

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 16 November 2025

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 98:1-3

Opening Psalm: 1B How Blest the Man

Confession of Sin

Almighty God, Who are rich in mercy to all those who call upon You; Hear us as we humbly come to You confessing our sins; And imploring Your mercy and forgiveness. We have broken Your holy laws by our deeds and by our words; And by the sinful affections of our hearts. We confess before You our disobedience and ingratitude, our pride and willfulness; And all our failures and shortcomings toward You and toward fellow men. Have mercy upon us, Most merciful Father; And of Your great goodness grant that we may hereafter serve and please You in newness of life; Through the merit and mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: Luke 1:76-79

Hymn of Preparation: 289 All Praise to Christ

Old Covenant Reading: Isaiah 55:1-13

New Covenant Reading: Hebrews 13:20-25

Sermon Title: *Blessing*

Hymn of Response: 426 How Vast the Benefits Divine

Confession of Faith: Ten Commandments

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Closing Hymn: 431 And Can It Be That I Should Gain

PM Worship

51C God, Be Merciful to Me (1-4)

518 Come, My Soul, with Every Care

51C God, Be Merciful to Me (5-8)

Old Covenant Reading: Hosea 14:1-9

New Covenant Reading: Matthew 11:25-30

Sermon Title: *Return to the Lord*

Adult Sunday School – Fellowship Lunch / No Sunday School

Suggested Preparations

Monday (11/10) Read and discuss Hebrews 13:20–25

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

I appeal to you, brothers, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly. You should know that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom I shall see you if he comes soon. Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those who come from Italy send you greetings. Grace be with all of you. (ESV)

Amy Peeler writes:

The rich benediction is a work of beauty and rhetorical power as it collects so many of the themes of the sermon and communicates them succinctly with fresh language. In this benediction, the author appeals to God as the God of peace. He invokes God's peace most clearly in the pedagogical section of chapter 12. Those who endure God's training will receive the peaceful fruit of righteousness. This peace is a gift from their Father God. When they put it to work in their own lives in their relationship with others, this virtue is one that will ultimately allow them to see God. This puts them into the same kingdom of peace over which the elusive Melchizedek reigned. As they dwell there, they follow the faithful example of another "outsider," Rahab who received the spies in peace. The genitive here in v. 20 of peace, could convey either that God is a God who is peaceful or that God reigns over a place that is peaceful. The latter lines up with what the author has displayed for them about God's rest and God's heavenly city. The character of God, on the other hand, is not necessarily peaceful, if that means that God only allows a relaxed life now. Peace is what is to come, but God has to allow some uncomfortable discipline now so that they can arrive there in the future.

Ultimate peace is guaranteed, however, because of what this God has done, named in the next way the author describes God as one *who led up from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep with the blood of the eternal covenant, even our Lord Jesus*. Their God is the one who has led someone out from death. This description of God puts this author into alignment with the Pauline corpus, which frequently describes God the Father as the one who raised Jesus from the dead. The author of Hebrews uses a term distinct to his own sermon, however. He does not employ Paul's typical term for raising but instead uses [a term that resonates] with the image of God and Jesus leading the many sons and daughters. A clear reference to the resurrection, provides the tether for those who argue that this surfacing of the concept gives evidence of its presence in the substructure of the sermon.

Read or sing Psalm 1B How Blest the Man

Tuesday (11/11) Read and discuss Hebrews 13:16–19

Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things. I urge you the more earnestly to do this in order that I may be restored to you the sooner. (ESV)

Tom Schreiner writes:

The life and teaching of leaders who inspired us should not be forgotten. Their faith continues to be a model and example for us. When we observe their transformation, the truth of the gospel is confirmed to us. We can also take comfort in the truth that Jesus Christ never changes. The grace given to the apostles and other stalwarts through church history remains the same, for Jesus has not changed.

In our antiauthoritarian age the call to submit to leaders is often misunderstood. The author isn't supporting the unbridled authority of leaders. If the readers flout the authority of the leaders, they are resisting the gospel itself and are in danger of committing apostasy. Submitting to leaders, in other words, is one way of submitting to God and to the gospel since the leaders in the churches remain faithful to the gospel. Hence this verse doesn't teach that Christians should obey leaders in every situation. Christians should submit to their leaders as the latter are faithful to the gospel. When believers stay true to the gospel, leaders are full of joy; and if they turn away, then leaders will be grieved.

