

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 20 July 2025

Call to Worship: Psalm 100:1-5

Opening Psalm: 4 Give Ear, God of My Righteousness

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: Ephesians 1:7-10

Psalm of Preparation: 118 The LORD Is My Refuge

Old Covenant Reading: Psalm 5

New Covenant Reading: Matthew 28:11-15

Sermon Title: *Cowardly Coverup*

Hymn of Response: 365 Thine Be the Glory

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

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Diaconal Offering

Closing Hymn: 357 The Day of Resurrection!

PM Worship

164 God Himself Is with Us

233 O Father, You Are Sovereign

263 O Savior, Precious Savior

Old Covenant Reading: Isaiah 35:1-10

New Covenant Reading: 1 Peter 1:6-9

Sermon Title: *A New Life*

No Sunday School – Fellowship Lunch

Suggested Preparations

Monday (7/14) Read and discuss Matthew 28:11–15

While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers and said, “Tell people, ‘His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ And if this comes to the governor’s ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day. (ESV)

Jeffrey Gibbs writes:

This little incident is narrated only in Matthew; this is not surprising, perhaps, since only Matthew (of the canonical Gospels) gives any report of a guard being posted at Jesus' tomb. ...

In terms of the text's shape, the following suffices to describe it: the soldiers' arrival to the chief priests and their departure from those leaders act as brackets around the center of the unit. The central emphasis of [this passage] is the chief priests' response to the soldiers' account and the instructions and promise that they give to the soldiers. After the account is narrated, Matthew adds an observation that, like its partners in 27:8 ("until today"), brings the story he is telling up to the moment when he composed the account.

Because they were so afraid of the angel, the soldiers guarding the sealed grave of Jesus had become like dead men. How long they remained in this condition we do not know. The impression given here by Matthew is that the soldiers recovered their senses fairly quickly. Presumably fearing for their own well-being should Pilate, the prefect, learn what had happened, they found their way into the city to some of the priestly authorities who had labored so hard to do away with Jesus and to make sure that everyone knew he was dead and gone.

Read or sing Psalm 4 Give Ear, God of My Righteousness

Tuesday (7/15) Read and discuss Matthew 28:1–10

Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you." So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me." (ESV)

Jeffrey Gibbs writes:

The angel's second imperative directs the women to speak, to "say." They are to declare that the first promise has been kept and that the second promise's keeping is coming soon. First, "He was raised from the dead." And second: "He will go ahead of you into Galilee; there you will see Him."

In the first place, the Good News of that early morning is that death was not the last word for Jesus. Abandonment was not the last word for Jesus, not even His abandonment by God as God's Son in the place of Israel and of all people. Defeat and darkness have been overthrown; Christ is risen from the dead, and in Him, life has won.

The second promise reaches back to Jesus' words that were spurned by Peter and the others on the Mount of Olives: "You all will be caused to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I will strike the shepherd, and so the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' But *after I am raised, I will go ahead of you into Galilee*. Jesus knew His closest followers would fall away. To the end, they denied it, but their denial did not matter. They did fall. Jesus was left alone, and that was the plan. He alone died as the representative and the summary of the people. He alone, now, is raised as God's Son, the representative and summary *of the people*. And He will go ahead and meet the men who had been the new patriarchs of Israel that Jesus/Israel/God's son had gathered around Himself – until one of them betrayed Him and all of them apostatized. Now raised to fullness of life, Jesus will show utter grace and complete mercy to the eleven who remain. They are historically and theologically unique. They will be restored in Galilee, just as Jesus had said. Their restoration will have immense implications for all peoples and for all of the centuries that will continue to unfold.

Read or sing Hymn 357 The Day of Resurrection!

Wednesday (7/16) Read and discuss Psalm 5

Give ear to my words, O LORD;
 consider my groaning.
Give attention to the sound of my cry,
 my King and my God,
 for to you do I pray.
O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice;
 in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch.

For you are not a God who delights in wickedness;
 evil may not dwell with you.
The boastful shall not stand before your eyes;
 you hate all evildoers.
You destroy those who speak lies;
 the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.

But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love,
 will enter your house.
I will bow down toward your holy temple
 in the fear of you.

Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness
because of my enemies;
make your way straight before me.

For there is no truth in their mouth;
their inmost self is destruction;
their throat is an open grave;
they flatter with their tongue.
Make them bear their guilt, O God;
let them fall by their own counsels;
because of the abundance of their transgressions cast them out,
for they have rebelled against you.

But let all who take refuge in you rejoice;
let them ever sing for joy,
and spread your protection over them,
that those who love your name may exult in you.
For you bless the righteous, O LORD;
you cover him with favor as with a shield. (ESV)

Confident that the LORD is for him, the Psalmist is concerned that evildoers will lead him astray – and so he prays that the LORD will lead him “in paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.”

There are two ways that those who hate God can lead us astray. First, we can respond to their evil with an evil of our own. Second, we can be seduced into comprising with the world in attempt to avoid the grind of standing against it. How should we respond? The critical thing for us to get out of verse 8 is that the Christian life is not a self-help project! We are to ask the LORD to lead us into paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. For your Father in heaven has freely given you the Holy Spirit to be with you and in you. No Christian ever needs to pursue right living on his or her own.

