

My Prayer Journal

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

Prayer of Confession: O God, we confess the blindness that is not even aware of sinning; the pride that dares not admit that it is wrong; the selfishness that can see nothing but its own will; the righteousness that knows no fault; the callousness that has ceased to care; the defiance that does not regret its own sins; the evasion that always tries to make excuses; the coldness of heart that is too hardened to repent. God, we are aware that all of these sins are the reason we are in need of a savior, for we cannot save ourselves.

My Prayers this Week:

Family Time:

Have you ever broken something that belonged to someone else, or lost something really valuable that wasn't yours? What do you think the right thing to do would be if that happened? Most people would say you should pay the person who owned the thing you broke or lost whatever amount it would take to replace it. That way, you take the responsibility of replacing what was lost instead of the person whose thing you lost having to pay for it, because, after all, it was your fault. Part of what the Bible teaches us is that the whole world is broken and lost ... and that it is every single human being's fault. The world belongs to God, so we really need to take responsibility for breaking it, but the cost is so high for all that is wrong that we could never really pay for it. Jesus, though, said that his death on the cross would cover all of that cost for us—and God agreed! In return, God helps us to try never to break it again!

MONDAY 5.8.23

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

For the past two weeks, as we continue to “Reframe our Worldview,” we have looked at the questions “Where Did We Come From?” and “How Did the World Get So Messed Up?” This week, we will delve into the question “What’s the Solution?” In the Christian worldview, the short and sweet answer is “Jesus.” But why is Jesus the answer? Through a Christian lens, the entire Old Testament points towards God’s work of turning things around in Jesus, but today’s reading from the prophet Isaiah brings that expectation to a rather startling climax. Through Isaiah, God proclaims that, astonishingly, the sins that have alienated humanity from God, each other, nature, and themselves can be, and will be, atoned for through the suffering of a perfectly obedient servant of God. This servant will be pierced and punished, yet “by His wounds we are healed.” His life will be a “guilt offering,” but will “justify (make right with God) many.” He will “bear the sin of many,” because “the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” In the aftermath of Jesus’ horrific crucifixion and glorious resurrection, the earliest Christ-followers, who were all of Jewish ethnicity and knew Isaiah’s words intimately, saw in them the fulfillment of God’s promise to cure the world of the sin problem.

- What worldviews does a suffering servant conflict with?

TUESDAY 5.9.23

Zechariah 12:10-13:9

Isaiah was not the only prophet who spoke about a coming day when God would cleanse sin from the world, and remove all the world’s impurity. Many prophets referred to that time as a “coming Day of the LORD,” and often used the phrase “on that day” as a way to refer to it. In today’s reading from Zechariah—one of the latest prophetic books of the Old Testament—God says that in that day He would “pour out a spirit of grace and supplication.” But God, speaking through the prophet, also refers to Himself as “the one they have pierced,” and that the day of His death would be a time of widespread mourning. And yet, somehow, that death would cause a fountain to be opened up; a fountain whose waters would “cleanse them from sin and impurity.” Although the “shepherd” God would send to His people would be struck down, and many of the shepherd’s “sheep” would be scattered, a remnant of them would turn to God to fulfill God’s desire to have a covenant people who truly belong to Him: “I will say, ‘They are my people,’ and they will say, ‘The LORD is our God.’” Reconciliation with God, the overcoming of sin, impurity, and alienation will have been accomplished through the pierced shepherd.

- What might the “fountain that cleanses from sin” refer to?

WEDNESDAY 5.10.23

Acts 2:22-41

Take a moment to consider ... what we read today is Luke’s rendition of what was reported to him as the earliest Christian salvation sermon ever preached. After the disciples had received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Peter—perhaps Jesus’ closest friend among the disciples, and yet the one who denied him publicly—stood up among the very people who had conspired to put Jesus to death, and boldly proclaimed that Jesus had been resurrected to life, exalted to the right hand of God, and that He had now poured out the Holy Spirit upon His followers. Peter invited his hearers to repent of sin and be baptized in Jesus’ name so that they too could receive the Holy Spirit and experience forgiveness of sin. Peter makes explicit that this invitation would stand in perpetuity, generation after generation, and that this invitation is the means of being saved “from this corrupt generation.” Such a sermon, to such an audience, could only have come through the power of the Holy Spirit ... and never through the self-will of an embarrassed and ashamed Jewish fisherman like Peter. Through the Holy Spirit, Peter realized that the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus had universal implications for God’s salvation of all creation. This sermon, Acts reports, brought 3,000 souls to Jesus!

