

My Prayer Journal

Use this weekly prayer to help you begin your time with God each day.

Prayer of Confession: O God, For remaining silent when a single voice would have made a difference, For each time that our fears have made us rigid and inaccessible, For the times we have lied to ourselves and to others, For moments when our desire to control has strangled our ability to love, For making choices that contribute to the exploitation of our earth and millions of its people, For losing sight of our unity, For these and so many words and deeds, both evident and subtle, which have fueled the illusion of separateness, We seek Your forgiveness as we seek to be reunited with Your love...

My Prayers this Week:

Family Time:

Try to think of a time when you did something wrong, and you got in big trouble with your parents. Maybe you even knew you deserved to get in big trouble. How did it make you feel toward your parents when you were in trouble? Did you feel different from when everyone was happy and giving each other big hugs? Now try to imagine what it would be like if someone else volunteered to get in trouble *instead* of you, so you could just stay in that happy, huggy feeling all the time. Would you be thankful? How would you show that person how thankful you were? This is a lot like what Jesus has done for us! So that we can always be in a happy relationship with God, Jesus volunteered to “get in trouble” instead of us, even though He didn’t do anything Himself to be in trouble for! How might you thank Jesus for doing that for you?

MONDAY 4.4.22

Leviticus 16:1-34

One of Christianity’s most basic beliefs is that Jesus’ death on the cross provided *atonement* for the sins of humanity. But the concept of atonement is not one that is easy to relate to in a 21st century world. To really understand what this Christian belief is really claiming, we need to begin by stepping back into the ancient world, to try to grasp the meaning of the Old Testament sacrificial system, as laid out in today’s reading from Leviticus. The Hebrew word translated “atonement” is *kippur*, which literally meant, as a verb, “to cover over,” or as a noun, a “lid” or a “cover.” The verb came to be used to mean “to appease,” or “to provide reconciliation” ... that is, “to atone.” This equates to our idea of “forgiveness” in many ways—God provided a way to “cover over” sin, so that it was no longer visible. But why did this system require the blood of a sacrificial animal? Why can’t God “just forgive”? The answer is that God’s justice will not allow it. If another of God’s children is harmed by our sin, that person deserves justice. To forgive without consequence offends God’s just nature. The Old Testament sacrificial system of atonement provided a way for God to be both merciful and just.

- Who *ought* to suffer the consequences of your sin?

TUESDAY 4.5.22

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

The basic idea behind the Old Testament sacrificial system was that in God’s mercy, He allowed a substitute to suffer the consequences of human sin that God’s justice demanded. When a sacrificial animal was brought to the Temple to make atonement for sin, the one who had sinned would lay hands on the head of the animal and, if they were sincere in their offering, pray a prayer over the animal that essentially said, “This should be me,” before the animal was killed. They understood, deeply, God’s mercy in allowing them to live while an animal paid the price. In today’s prophecy from Isaiah, Isaiah makes the astounding statement that God would one day send a servant who would take the consequences of *all* human sin upon Himself. He would be “pierced for our transgressions,” and “by His wounds, we are healed.” Isaiah says that God has “laid on Him the iniquity of us all,” with the ultimate result that “He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.” Early Christians clearly saw in this prophecy of a “suffering servant” their Lord, Jesus Christ—and it formed a foundation for the Christian understanding of the atonement that had been accomplished at Calvary.

- What parallels do you see between Isaiah’s suffering servant and the sacrificial animals of Leviticus?

WEDNESDAY 4.6.22

John 1:29-42

In today’s reading, we see that upon first seeing Jesus, John the Baptist declared, “Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” Clearly, the reference was to the sacrificial lambs who were brought to the Temple daily to atone for (take away) the sins of the people, in keeping with the Levitical law. Did John the Baptist already recognize that Jesus was Isaiah’s Suffering Servant, “led like a lamb to the slaughter”? As a genuine prophet of God Himself, John the Baptist may well have had this direct insight from God. God had told John that the one He saw the Holy Spirit come down upon from heaven would be the one who would baptize with the Holy Spirit—and this was exactly what John saw happen when he baptized Jesus. And John wasted no time testifying to others about Jesus’ identity—telling two of his disciples the next day that Jesus was “the Lamb of God.” It was an astonishing statement to make—John did not say “Look, the long-awaited Messiah!”, or “Look, a great rabbi to follow.” He said, “Look, the Lamb of God.” From the very beginning, John the Baptist recognized Jesus as someone who would die sacrificially as atonement for—to cover over—the sin of the world.

- Do *you* believe that Jesus was “the Lamb of God”?