Read or sing Psalm 11B The LORD Is My Refuge

Thursday (7/17) Read and discuss Isaiah 35

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad;
the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus;
it shall blossom abundantly
and rejoice with joy and singing.
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
They shall see the glory of the LORD,
the majesty of our God.

Strengthen the weak hands,
and make firm the feeble knees.

Say to those who have an anxious heart,
 “Be strong; fear not!
Behold, your God
 will come with vengeance,
with the recompense of God.
 He will come and save you.”

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
 and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
then shall the lame man leap like a deer,
 and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.
For waters break forth in the wilderness,
 and streams in the desert;
the burning sand shall become a pool,
 and the thirsty ground springs of water;
in the haunt of jackals, where they lie down,
 the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

And a highway shall be there,
 and it shall be called the Way of Holiness;
the unclean shall not pass over it.
 It shall belong to those who walk on the way;
 even if they are fools, they shall not go astray.
No lion shall be there,
 nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;
they shall not be found there,
 but the redeemed shall walk there.
And the ransomed of the LORD shall return
 and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
 they shall obtain gladness and joy,
 and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. (ESV)

Alec Motyer writes:

Sometimes even Isaiah excels himself! He was a master wordsmith and poet; in chapter 35 he is at his highest and best. But if the beauty of Isaiah’s words and thoughts thrill us, how great is our excitement when we realize that he is writing about us! We are the enigmatic ‘them’ and ‘they’ (vv. 1, 2, 8), the anonymous ones around whom the poem moves, because we are the redeemed and ransomed with whom it ends. The ‘ransomed’ are those for whom the price has been paid; the ‘redeemed’ (v. 9) are those with whom the LORD, the divine next-of-kin, has identified Himself, saying to us: ‘What is your problem? Give it to Me. What is your need? I will meet it. What is your burden? Lay it on My shoulders.’ That is the way with the *Goel*, the kinsman-redeemer. He bears it all, pays it all, does it all. He the doer, we the recipients. But now that we know who the ‘them’ and ‘they’

are, follow through what Isaiah says about them, about us. First, whatever our circumstances appear to be (the desert, the parched land, v.1), we may confidently expect to be provided for. No other eye but ours, the eye of faith, will see the blossoming, but the blossom will be there. Secondly, we endure as seeing Him who is invisible (Heb. 11:27). In every situation, in every place, the glory of the LORD is present – and remember, His glory is not an abstract ‘something,’ the LORD’s glory is the LORD in all His glory, with us, recognized by faith, all along the way. Thirdly, to the outward eye, the road may seem full of twists and turns, but it is a protected pathway from which no hazard can dislodge the pilgrim. It is a ‘highway,’ running in a straight line from conversion to glory. And finally, the end is guaranteed: emphasize the verb, ‘the redeemed *shall* come.’ Everything that made the journey a sad experience will take to its legs; every unalloyed delight that slipped like soap out of the pilgrim’s grasp will be finally possessed. Zion admits no disappointment.

Friday (7/18) Read and discuss 1 Peter 1:6–9

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. (ESV)

Tom Write comments:

Quite a bit of this letter is concerned with the suffering of the early Christians. Here Peter states the theme which he will develop: that this suffering is the means by which the quality of the Christians’ faith can shine out all the more, and when Jesus is finally revealed this will result in an explosion of praise. Meanwhile, they are to live their lives, to inhabit this great room of the gospel, with love for Jesus in their hearts and ‘a glorified joy’ (verse 8) welling up within them. This is the beginning of the ‘rescue’ which God has accomplished for them ...

There are difficult things here which must be faced. But with this new identity, and with the powerful mercy of God keeping us safe, we can go ahead and make the room – this remarkable letter, and its meaning for our lives today – a place where we feel thoroughly at home.

Read or sing Hymn 365 Thine Be the Glory

Saturday (7/19) Read and discuss Matthew 28:11–15

While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. And when they had assembled with the elders and taken

counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers and said, “Tell people, ‘His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ And if this comes to the governor’s ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day. (ESV)

Jeffrey Gibbs writes:

The reaction of the chief priests and the elders to the soldiers’ report reveals something *theological* about God’s reign in Jesus, *even after His triumphant resurrection from the dead*. On the one hand, Jesus’ resurrection has ushered in a new salvation and a new era in the history of the world, and there are promises that attend that newness for His disciples to grasp. On the other hand, there is still an already-and-not-yet quality to God’s reign in Jesus. Even as it was the case during Jesus’ earthly ministry in Israel, so it will continue to be during the time that stretches out until “the consummation of the age.” The reign of God will continue to be violently attacked. Rulers and leaders, Jewish and Gentile, will continue to oppose and reject what God has done, is doing, and will do through Jesus. The leaders who set themselves in opposition to Jesus so as to put Him to death will continue to oppose Him, even though He is (contrary to their ongoing postulation) risen to victorious, immortal life. God’s victory has happened in and through Jesus – but still God’s reign can and will be opposed and assailed violently.

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