- To what do you attribute the amazing response to Peter?

THURSDAY 5.11.23

Romans 3:21-31

Nearly as succinctly as is possible, in these verses from Paul’s letter to the church in Rome, Paul makes the theological case for how God is accomplishing the salvation of the world through Jesus Christ. Everyone—EVERYONE—has sinned and has fallen short of the glory God intends for them. And yet, Jesus has redeemed them and justified them (declared them “not guilty” of sin) as a free act of grace on the part of God. But God would not be a “just” God if God simply let us escape from the reality that sin has consequences with a “wave of the hand” forgiveness. No, for justice to be served, someone must “make it right,” making restitution for the wrong. Without explicitly referring to Isaiah’s suffering servant passage from Monday, Paul says that Jesus has stepped up to fill this role. He offered Himself as the sacrifice that makes complete restitution (atonement) for every sin ever done by any human being. For that restitution to be effective, though, the sinner must take it on faith that Jesus has actually done this for them. For “those who have faith in Jesus,” then, justice has been served; the guilty are ruled not guilty; and they experience the glory of being declared righteous in God’s sight. The just demands of law have been met, by one who suffered on our behalf.

- Why might “the world” take issue with Paul’s argument?

FRIDAY 5.12.23

Ephesians 1:3-14

Paul was perhaps even more explicit about the universal redemption of our fallen world that is accomplished through Jesus in his letter to the church in Ephesus than He was in His letter to the church in Rome! Verse 10 of today's reading puts God's purpose in Jesus this way: "to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ." In Jesus, all of creation is being reunited under His example and leadership. Narrowing the cosmological perspective on that down to what it means for human beings, Paul uses language of holiness, blamelessness, redemption, forgiveness, salvation, and adoption as children of God. Furthermore, this has been God's plan from the very beginning! God's solution to the problem of a fallen world—Jesus Christ—has been "predestined" from before the creation of the world. Paul writes that "when the times will have reached their fulfillment," God's plan will reach its culmination ... but in the meantime, those who believe in Christ can know that they are God's possession, the mark of which is the active presence of the Holy Spirit in their everyday lives. No longer slaves to sin, we are empowered to live as children of God and become everything God wills for us to become!

- Does your life reflect your adoption as God's child?

SATURDAY 5.13.23

Hebrews 9:11-28

The entire letter to the Hebrews addresses the way in which Jesus serves as God's ultimate solution to the problem of a fallen world. The writer expects the reader to be intimately familiar with the theology of the Old Testament, continually contrasting the enormous benefits of God's New Covenant in Jesus Christ over those of the Old Covenant, which is understood as a "shadow," or precursor, to the greater things God had planned from the beginning to accomplish through Jesus Christ. The entire letter, therefore, is worth a close read, but for today, we read specifically about how the blood of Christ accomplishes forgiveness of sin. We need to know that under the Old Testament, God had allowed an animal to be sacrificed as a graphic portrayal of the cost of sin. Sin leads to death ... but God allowed an animal's life-blood to pay that cost rather than demanding the life-blood of the sinner. As the writer says, "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." Although God said this system would be effective when it was done in faith, it was imperfect. Christ, on the other hand, was a perfect sacrifice, who takes away the sin of all who believe in faith that His blood satisfies the cost of our sin. He chose to exchange His life for ours.

- Has the blood of Christ cleansed your conscience (v. 14)?



Daily Study Guide

May 7-13, 2023

Sermon Series: Reframing Your Worldview

Week Four: "What's the Solution?" - Rev. J. David Israel

Scripture for Sunday, May 7: 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 (CEB)

"So then, from this point on we won't recognize people by human standards. Even though we used to know Christ by human standards, that isn't how we know Him now. So then, if anyone is in Christ, that person is part of the new creation. The old things have gone away, and look, new things have arrived! All of these new things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and who gave us the ministry of reconciliation. In other words, God was reconciling the world to Himself through Christ, by not counting people's sins against them. He has trusted us with this message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors who represent Christ. God is negotiating with you through us. We beg you as Christ's representatives, "Be reconciled to God!" God caused the one who didn't know sin to be sin for our sake so that through Him we could become the righteousness of God.

Things that really impacted me from today's sermon:

Prayer Requests

- Mitch Mitchell
- Bill Reichter
- Nini Schneider
- Jane Leimkuehler
- Bev Hampton

Mitchell family on the passing of
Drew Mitchell

**Share prayer requests online
at livingwordumc.org**