THURSDAY 4.7.22

Romans 3:1-26

In Romans, Paul makes the extended argument that the only reason the Old Testament sacrificial system was effective in atoning for sin was because the people had *faith* that it did. God had told them, “Here is how you can make atonement for sin—through shedding the blood of sacrificial animals”, and they believed God, receiving forgiveness through faith that the system established by God really worked. Now, Paul argues, God has acted definitively, for all time, in Jesus Christ. “God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in His Blood.” In other words, just as the people had faith that the blood of the sacrificial animals provided atonement, faith in the Blood of Jesus accomplishes the very same atonement, once and for all. While God’s justice had been offended by the many sins of humanity for which atonement had never been made, now God’s demand for justice was fully satisfied. On the cross, Jesus bore the consequence of all human sin, and if, in faith, we believe that this is so, it becomes effective for us personally. It is the same system God had used from the beginning, but now, atonement by faith in the blood of the sacrifice is available to everyone, for every sin.

- Have *you* accepted, by faith, the atoning value of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross?

FRIDAY 4.8.22

Hebrews 2:10-18; 4:14-5:5

The letter to the Hebrews is probably the best elaboration on the meaning of Jesus Christ’s sacrifice of atonement that can be read. The Scripture lesson from Sunday describes the superior effectiveness of Jesus’ sacrifice of atonement as compared to the Old Testament’s system. But in today’s reading, rather than emphasizing Jesus’ role as the sacrifice itself, the writer of Hebrews emphasizes Jesus’ role as the high priest who offers the sacrifice of atonement. Going back to Monday’s reading from Leviticus, it was the High Priest who, once per year, on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), would enter into the Holy of Holies to offer the sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the community. A human priest, representing the Israelite community, would enter into God’s presence to make atonement. Who, then, enters into the Holy of Holies to offer the sacrifice of Jesus to God? The writer of Hebrews argues that in His Ascension into heaven, Jesus Himself fulfills this role of the High Priest, entering not into the Holy of Holies in the Temple—a mere physical representation of the presence of God—but into the actual presence of God in heaven. Jesus is both the sacrifice of atonement, and the priest—our human representative—who enters into God’s presence to offer it.

- Do you view Jesus in this priestly role? Why or why not?

SATURDAY 4.9.22

1 John 1:5-2:2

Although the book of Hebrews provides the most elaborate statement of the theology of atonement, the apostle John, in the letter we know as the book of First John, provides one of the most succinct statements about it in all of Scripture. In 1 John 2:2, John states, “He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but for the sins of the whole world.” John’s original audience would have understood the words immediately. On the cross, and through His Resurrection, Jesus overcame every obstacle separating humanity from God. Satan, who fights to keep us from God, was overcome. Death, the destroyer of our lives, was defeated. God’s demand for justice was satisfied. Our inability to fully repent or to fully love others was accomplished for all humanity by Jesus on our behalf. Our sin, itself, was wiped away, removed, by the Blood of Jesus, allowing us to enter into the presence of God as pure, unblemished, human beings. John calls us, in response to all this depth of meaning in the concept of atonement, to walk in the Light of Christ, avoiding sin at all costs, but knowing that when we fail, “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” John calls for us to love, then, as Jesus loved.

- Are you walking in darkness, or in light? How?



Daily Study Guide

April 3-9, 2022

Sermon Series: Christian Basics—Who is Jesus?

Week Three: “Atonement” - Rev. J. David Israel

Scripture for Sunday, April 3: Hebrews 9:11-15 (CEB)

“But Christ has appeared as the high priest of the good things that have happened. He passed through the greater and more perfect meeting tent, which isn’t made by human hands (that is, it’s not a part of this world.) He entered the holy of holies once for all by His own Blood, not by the blood of goats or calves, securing our deliverance for all time. If the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkled ashes of cows made spiritually contaminated people holy and clean, how much more will the Blood of Jesus wash our consciences clean from dead works in order to serve the living God? He offered Himself to God through the eternal Spirit as a sacrifice without any flaw. This is why He’s the mediator of a new covenant (which is a will): so that those who are called might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance on the basis of His death. His death occurred to set them free from the offenses committed under the first covenant.”

Things that really impacted me from today’s sermon:

Prayer Requests

- Mark Grossenheider
- Natalie Grossenheider
- Judy Hoffman
- Krista King
- Sandra Lewis
- Sophia Miller
- David Mitchell
- Mitch Mitchell
- Charlotte Ottley
- Jerry Primm
- Bill Reichter
- Art Schnatterly
- Nini Schneider
- Tim Schwegel
- Rebecca Ware-Mitchell
- Coleman Family
- Ellis Family
- Fowler Family
- Jones Family
- Thibault Family

Please lift up the people of Ukraine during this devastating time in their country. May God wrap them in protection and provide wisdom for their leaders. May the Holy Spirit help us, and the world, find ways to support our brothers and sisters that are suffering, misplaced, fearful, and grieving. #

Share prayer requests online at livingwordumc.org