Prayer
Scripture: Romans 8:28-30
Hymn: 332 "All People that on Earth Do Dwell" with Doxology (verse 4 of 333)

CALVIN'S WITHDRAWAL FROM FRANCE: On May 4, 1534 John Calvin resigned his benefits at Noyon. Two days later on May 6 the chapter started judicial proceedings against his brother, Charles, that resulted in Charles being excommunicated. John was imprisoned for a short time in Noyon; he was released, only to be imprisoned again. In September 1534 he was still in Noyon; he wrote Bucer of Strasbourg a letter from Noyon recommending a brother suspected of "Anabaptism" which suggests there was a secret evangelical community in Noyon. Calvin made a dangerous visit to Paris where he visited with la Forge and in whose home he was privately contacted by a number of people emerging into a French Protestantism or the first Calvinists. It was a miscellaneous group that included nobles, professors, students, a lawyer, a paralyzed shoemaker, an upholster, a military officer, a mason, and even persons of Libertine, Anabaptist, and Anti-Trinitarian tendencies. Michael Servetus, a brilliant young Spaniard, who wanted to reform both Catholicism and the Reformation, after being rejected by Melanchthon and Bucer, left Germany, and turned to France, hoping for a hearing. He arranged a meeting with Calvin, but failed to show up for the appointment. Rumors spread that Calvin was in the city and la Forge urged him to leave before it was too late.

In Poitiers eager disciples flocked to Calvin for teaching and in a private service he denounced the mass and held a simple Lord's Supper that has been called the first Calvinistic service. It was increasingly dangerous for Calvin to stay in any one place very long.

In Orleans he completed the Psychopannychia (The Watch of Souls) against Anabaptists who were disturbing the people with the doctrine that the soul sleeps from death until the resurrection. Though he completed the work and dated the preface in 1534, the work was not published until 1542. Calvin said he wrote this work because for a long time the people had been urging him to do something to check the madness of the Anabaptists. Disturbing rumors of the revolution at Münster were spreading.

About this time in 1534 Calvin prepared two prefaces for the translation of the Bible into French for the Waldenses made by his cousin, Olivétan. He prepared a preface for the Old Testament and one for the New Testament, praising the diligent scholarship of the translator and calling for a Biblical faith. Olivétan's Bible was published in Neuchatel in June, 1535.

When Calvin returned to the home of du Tillet in Angoulême, du Tillet urged that they must flee from France at once. A storm had broken in Paris. On the night of October 13, 1534, placards violently attacking the mass were put up on many doors, posted on walls and other prominent places, and one was even put on the door of the king's room at the Chateau d'Amboise. The author of the placards was Antoine Marcourt, a native of Lyons and pastor at Neuchatel. They had been printed on the press of Pierre de Wingle at Sarrières. They were entitled: "True articles on the horrible, great and unbearable abuses of the papal mass, invented directly against the holy Supper of our Lord, the only Mediator and the only Savior, Jesus Christ." Heaven and earth were called to witness against the pompous and blaspheming the Lord and seducing and blinding the people. The doctrine of the mass was the work of pestilential and perverse antichrists. Shamelessly they claimed to enclose Christ in a wafer that could be eaten by mice, rats, spiders and vermin. Such heretics deserved faggots but they burned those who would not believe in their idols. They trifled over a god of dough, beating their breasts. They divided the wafer into three and played with it like a cat playing with a mouse. St. John pointed to Jesus living and
whole. In the Old Testament the sacrificial lamb was roasted whole. St. John did not eat Jesus in their fashion. The placards accused the priests of monkey tricks. The lamb was eaten by the wolf.

Francis I was very angry and considered the placards high treason. The clergy, the University, and Parliament called for strong action. Those suspected of attending secret meetings were suspected of posting the placards. Some suspected of being Evangelicals were arrested. One of the number betrayed his brethren. To escape the stake he offered to point out the houses of his brethren. Special gallows were prepared that could alternately be raised for whipping and lowered into the flames to prolong the torture.

One of the first victims was the arthritic paralytic, Barthelemy Milon, who had been bedfast for years. Among those burned were du Burg, the cloth merchant, and Poille, the mason. Women and girls were burned. The arrests continued. On February 15, 1535, Etienne de la Forge, who had been Calvin's host, was burned.

CALVIN IN BASEL: By the first of the year, 1535, Calvin was in Basel, beyond the reach of the king of France. He and du Tillet had fled to Metz. One of du Tillet's servants stole the horses and money and they had to travel on foot. In Strasbourg Calvin was warmly received by Bucer, Capito and Zell. They trudged on to Basel where Cop had found refuge a year earlier.

