



LIVING STONE

REFORMED CHURCH

ORDER OF SERVICE

May 3, 2026

NEXT WEEK: MAY 10, 2026

LIVING STONE REFORMED CHURCH | 9:30 AM

NSA NORTH CAMPUS (112 N. MAIN ST) | BEN ZORNES

CHRIST CHURCH | 8:00, 9:30, 10:00, 11:00 AM

8:00, 9:30, 11:00 | CHURCH HALL (820 DOMINION WAY) | DOUGLAS WILSON

10:00 | CHRIST CHURCH DOWNTOWN (417 S JACKSON ST) | BEN MERKLE

KING'S CROSS CHURCH | 8:00 & 9:30 AM

8:00 | NUART THEATER (516 S. MAIN ST) | TOBY SUMPTER

9:30 | LOGOS FIELDHOUSE (1221 W. A ST) | TOBY SUMPTER

CHRIST THE REDEEMER CHURCH | 9:00 AM

509 S. MAIN ST, TROY

SCRIPTURE READINGS

GENESIS 39:7-21, 1 CORINTHIANS 6:15-20

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ORDER OF SERVICE

ANNOUNCEMENTS & MEDITATION

- CALL TO WORSHIP -

Please stand.

ADORATION

Minister: The Lord is risen!

Congregation: He is risen, indeed!

SCRIPTURE

Deuteronomy 33:29

Minister: Lift up your hearts!

Congregation: We lift them up to the Lord!

PRAYER

HYMN

All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name.....336

- CONFESSION -

Please sit.

EXHORTATION.....*Jeremiah Jasso*

PSALM

The God of Abraham Praise.....409 (vv. 1-4)

CONFESSION OF SIN

Congregation is invited to kneel if able.

1 John 4:20

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Please stand.

Galatians 4:28-30

Minister: Your sins are forgiven through Christ.

Congregation: Thanks be to God!

CONFESSION OF FAITH

The Apostles Creed.....712

Minister: Christian, what do you believe?

Congregation: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the virgin, Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into Hades. On the third day He rose again from the dead, ascended into Heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

RESPONSIVE READING: PSALM 75

Minister: Unto You, O God, we give thanks,

Congregation: Unto You we give thanks.

Minister: Your name is near,

Congregation: Your wondrous works declare.

Minister: God is the judge:

Congregation: He puts down one, and sets up another.

Minister: All the horns of the wicked I will cut off;

Congregation: But the horns of the righteous shall be exalted. Amen.

HYMN

The Lord Jehovah Reigns.....171

- CONSECRATION -

SCRIPTURE READING

(Bryan Kuranaga)

Genesis 15:1-6, 1 Peter 1:3-9

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God!

BAPTISM

Hazel Esther June Butcher

“Little child, for you Jesus Christ came to this earth, struggled and suffered; for your sake He crossed Gethsemane and went through the darkness of Calvary; for your sake He cried: ‘It is finished’; for your sake He died and for your sake He overcame death; indeed for your sake, little child, and you still knew nothing of it. And thus the word of the apostle is confirmed: ‘We love God, for He loved us first.’”

HYMN

Please sit.

All Peoples, Clap Your Hands for Joy.....93

CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER

(Bryan Kuranaga)

Opening: Psalm 147:2-4

Thanksgiving: Deuteronomy 1:11

Petitions: Psalm 84:11

HYMN

Please stand.

Praise Ye the Lord.....Bulletin

SERMON

Please sit.

A Tightrope.....Ben Zornes

PRAYER

Ending with *The Lord’s Prayer.....725*

OFFERTORY

Please stand

The God of Abraham Praise.....409 (vv. 5-8)

- COMMUNION -

Please sit.

MEDITATION.....*Jeremiah Jasso*

THE BREAD

From Heaven, O Praise the Lord.....294

THE WINE

The God of Abraham Praise.....409 (vv. 9-12)

- COMMISSIONING -

Please stand.

CLOSING DOXOLOGY

The congregation may raise hands.

All Glory to the Father Be.....536

CHARGE & BENEDICTION

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.

Numbers 6:24-26

“MAY I COME TO THE LORD’S TABLE?”

The Lord’s Supper is observed every Lord’s Day at Living Stone. We warmly invite to the Lord’s table all those who are baptized disciples of Jesus Christ, under the authority of Christ and His body, the Church. Since the elders are responsible for the table, when a baptized child begins taking the Lord’s Supper, we ask a parent to notify one of the elders. By eating the bread and drinking the wine with us as a visitor, you are acknowledging that you are a sinner, without hope except in the sovereign mercy of God, and that you are trusting in Jesus Christ alone for salvation. You also acknowledge to the elders of this congregation that you are in covenant with God, being active in a congregation which is covenantally bound to the triune God through Word and sacrament. If you have any doubt about your participation, please speak to the elders before or after the service.

A TIGHTROPE / NEHEMIAH 9

INTRODUCTION

A tightrope routine only works if the line is securely fastened between two poles which stand opposite each other. The Christian life has many such tensions. One in particular is brought into view by this text. On one side we have the joy of God's gracious forgiveness of all our sins, on the other we have the godly sorrow which our sin should bring about. If you detach from one pole you end up with glib antinomianism. If you detach from the other you end up as a paranoid legalist. The options seem to be Joel Osteen or Amish. The Christian life needs the line between these two truths to be taut.

THE TEXT

Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them. And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers. And they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the LORD their God one fourth part of the day; and another fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the LORD their God. [...]
Nehemiah 9:1ff

SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

After the observance of the Feast of Booths (Tishri 15-22, Cf. Neh. 8:15-17), the people assemble once more for a day of fasting (v1, Tishri 24). This was to be a solemn day of getting right with God.

