

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 12 April 2026

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 96:1-3

Opening Psalm: 48A Great Is the LORD Our God

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: John 1:29

Psalm of Preparation: 99B The LORD God Reigns in Majesty

Old Covenant Reading: Psalm 48 (sermon text)

New Covenant Reading: Hebrews 12:18-29

Sermon Title: *The Glory of Zion*

Hymn of Response: 403 Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken

Confession of Faith: Nicene Creed (p. 852)

Doxology (Hymn 569)

Closing Psalm: 48B The LORD Is Great and Greatly Praised

PM Worship

425 How Sweet and Awesome Is the Place

216 Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

32B How Blest Is He Whose Trespass

Old Covenant Reading: Psalm 32

New Covenant Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:18-21

Sermon Title: *The Righteousness of God*

Adult Sunday School – Cornelius Van Til

Suggested Preparations

Monday (4/6) Read and discuss Psalm 48

Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised
in the city of our God!

His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation,
is the joy of all the earth,

Mount Zion, in the far north,
the city of the great King.
Within her citadels God
has made himself known as a fortress.

For behold, the kings assembled;
they came on together.
As soon as they saw it, they were astounded;
they were in panic; they took to flight.
Trembling took hold of them there,
anguish as of a woman in labor.
By the east wind you shattered
the ships of Tarshish.
As we have heard, so have we seen
in the city of the LORD of hosts,
in the city of our God,
which God will establish forever. Selah

We have thought on your steadfast love, O God,
in the midst of your temple.
As your name, O God,
so your praise reaches to the ends of the earth.
Your right hand is filled with righteousness.
Let Mount Zion be glad!
Let the daughters of Judah rejoice
because of your judgments!

Walk about Zion, go around her,
number her towers,
consider well her ramparts,
go through her citadels,
that you may tell the next generation
that this is God,
our God forever and ever.
He will guide us forever. (ESV)

Tim Keller writes:

When this psalm was written, the city of God was Jerusalem, containing the hill of Zion with the Temple, the place for the atonement of sin. But after Jesus, who was the final temple and sacrifice for sin, the city of God becomes the community of the faithful both in heaven and on earth. The community of God's people is to be "the joy of the whole earth" (verse 2)

– an alternate human society based on love and justice rather than on power and exploitation. The earthly Jerusalem never did draw on power in the nations, but the transformed community of believers in Christ did (Acts 2:41, 4:32-35). Do our churches do that today?

Jesus is the true temple, and when we unite with Him by faith we receive His Spirit and become a living temple in which God dwells. When Christians “count Zion’s towers,” they thank God for the church and joyfully wonder at what they have become in Christ. When they “tell of them to the next generation,” they show inquirers the way of salvation through Jesus. And the LORD is “our guide even to the end” (verse 14). The end of what? There are many endings in life, the greatest one being death. It’s mystery and terror are made bearable by the knowledge that Jesus will be with us, into death and out the other side.

Read or sing Psalm 48A Great Is the LORD Our God

Tuesday (4/7) Read and discuss Luke 24:13–35

That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, “What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?” And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?” And he said to them, “What things?” And they said to him, “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.” And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, but they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.” So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, “Did

not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!” Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread. (ESV)

Tom Wright comments:

Think of the first meal in the Bible. The moment is heavy with significance. ‘The woman took some of the fruit, and ate it; she gave it to her husband, and he ate it; then the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked.’ The tale was told, over and over, as the beginning of the woes that had come upon the human race. Death itself was traced to that moment of rebellion. The whole creation was subjected to decay, futility and sorrow.

Now Luke, echoing that story, describes the first meal of the new creation. ‘He took the bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them; then the eyes of them both were opened, and they recognized Him’ (verse 31). The couple at Emmaus – probably Cleopas and Mary, husband and wife – discover that the long curse has been broken. Death itself has been defeated. God’s new creation, brimming with life and joy and new possibility, has burst in upon the world of decay and sorrow.

Jesus Himself, risen from the dead, is the beginning and the sign of this new world. He isn’t just alive again in the same way that Jairus’s daughter, or the widow’s son at Nain, were. They, poor things, would have to face death again in due course. He has, it seems, gone through death and out the other side into a new world, a world of new and deathless creation, still physical only somehow transformed.

Read or sing Psalm 99B The LORD God Reigns in Majesty

Wednesday (4/8) Read and discuss Hebrews 12:18–29

For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. For they could not endure the order that was given, “If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned.” Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, “I tremble with fear.” But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven. At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire. (ESV)

The LORD has graciously elevated us to a remarkable place:

... you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

How shall we respond to this grace? The response to grace is gratitude. The response to these glorious privileges is worship. But notice what kind of worship? Worship ... with reverence and awe.

Why? Verse 29: "For our God is a consuming fire."

There it is. We are back to the fire. The same fire that burned at Sinai burns at Zion. God hasn't changed. His holiness hasn't diminished. The difference is not in God. The difference is in us. We have been made holy in Jesus Christ. We have been cleansed by His blood. We have been clothed in His righteousness. We can now approach the consuming fire not because the fire is less hot, but because of the astonishing grace that our heavenly Father has showered upon us in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Yet, here is a message that the Church in America desperately needs to hear: The grace of God is not intended produce presumption. We must never respond to grace by treating the Holy God as though He is just like some guy down the street. The Fear of the LORD is not only the beginning of wisdom it is the **end of wisdom** as well.

Read or sing Hymn 403 Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken

Thursday (4/9) Read and discuss Psalm 32

Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.

Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.
For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah

I acknowledged my sin to you,
and I did not cover my iniquity;
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,"
and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah

Therefore let everyone who is godly
offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found;
surely in the rush of great waters,
they shall not reach him.
You are a hiding place for me;
you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with shouts of deliverance. Selah

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.
Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding,
which must be curbed with bit and bridle,
or it will not stay near you.

Many are the sorrows of the wicked,
but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD.
Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous,
and shout for joy, all you upright in heart! (ESV)

Alec Motyer writes:

Psalm 32 achieves no mean feat by alerting us – dramatically – to the seriousness of sin. Even though it is, in fact, the least aspect of the problem of sin, the psalm underlines the personal pity of it all. Sin burdens, diminishes and blights the life of the sinner. It may not be felt but in fact it is like carrying around a sack of sand. Proverbs 7:23 says sexual promiscuity is the equivalent of being shot in the liver by an arrow! Paul (1 Corinthians 6:18) teaches that the adulterer sins against his own body! Not, we might say, the common view, but exactly what Psalm 32 implies about David's 'roaring.' Then at a deeper level is the alienation and hostility of God, whose hand goes out heavily against the sinner. We need to take this on board. David is writing as a believer and of a believer's sins. The hurt done to our

holy God alienates him, grieves his Holy Spirit, and leaves us diminished – vitality turned to aridity. ‘Flee childish lusts’ counsels Paul (2 Timothy 2:22); ‘follow righteousness.’ What a relief, then, to note the miracle (no less) of repentance (verse 5). The sheer simplicity of it! ‘I let you know ... you forgave.’ Yes, even though he alone knows ‘the iniquity of my sin’ – ‘my sin in iniquity!’ See the same thought in Psalm 51:1-3 – and the very incident recorded in 2 Samuel 12:13. This simplicity of dealing with sin by repentance is made possible through substitution. The principle of one standing in the place of another goes back at least as far as Abraham: recall how, without instruction, he knew he could kill the ram ‘in the place of his son’ (Genesis 22:13). The same principle pervades the Levitical sacrifices – everywhere we read of the sinner laying his hand on the sacrifice. He is enacting on a personal level what the High Priest did nationally in Leviticus 16:21-22: transferring sin in all its penalties to another, appointing a substitute. Isaiah foresaw that ultimately only a Person could be a true substitute for person, foreshadowing Jesus, when ...

In my place, condemned He stood;
Sealed my pardon in His blood.

In this way (Psalm 32:1), sin is ‘covered’ – not by being hidden out of sight but as a debt is ‘covered’ by the price which pays for it. Wonder of all wonders, my sin is no longer put to my account, but is ‘imputed’ (Psalm 32:2) to Another.

Friday (4/10) Read and discuss 2 Corinthians 5:18–21

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (ESV)

David Garland writes:

God provided Jesus to stand in for sinful humanity. Even though Jesus was sinless, God deals with Him as though He were a sinner by letting Him die an accursed death. In the Jewish cult the animal offered up to atone for sins “had to be holy, without defect, precisely so that both priest and offerer could be confident that the death it died *was not its own*.” The result of this transaction is that “we might become the righteousness from God.” We do not simply have righteousness from God, we are the righteousness of God because of being in Christ. We are giving His righteousness only as we are

in Him, and we will be raised like Him only if we live in Him. “Being in Him” may refer to being transferred by God out of the realm of sin and death that brings condemnation into the realm of Christ that brings righteousness. It may also refer to Christ as the instrument through whom believers become the righteousness of God. Campbell argues that “the internal logic” of the passage indicates that the righteousness of God comes by virtue of being in “union with Christ.” On the cross, the sinless one, Christ, became a sin offering and under a curse and thereby aligned Himself with human sinners. God confers His righteousness on believers who are united to Christ through their faith. Harris explains, “As a result of God imputing to Christ something that was extrinsic to Him, namely sin, believers have something imputed to them that was extrinsic to them, namely righteousness.”

Read or sing Psalm 48B The LORD Is Great and Greatly Praised

Saturday (4/11) Read and discuss Psalm 48

Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised
in the city of our God!
His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation,
is the joy of all the earth,
Mount Zion, in the far north,
the city of the great King.
Within her citadels God
has made himself known as a fortress.

For behold, the kings assembled;
they came on together.
As soon as they saw it, they were astounded;
they were in panic; they took to flight.
Trembling took hold of them there,
anguish as of a woman in labor.
By the east wind you shattered
the ships of Tarshish.
As we have heard, so have we seen
in the city of the LORD of hosts,
in the city of our God,
which God will establish forever. Selah

We have thought on your steadfast love, O God,
in the midst of your temple.
As your name, O God,

so your praise reaches to the ends of the earth.
Your right hand is filled with righteousness.

Let Mount Zion be glad!
Let the daughters of Judah rejoice
because of your judgments!

Walk about Zion, go around her,
number her towers,
consider well her ramparts,
go through her citadels,
that you may tell the next generation
that this is God,
our God forever and ever.
He will guide us forever. (ESV)

Allen P. Ross writes:

This is a song of celebration; it proclaims the glorious news that God's presence is among His people. He is also to be praised for His mighty works, defeating His enemies, defending His sanctuary, and guiding His people by His faithful love and righteousness. The psalm focused on Zion, the place where God made His presence known to Israel. But God's presence is always powerful and beneficial to His faithful people. And this provides reason enough for them to offer Him praise. We may word the central theme of this psalm this way: *The LORD is worthy of all praise and honor because, having defeated His enemies, he preserves His presence with His people and guides them throughout life by His faithful love and righteousness.* I have worded the point so that it fits the focus of the LORD's presence in Zion presented in this psalm, but also fits the eschatological application of the psalm in the New Testament.

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