

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 14 September 2025

AM Worship – Pastor Woods preaching

Call to Worship: Psalm 105:1-3

Opening Psalm: 85 You Were Pleased to Show Your Favor

Confession of Sin

Almighty and everlasting God, Glorious Creator of all things, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; We have sinned against Your holy Name, by failing to glorify You in our lives as your redeemed children. Our unthankfulness extends to every thought and deed, as well as to our failure to thank you with our lips. We have not lived to the praise of the glory of Your grace. We have not esteemed the reproach of Jesus Christ our Savior to be greater than the riches of this world. We have failed to estimate the infinite cost of the salvation won for us at the cross through the shed blood of Jesus. We have not been faithful to You as You have been faithful to us in all things. Father, forgive us for our ingratitude through the reconciling sacrifice of Jesus Christ our all-sufficient Mediator, we pray. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: Jeremiah 31:31-34

Psalm of Preparation: 103B O Bless the LORD with All My Soul 1-3

Old Covenant Reading: Psalm 85

New Covenant Reading: Luke 7:36-50

Sermon Title: *Loving Christ Much*

Psalm of Response: 103B O Bless the LORD with All My Soul 4-6

Confession of Faith: Nicene Creed (p. 852)

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Closing Hymn: 496 My Jesus, I Love Thee

PM Worship

99A The LORD God Reigns on High

393 Spirit of God, Dwell Thou within My Heart

412 Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word

Old Covenant Reading: Hosea 5:15-6:6

New Covenant Reading: Matthew 9:1-13

Sermon Title: *Turn and Know the Lord*

Sunday School – Making a Good Profession – Week 2: The Trinity

Suggested Preparations

Monday (9/8) Read and discuss Luke 7:36–50

One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at table. And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is

touching him, for she is a sinner.” And Jesus answering said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” And he answered, “Say it, Teacher.”

“A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?” Simon answered, “The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt.” And he said to him, “You have judged rightly.” Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.” And he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?” And he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” (ESV)

David Garland writes:

Jesus eats with sinners, but He also eats with Pharisees. God is not for one brand of sinners over against others, but for all sinners. The problem is that Simon does not recognize himself to be a sinner in need of forgiveness. By pigeonholing the woman as a sinner, Simon assumes that he is not to be classified as such. The Pharisees in Luke consistently misjudge their own and other persons’ standing before God. This Pharisee believes himself to be morally superior to the likes of this woman.

The parable of the two debtors challenges that assumption. It blurs the line between sinners and righteous. Both are debtors, and both are hopelessly bankrupt. Kasemann declares, “God’s dealings are with the ungodly; always with the ungodly, and most of all when He is dealing with the pious.” He goes on to say, “The Gospel does not establish a new religion for those who want to be pious, but salvation for the ungodly; and Christians are not pious people resting safely on grace but ungodly people standing under grace.”

Simon, however, wishes to preserve the distinction between righteous and sinner that sets him apart from this woman. He therefore presumes to know more than Jesus and to know the mind of God better than Jesus. He wants to call the tune to which Jesus must dance, and the name of that tune is “Sinners Begone.”

Simon does know the role of the prophet, however. The prophet is to make plain the secrets hidden in a person’s heart. The prophet is also one who knows and reveals the mind of God. Jesus clearly assumes the role of the prophet because both of these things happen. He knows the woman’s heart and announces God’s verdict: her sins have been forgiven. He also knows the Pharisee’s heart. He exposes his inner thoughts and implies God’s

verdict. If he were to acknowledge his debt, seek forgiveness, and accept other sinners whom God has accepted, he would find the same welcoming forgiveness as the woman.

Read or sing Hymn 85 You Were Pleased to Show Your Favor

Tuesday (9/9) Read and discuss Hebrews 11:39–12:3

And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. (ESV)

John Kleinig writes:

There are two reasons for the congregation to keep looking to Jesus. First He is their exemplar, the model for their endurance. He “endured” the worst kind of public shaming in the ancient world, death by crucifixion, by reversing its intended effect and changing its outcome. Normally people who face severe public shaming have all the joy behind them and the prospect of further trouble before them. They fear the outcome of their humiliation even more than their actual humiliation, for by it they are degraded and transformed into outcast nobodies. In contrast with that Jesus willingly and actively endured the cross “for the sake of the joy” that was set before Him” by God Himself, the joy of His exaltation as God’s co-regent, the joy of sharing His glory with His human siblings (2:9-10). As Moses before Him chose “the mockery of the Messiah” and its reward over the treasures of Egypt, Jesus “endured the cross” by “despising the shame” of it as something that was quite inconsequential compared to the prospect of that surpassing joy. So by His endurance Jesus turned the way of shame and sorrow into a way of joy and great rejoicing for those who follow Him.

