eye!
Let his arm be wholly withered,
his right eye utterly blinded!” (ESV)

John MacKay writes:

Zechariah’s later prophesies were primarily designed to inspire hope and resolve in the people of his day by giving them insight into the future purposes of God, and so enabling them to rise above the discouragements and baffling circumstances of their own time. By seeing their lives in terms of the future prospect when the Messiah would come and the divine promises be realized, they would recapture the eagerness that should characterize those destined to enjoy such an inheritance (1 Cor 1:7), and be strengthened in their ‘faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth’ (Col 1:5).

But the future held more than glory. There was a darker side. While the prophet would encourage, he cannot do so contrary to the truth. Furthermore, the people needed to be warned of the dangers ahead. These are dramatically introduced here. Many details of what the prophet says cannot be interpreted with certainty, but the overall picture is clear. First, he enigmatically presents a picture of catastrophe sweeping south through Palestine (11:1-3). Then he shows why this catastrophe awaits the Jews. It is the LORD’s judgment on them for rejecting the good shepherd He had sent to them. Instead the people would be ruled by a foolish and worthless shepherd.

Read or sing Hymn 507 Thy Mercy, Lord, Is What I Need

Thursday (5/15) Read and discuss Jeremiah 31:31–34

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to

the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” (ESV)

Phil Ryken comments:

In Jeremiah 31 God refers to “the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt” (v. 32a). For Jeremiah, therefore, the Old Covenant meant the covenant God made with his people at Mount Sinai. The Mosaic Covenant was for a people already saved by grace. “God spoke all these words: ‘I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery’” (Exodus 20:1–2). Once they were saved, God’s people had to keep God’s covenant in order to receive God’s blessing. They had to worship God alone, keep the Sabbath holy, preserve the sanctity of human life, tell the truth, and obey the rest of the Ten Commandments (vv. 3–17). The Mosaic Covenant was a good and gracious covenant.

There was only one problem with the Old Covenant—sin. The covenant was broken even before it could be ratified. By the time Moses came down from the mountain, the people had cast a golden idol in the shape of a calf. “When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain” (Exodus 32:19).

So God reissued the covenant (Exodus 34), only to see his people break it all over again. The history of the Old Testament is one of idolatry, immorality, discontent, and disobedience. According to the Old Testament scholar Gerhard Von Rad, “The reason why a new covenant is to ensue on the old is not that the regulations revealed in the latter have proved inadequate, but that the covenant has been broken, because Israel has refused to obey it.” J. A. Thompson goes one step further: “They had not merely refused to obey the law or to acknowledge Yahweh’s complete and sole sovereignty, but were incapable of such obedience.”

Jeremiah rightly identified sin as the problem with the Old Covenant: “‘They broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,’ declares the LORD” (31:32b). Robertson explains that here “Jeremiah does not condemn the old covenant. He condemns Israel for breaking the covenant.” And not just breaking it! The first twenty-eight chapters of Jeremiah are an exhaustive record of how Judah shattered the covenant and ground the fragments into dust.

Friday (5/16) Read and discuss Hebrews 8

Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man. For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; thus it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. Now if he

were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, “See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.” But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.

For he finds fault with them when he says:

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord,
when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel
and with the house of Judah,
not like the covenant that I made with their fathers
on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt.
For they did not continue in my covenant,
and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord.
For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel
after those days, declares the Lord:
I will put my laws into their minds,
and write them on their hearts,
and I will be their God,
and they shall be my people.
And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor
and each one his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’
for they shall all know me,
from the least of them to the greatest.
For I will be merciful toward their iniquities,
and I will remember their sins no more.”

In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away. (ESV)

J. Ligon Duncan comments:

It’s a better covenant because the Law is written on the hearts of God’s people

In what way is this covenant better? He comes right out and tells you. Look at verse 10. “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts.” Now in the old covenant, when Moses came down from the mountain, where was the Law written? It was written on tablets of stone by the very finger of God. That’s glorious, wasn’t it? That’s the hallmark of the Mosaic covenant, that they received written revelation from God Himself, written by His finger, in stone. That’s repeated over and over in the Old Testament as the high point of God’s

revelation of Himself through Moses to the people of God. But guess what the author of Hebrews says happens in the new covenant? In the new covenant, God writes His Law by His Spirit on your hearts. In other words, the new covenant is better in the moral transformation that it works in the people of God.