Read or sing Hymn 289 All Praise to Christ

Wednesday (11/12) Read and discuss Isaiah 55

“Come, everyone who thirsts,
 come to the waters;
and he who has no money,
 come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
 without money and without price.
Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
 and your labor for that which does not satisfy?
Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good,
 and delight yourselves in rich food.
Incline your ear, and come to me;
 hear, that your soul may live;
and I will make with you an everlasting covenant,
 my steadfast, sure love for David.
Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples,
 a leader and commander for the peoples.
Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know,
 and a nation that did not know you shall run to you,
because of the LORD your God, and of the Holy One of Israel,

for he has glorified you.

“Seek the LORD while he may be found;
call upon him while he is near;
let the wicked forsake his way,
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;
let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.
For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven
and do not return there but water the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

“For you shall go out in joy
and be led forth in peace;
the mountains and the hills before you
shall break forth into singing,
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.
Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress;
instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle;
and it shall make a name for the LORD,
an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.” (ESV)

R. Reed Lessing writes:

The coming Babylonian exile will put an end to Israel’s idolatrous celebrations. “The mirth of the tambourines is stilled, the noise of the jubilant has ceased, the mirth of the lyre is stilled. No more do they drink wine with singing” (Is 24:8-9 ESV). Yahweh’s judgment will fall in 587 BC and last some seventy years. But after judgment comes joy, and after fasting comes the feast.

The invitation “Hey, all ... Come!” (55:1) goes out to all “peoples” and every “nation,” even those who have never heard of Israel’s God (55:4-5). No money is needed, and no one will be turned away. Yahweh freely provides everything for the festivities (55:1-2). “Come, for everything is now ready” (Luke 14:17 ESV). Our place at the table is made possible

because the Suffering Servant willingly experienced spitting, mocking, whipping, nailing, bleeding, sweating, dying, and rising. In His Supper, Jesus freely gives [the signs and seals of] His body and shed blood for the forgiveness of sins now with the pledge of resurrection on the Last Day. This meal for His bride to celebrate in His remembrance “proclaims the Lord’s death until He comes.” It is a foretaste of the everlasting banquet (Rev. 19:9). Far from being over, the feast has just begun!

Read or sing Hymn 426 How Vast the Benefits Divine

Thursday (11/13) Read and discuss Matthew 11:25-30

At that time Jesus declared, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (ESV)

Jeffrey Gibbs comments:

The way to find rest is to trade the heavy burden of sin and failure for Jesus’ own “yoke.” At first glance, it hardly seems like an offer of rest to take a yoke upon yourself. As Jesus continues to speak, however, He reveals that the essence of taking His yoke upon oneself consists in learning what He is like. For this “yoke” is nothing other than to become a disciple of Jesus, as His own words declare: “learn from Me.” The noun “disciple” and the verb “learn” share a common root and a common meaning; to be Jesus’ disciple is to learn from Him. But learn what? Here the translation of [a little word in 11:29] as “that” rather than “because” becomes important. In order to take the yoke of Jesus and find rest from one’s burdens, what one needs to learn is what Jesus is like: “learn from me *that* I am gentle and humble in heart.” [Note from Pastor Booth: The ESV translates this word “for.” *i.e.*, “for I am gentle and lowly in heart.”] In learning that Jesus gently receives and forgives all who come to him in need, disciples find rest for their lives. All who come to His unparalleled authority and power with only their need in their hands find a Savior. He saves, indeed, because of His own humility of heart that leads Him to the cross and the empty tomb for all. Paradoxically, then, taking on the yoke of who Jesus is, the burden of discipleship becomes light indeed.

Friday (11/14) Read and discuss Hosea 14

Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God,
for you have stumbled because of your iniquity.

Take with you words
and return to the LORD;
say to him,
“Take away all iniquity;
accept what is good,
and we will pay with bulls
the vows of our lips.
Assyria shall not save us;
we will not ride on horses;
and we will say no more, ‘Our God,’
to the work of our hands.
In you the orphan finds mercy.”

I will heal their apostasy;
I will love them freely,
for my anger has turned from them.
I will be like the dew to Israel;
he shall blossom like the lily;
he shall take root like the trees of Lebanon;
his shoots shall spread out;
his beauty shall be like the olive,
and his fragrance like Lebanon.
They shall return and dwell beneath my shadow;
they shall flourish like the grain;
they shall blossom like the vine;
their fame shall be like the wine of Lebanon.

O Ephraim, what have I to do with idols?
It is I who answer and look after you.
I am like an evergreen cypress;
from me comes your fruit.