Second, they can also look to Jesus for help because He “has taken His seat at the right hand of God’s throne” (12:2). This statement not only alludes to God’s decree to His Son in Ps 110:1, which was quoted in Heb. 1:13, but also recalls the previous discussion of the Son’s enthronement as God’s co-regent and heavenly High Priest. As the divinely anointed King, He is enthroned with God as His deputy and acts on God’s behalf for the benefit of His people; as the divinely appointed Priest, He sits next to God at His right side, the place of privileged access to God and His grace, and there appears before God on behalf of His people. So since He now intercedes for

the congregation as their great High Priest, they can now come near to God through Him to receive heavenly help to run their earthly race. What more could they ask for as an incentive for them to persevere in the race!

Read or sing Psalm 103B O Bless the LORD with All My Soul 1-3

Wednesday (9/10) Read and discuss Psalm 85

LORD, you were favorable to your land;
you restored the fortunes of Jacob.
You forgave the iniquity of your people;
you covered all their sin. Selah
You withdrew all your wrath;
you turned from your hot anger.

Restore us again, O God of our salvation,
and put away your indignation toward us!
Will you be angry with us forever?
Will you prolong your anger to all generations?
Will you not revive us again,
that your people may rejoice in you?
Show us your steadfast love, O LORD,
and grant us your salvation.

Let me hear what God the LORD will speak,
for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints;
but let them not turn back to folly.
Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him,
that glory may dwell in our land.

Steadfast love and faithfulness meet;
righteousness and peace kiss each other.
Faithfulness springs up from the ground,
and righteousness looks down from the sky.
Yes, the LORD will give what is good,
and our land will yield its increase.
Righteousness will go before him
and make his footsteps a way. (ESV)

Tim Keller writes:

This psalm is a blueprint for how to respond when your church community declines. Study past seasons of revival and reformation (verse 1). Church history is convicting and encouraging, showing how far we have fallen yet also what God can do. Next must come repentance, acknowledgement that our hard hearts and sin have put a barrier between God and us (verses 4-5). We must also cry out to God in prayer that He “show us” His unfailing love

(verse 7). Revivals always involve a fresh “seeing” of the Gospel of grace – grasping it theologically and knowing it experientially. Finally we must wait on Him, listening faithfully to His Word (verses 7-9).

Love and truth (the meaning of “faithfulness”) must meet in harmony (verse 10). But how can God in faithfulness punish sin yet also in love embrace sinners? Christ reconciles all things in heaven and earth by making peace through His blood (Colossians 1:20). When Jesus bore our punishment on the cross, love and holiness “kissed” – they were both fulfilled at once. Love without holiness is mere sentiment; righteousness and law without a grasp of grace in Pharisaism. Our natural temperaments incline us to one or the other, but the Gospel keeps truth and love together in our lives. And the more they are unified within us, the more we are brought into the deepest relationship with those who believe the Gospel too.

Read or sing Psalm 103B O Bless the LORD with All My Soul 4-6

Thursday (9/11) Read and discuss Matthew 9:1–13

And getting into a boat he crossed over and came to his own city. And behold, some people brought to him a paralytic, lying on a bed. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven.” And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, “This man is blaspheming.” But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, “Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he then said to the paralytic—“Rise, pick up your bed and go home.” And he rose and went home. When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men.

As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he rose and followed him.

And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” But when he heard it, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.” (ESV)

Jesus poses a question: “Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise and walk’?”

On the surface, the answer is obvious: Anyone can say, “Your sins are forgiven.” And there is no way to prove that what that person is saying is either true or false. In that sense it is far easier *to merely say*, “your sins are forgiven” than it is to say, “rise up and walk.” After all, if the paralytic remains a paralytic – the claim to such authority will be immediately and embarrassingly falsified. Indeed, given that the scribes are thinking among themselves

that Jesus is blaspheming – if the paralytic isn't healed ... they might very well drag Jesus before the Sanhedrin ... if they don't decide to stone Him first themselves.