It's a better covenant because God has taken us to be His possession

Second, not only will “I put my laws into their minds and write them on their hearts,” second, still in verse 10, “I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” ... That is a big Old Testament theme and it's a theme that announces the purpose of God. And what is the purpose of God for you? It is for you to be His possession and for He to be your possession. It is for you to be His inheritance and for He to be your inheritance. The purpose of God is that He would be ours and we would be His. “I will be your God; you will be My people.” And that is realized by this new and better covenant.

It's a better covenant because “knowing the Lord” is more fully realized

Third, look at what he goes on to say. “And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least to the greatest.” This is referring to our experience of communion with God. “To know” is the language of intimacy in the Bible. How do you express a personal relationship with God in Biblical language? You “know” God. That's why J.I. Packer titled his book, *Knowing God*. His study of God is called *Knowing God* because the Christian longs to have a personal experience and knowledge of the living God. It's at the very heart of what true Christianity is about and this new covenant realizes that in a way that it was never realized under the old covenant.

It's a better covenant because we have actual forgiveness of sin

And fourth, he goes on to say – look at verse 12. “For I will be merciful towards their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.” And so in actual forgiveness of sins, the new covenant is superior to the old. Let me ask you a question. How many sins were forgiven by the sum total of all the Old Testament sacrifices? Zero. None. Not one sin was forgiven by the Old Testament sacrifices. All of the sins of the people of God in all ages are forgiven only by the blood of Jesus. What will the author of Hebrews say in two chapters? The blood of bulls and goats cannot forgive sin. “What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.” That means that Abraham's sins and Moses' sins and Aaron's sins and Joshua's sins and David's sins were not forgiven by animal sacrifices. They were forgiven by the blood of Jesus. And the author of Hebrews is saying this

new covenant has been fulfilled. On the night in which Jesus was betrayed, he took a cup, and He said, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sin. Drink it, all of you.” And so, when you are in despair, where do you look? Not to your circumstances, not to better circumstances, but to a better priest and to a better covenant. That’s our hope, my friends. That’s the hope that God has given to those who are despondent and despairing – to look to Jesus, the better priest of a better covenant.

Read or sing Hymn 508 Jesus, Priceless Treasure

Saturday (5/17) Read and discuss Matthew 27:1–10

When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. And they bound him and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate the governor.

Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” They said, “What is that to us? See to it yourself.” And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself. But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, “It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is blood money.” So they took counsel and bought with them the potter’s field as a burial place for strangers. Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, “And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel, and they gave them for the potter’s field, as the Lord directed me.” (ESV)

Jeffrey Gibbs writes:

The chief priests are working with the category of purity, but they have no understanding of where it comes from or how to obtain it. They take up the money that Judas had thrown up onto the level of the sanctuary itself, and they have to decide what they should do with it. It was money connected with bloodshed because it was used to facilitate Jesus’ arrest and (they trust) His eventual execution. It cannot go into the temple treasury, and so they take counsel together. For unknown reasons, they decide to purchase a plot of land that had been known as “the potter’s field,” and so they use the defiled money to provide a place of ritual defilement, that is, a place to bury the bodies of foreigners. In so doing, they instituted (deliberately or accidentally we do not know) a name change. At some point and continuing up to the time when Matthew was writing, that field acquired an additional or alternative name: “the bloody field.”

The chief priests try to avoid defilement for the temple and for themselves. They do not succeed, however, because of their unbelief. Jesus’ righteous,

innocent blood will come upon them for judgment, as Jesus said it would. For those with ears to hear in and around Jerusalem, the very name of the field the chief priests purchased with the defiled money will speak against them. It will be known as “the bloody field.”

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