Whoever is wise, let him understand these things;
whoever is discerning, let him know them;
for the ways of the LORD are right,
and the upright walk in them,
but transgressors stumble in them. (ESV)

G. Herbert Livingston writes:

Hosea is not a critic in this passage; rather, he is a caring pastor urging that his suffering people pray to God for help. In the evangelistic appeals of the prophet, the word *return* is usually the first word uttered. The word means to turn around and go in the opposite direction. The people are walking the wrong way, yet they know how the LORD feels about their sin and what He will do about it. They still have a choice. They can stop, turn around, and come back to God. To do so, they will have to admit that their sins are

causing their downfall. The Hebrew word for “sins” in this instance designates more than the acts of sin. The word also suggests the warped, twisted condition of the inner self.

As they approach the LORD, they have to select the correct words, words that match their repentant attitude. They have to pray for forgiveness and plead for grace. They have to commit themselves to worship only the true God. What they say during worship – prayer, praise, affirmations of faith, testimonies – must be offerings.

The supplicants must renounce national dependence on idol worshipping nations such as Assyria; they must renounce their dependence on war-horses, even to the extent of never mounting them again. The ultimate renunciation must be pagan deities and man-made images. Why must they make this radical renunciation? It is because even the most helpless persons in society, the orphans, find their help in God.

The LORD responds with an announcement of salvation. He will change His people by healing them. This divine act will take care of the sins committed and the condition of sin within. Waywardness is a sin and marks a severance of spiritual relationship with the LORD. The LORD’s work of grace is more than a Band-Aid or injection of an antibiotic. When He heals His people, His cure reaches to the core of the soul and restores spiritual health. The source and the agent of this healing is divine love which has no limits and is given freely. God’s anger is not a permanent aspect of his relationship with those in spiritual need; it is quickly set aside when His people come humbly, earnestly repentant, and plead for mercy.

Divine love is depicted as a dew (v. 5). The emphasis here is not on its quick disappearance when the sun shines on it; rather, the stress is on its ability to gibe life-sustaining moisture during the rainless season of the year. Flowers like the lily respond to this moisture with beautiful blossoms. So will the LORD’s people when they open themselves to His love and let it flood into their beings.

Read or sing Hymn 431 And Can It Be That I Should Gain

Saturday (11/15) Read and discuss Hebrews 13:20–25

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

I appeal to you, brothers, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly. You should know that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom I shall

see you if he comes soon. Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those who come from Italy send you greetings. Grace be with all of you. (ESV)

Tom Wright comments:

The crowning glory of this final passage is the great blessing in verses 20 and 21, which is still used regularly in many churches, especially in the Easter season. The writer has not, up to this point, made much of the actual resurrection of Jesus, though he has assumed it throughout. He has chosen to concentrate more on His sacrificial death on the one hand, and His going on our behalf into the heavenly sanctuary on the other. But both of these only make the sense they do because Jesus was raised from the dead, as the whole New Testament insists on page after page. And here, in drawing together the lines of thought in the letter as a whole, this finally becomes explicit.

God ‘led up’ Jesus, back from the world to the dead, demonstrating that He was indeed ‘the great shepherd of the sheep.’ His blood, shed on the cross, has become the sacrificial blood which inaugurates the new covenant, the ultimate bond between God and His people, the agreement between them which brings in the ‘age to come’ for which Israel had longed. That’s what ‘eternal’ really means: not just ‘going on for ever and ever,’ but ‘in relation to God’s new age,’ in which there will be new tasks, new possibilities, new creative challenges.

Nor do we have to wait for ‘life after death’ for these to begin. God desires to accomplish them, at least in a preliminary way, through His people even in the present. That’s why this blessing goes on to pray that God will ‘put you into proper condition in every good work to do His will’ (verse 21). When someone is getting ready to do a great task, they are trained up and kitted out for it, whether it’s a lawyer getting ready to work in the courtroom, a plumber needing all the tools of the trade or, like my friend, a bishop getting ready. To take on responsibility for part of God’s church. Hebrews is praying that, whatever task each Christian is called to undertake, God will equip him or her fully for it, not only outwardly but also inwardly, so that he or she will ‘perform,’ or accomplish, whatever will be pleasing in His sight.

Here we are at the heart of the mystery of Christian living, Christian leadership, and Christian work for the Kingdom. It is quite clear from the whole letter that to engage in such work requires effort, determination, and patience. The fact that God is at work within us, as individuals and as communities, doesn’t take that away. But, as we prepare for the work, engage in it, and thank God for it when it’s done, we must never forget that it is, ultimately, something that He does, mysteriously, in and through us.

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