Nevertheless, given that we know the whole story we should realize that it was far harder for Jesus to forgive this young person's sins than it was to say, "rise up and walk." God can heal the sick simply by the creative word of His own power. When the LORD uses Elijah to raise the widow's son in Zarephath – it doesn't cost Elijah anything at all. Rather, this dramatic miracle authenticates Elijah's position as a true man of God. When the LORD uses Elisha to heal Naaman's leprosy, that doesn't cost Elisha anything at all. Rather it strengthens Elisha's reputation as "*the* man of God" in all of Israel. But when Jesus declares to this paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven" Jesus is committing to taking the guilt of all this person's sins upon Himself. He is committing to going to the cross and dying in his place.

It is obviously harder to "say" to the paralytic "Rise up and walk." But the forgiving of this man's sins was infinitely harder to actually do.

The unique thing about Jesus among all of the true prophets of God is that Jesus had the power to forgive sins. In fact, the reason why Jesus performed such a vast multitude of healing miracles was so that these miracles would serve as signs so that we would all KNOW, right down to this present day, that Jesus Christ has this unique authority and that He uses this authority for our good.

Friday (9/12) Read and discuss Hosea 5:15-6:16.

I will return again to my place,
until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face,
and in their distress earnestly seek me.

"Come, let us return to the LORD;
for he has torn us, that he may heal us;
he has struck us down, and he will bind us up.

After two days he will revive us;
on the third day he will raise us up,
that we may live before him.

Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD;
his going out is sure as the dawn;
he will come to us as the showers,
as the spring rains that water the earth."

What shall I do with you, O Ephraim?
What shall I do with you, O Judah?

Your love is like a morning cloud,
like the dew that goes early away.

Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets;
I have slain them by the words of my mouth,
and my judgment goes forth as the light.

For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice,

the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings. (ESV)

Chapter 6, verse 4 gives a painful description of how Israel treated the LORD:

Your love is like a morning cloud,
like the dew that goes early away.

Derek Kidner comments:

Heartbreaking indeed; but met with neither a helpless wringing of hands nor a pointless flash of temper. The fierceness of verse 5, with its cutting in pieces and killing, is not blind fury, but has the clarity of light, the purity of justice and the constructiveness of love – for verse 6 reveals the end view. Notice, too, the implied appeal to reason and conscience, for the ‘cutting and killing’ was done by *my prophets* first of all. God does not send His judgments [upon his covenant people] without warning or without the offer of repentance.

Verse 6 was a saying highly treasured by our LORD: see Matthew 9:13; 12:7. Like the two great commandments which he picked out as the ruling principles of the law, it pinpoints the supportive relationship to our fellows and the filial relationship to God that are the heart of true religion. It is a theme of all Hosea’s great contemporaries, stirring them to some of their most powerful pronouncements.

Read or sing Hymn 496 My Jesus, I Love Thee

Saturday (9/13) Read and discuss Luke 7:36–50

One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee’s house and reclined at table. And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner.” And Jesus answering said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” And he answered, “Say it, Teacher.”

“A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?” Simon answered, “The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt.” And he said to him, “You have judged rightly.” Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you, her sins, which

are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.” And he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?” And he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” (ESV)

David Garland writes:

“The one to whom little is forgiven shows little love” is a sly reference to Simon. The woman would not act this way if she had not felt overwhelming gratitude for being forgiven. Simon would not think and act this way if he has not convinced himself that he has little need of forgiveness. One can recall another Pharisee, Paul, who could boast of his religious heritage and his blameless righteousness derived from his obedience to the law (Phil 3:5-6). Consequently, Simon has no motivation to show love to Jesus or this woman.

The implication is that Simon too is a sinner in the town, but his sins are more socially respectable: the sins of pride, arrogance, hard-heartedness, insensitivity, and a judgmental spirit – things that religious people rarely identify as sin. Because he has no consciousness of his totally irretrievable sinful condition before God, he has no sense of absolute indebtedness to God or of unmerited grace. He has never had the experience of having an IOU torn up. He could boast in his uprightness attained through his own achievements and could look down on all others who have not achieved the same spiritual level that he had. The result is that he has no real love for God and no real love for others.

Being religious can often be a great cover for sin lurking in the depths of one's being. The parable combined with the incident seems to say that there are two kinds of sinners, overt and covert – those who know that they have been forgiven much and exude love and devotion, and those who think that their misdemeanors are so minor that they feel little compulsion to show love to God or others. Jesus loves both kinds of sinners and announces that God stands ready to forgive them their debt. The problem is that repentance comes hardest for the righteous sinners who feel no need to cast themselves on the mercy of God. It is also harder for them to discover grace, to grow in grace, and to live gracefully.

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