A group of eight Levites (vv4-5a) offer a prayer of repentance (vv5b-37). There is a striking counterpoint in this prayer between "they" and "thou" (especially in v26 & v31). This prayer traces the history of God's kindness as seen in His covenant making. It begins with creation and then continues through three principle covenantal high points: Abram, Moses, then the prophets (vv6-15). God's covenant faithfulness is set in contrast with Israel's many abuses of that kindness (vv16-29). God demonstrated staggering forbearance towards Israel (vv30-31).

The prayer then turns to petition God to remember them in their current affliction. This spirit of contrition before God is wonderfully summed up in verse 33, "Howbeit thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly." Though they don't deserve it, they ask God to, once more, deliver them (vv32-37). This deliverance is requested in order that the people might serve God (v36). The fruit of the land has enriched the pagan kings and rulers which God has set over them as their judgement, but this arrangement is a great distress (v37). The people renew covenant with God, sealed by the princes, Levites, and priests, the terms of the covenant are found in the next chapter (v38).

A TIME TO WEEP

The joyful feasting in the last chapter, and the mournful fasting in this appear to be at odds. The people were cut to the heart and wept, and Nehemiah told them to dry their tears and have a party. But now, after the week of the celebratory Feast of Booths, we have a day set aside for mourning and confession of sin. So, which is it? Notice how Nehemiah and Ezra lead the people to lead their emotions. After nearly two weeks of feasting, one day is set aside for sorrow. This day of confession was quite needful, but the train of emotions were set on the rails of God's Word.

During the hardscrabble days of America expanding her frontiers, revival meetings became a feature of the religious life of our country. That has been with us ever since. Those camp meetings often focussed on exciting a crowd to emotional response. This response became a proof of a Spirit-born revival. The furniture of the church was no longer just a font, a table, and a pulpit, there was an anxious bench added to the sacred furniture. The anxious bench famously became the spot where folks were invited, nay cajoled, by all means of dramatic flourishes from revival preachers to "close with God" or else fall into eternal damnation.

This approach is quite out of step with the example we see here (and elsewhere) in scripture. We re-

ally do need to sorrow over our own sins and those of our fathers. But we need to recognize that one of those sins, particularly for Americans, is feral emotionalism. Ezra's example is quite the antidote to the aforementioned feral emotionalism. He gives the eight Levites a well-prepared prayer to lead their respective groups through. This prayer formed rails to keep the steam engine of the people's emotions moving to an appropriate end. Godly sorrow leads to repentance. Worldly sorrow no matter how loudly it might flail and wail, does not lead to true reformation. There is a strong cord here that holds this prayer of sorrowful repentance together with the joyful feasting.

COVENANT RENEWAL

So, consider what stands between both those two polls. It is the covenant making of God. Jehovah's covenant faithfulness runs like a vein of gold through this prayer. This solemn day was done at the culmination of the Feast of Booths (Cf. Ezra 3:4) which was a feast that not only anticipated Christ's incarnation, but what the incarnation would bring about: the outpouring of the Spirit. The custom was for all the worshippers to go with their torches to obtain fire from the altar in order to illuminate their own tabernacles. The Spirit comforts you with the assurance of God's grace to you, and the Spirit convicts you of your sin bringing about godly sorrow. These things are held together by the objectivity of the covenant. God's covenant is gracious and full of tender-mercy. Christ drank up the cup of wrath. This being the case, in the words of Paul, should we sin so that grace may abound?

This is an opportune moment to comment on what we mean when we describe our worship service as a Covenant Renewal service. Our service to God in our corporate worship is founded on the gracious covenant that God has made with us through Christ. This covenant holds out two things to you: God is more merciful to you than you could ever imagine, and thus sin must not find any footing within your life and must be confessed.

Why do we set aside a time each week to confess our sins? It isn't to store up your sins and only confess them when the pastor invites you to kneel. Rather, we should think of it as a time for God to uncover anything we have either been overlooking or deliberately hiding. This should be a daily habit, and our confession in our service serves as the headwaters of that river of quick confession of our sins. Habit does not mean unspiritual. When done in faith, it really serves to guard us from being manhandled by our fickle emotions.

Thus, covenant renewal becomes for us the steady support for our joy in God's forgiveness on one side, and our honest sorrow over our sin. This keeps us steady, for as the Word says elsewhere, "Let God be true, and every man a liar."

REMINDING GOD

God always deals with His people via covenant. He has solemnly bound Himself to us and there are accompanying blessings and curses. The prayer found here relies on the covenant blessings and curses outlined in Leviticus 26. Ezra's prayer here reminds God of His covenant promises, and pleads with Him to make good on those promises, although the people had sinned against Him repeatedly.

Each Lord's Day we are seized by God's summoning Word. We are cut with the knife of the Spirit's convicting use of the Word. We are cleansed by the clean water of the Word preached. We are brought to a feast table to commune with the God who made us His. We are commissioned anew to take dominion of this earth, subduing it to the reign of Christ. This really is the high point which orders our entire life. Here our joy in God's tender-mercies towards us, and our sorrow over how we have not been faithful to honor Him rightly are held steadfast in perfect tension by His covenant Word to us.

That Word is summed up in the words from this prayer: thou art a gracious and merciful God. Because He has bound Himself to you in Christ you can rejoice and be exceedingly glad. Because He dwells in You by His Spirit, you can rightly mourn over your sins. Because of this covenant you can serve Him rightly by walking daily in this solemn joy of this covenant of grace.