Calvin hid out in Basel under the name of Martinus Lucanius, an anagram on his name. He wanted privacy for study and writing. He found lodging in the home of Catherine Klein in an eastern suburb of Basel, called St. Alban. His identity and presence was known only to a few intimate friends, including Cop and Farel from the Paris circle of Marguerite of Angoulême. He formed important friendships with Myconius who had succeeded Johann Oecolampadius as pastor of the church in Basel upon the death of the latter three years earlier. Another important friend was Bullinger, the successor of Zwingli. There was also Pierre Viret, another religious refugee from France. He was a former monk who became court preacher for the Queen of Navarre until he had to flee. He later became the reformer of Lausanne and Courault. Calvin felt safe and at home since Basel had repudiated the mass and processions and was thoroughly committed to the Reformation. Calvin studied Hebrew under Sebastian Münster and worked on a handbook of theology that he had been planning for some time. He was deeply troubled by the reports of the martyrdoms in France.

CALVIN'S LETTER TO HIS KING: For about two years Francis I had been trying to get the German princes to join him in an alliance against Charles V. When reports of the persecution of French Protestants reached Germany, the Germans were greatly aroused. The French king was most anxious to divert foreign sympathy from his victims. The intensity of the persecution had been increased in January 1535. On February 1, 1535, Francis I published a letter, addressed to the Imperial Diet, explaining that those being punished in France were raving lunatics urged on by the devil, the father of lies. They were anarchists plotting the overthrow of all things. His government was resisting a contagious plague of the foulest sedition. There was a vast gulf between the orderly German Protestants and the rabid revolutionists of France. No prince could tolerate the notorious excesses of these enemies of all orderly society. The implication was that the French Protestants were wild Anabaptists.

The letter was probably prepared for the king by Guillaume du Bellay, brother of the bishop of Paris, who had been the king's agent to organize negotiations with the princes of Germany and certain theologians of Zurich and Germany, including Melanchthon. He tried to flatter the Germans into an alliance while burning Evangelicals in France.

The lies of the French spurred Calvin to complete his handbook as a true picture of the religion of the people being put to death. Between January and August of 1535 he buried himself in his work. To accompany it he prepared a prefatory letter to Francis I. He had continued to receive reports of the terrible persecution in France that continued unabated until July when Cardinal Duprat, the chief director of the king's religious policy
died. This brought a lull in the persecution. The French court conveyed to Melanchthon and Bucer invitations to come to Paris for a consultation on church reform. In June, 1535, the siege of Münster had ended, and hatred of the Anabaptists was at its height. Calvin had good reason to fear that the Protestant cause would be completely discredited. He may have hoped to have his book ready for the book fair at Frankfurt in the fall of 1535, but he did not complete the manuscript until August 23—that was the date he put after his name on the letter to the king.

Calvin's printers were slow in getting the book out. It did not appear until March, 1536. The publisher was Jean Oporin and the printers were Balthazar Lasius and Thomas Flatter. It was a small book of 520 pages, 6⅞ by 4⅞ inches. It could be hidden easily under a coat. The title translated into English reads: "The Institute of the Christian Religion, Containing almost the Whole Sum of Piety and Whatever It Is Necessary to Know in the Doctrine of Salvation. A Work Very Well Worth Reading by All Persons Zealous for Piety, and Lately Published. A Preface to the Most Christian King of France, in Which this Book is Presented to Him as a Confession of Faith. Author, John Calvin, of Noyon. Basel, MDXXXVI."

Calvin addresses the king with formal courtesy. The letter is eloquent, dignified, but filled with noble indignation against injustice. He appeals for tolerance, not as a concession, but as a right. It is the king's duty to be just; to punish unheard is to perpetuate violence and fraud. Simple, godly people are charged with horrible crimes. The king must investigate as a minister of God. If the king fails to investigate he fails to serve God and becomes a robber and no king. He declares that he has written his book to meet the needs of multitudes hungering and thirsting after Christ but who have little knowledge of him. With lawyer-like acuteness he answers the charges against the Evangelicals. He denies they are guilty of plotting against the government. They seek to live by the Word of God. Their accusers are ignorant of the Word and accuse the Evangelicals of preaching new doctrines. They preach the Word and their teaching and practice is that of the holy fathers. Many of the practices of the persecutors were condemned by the holy fathers. The accusers contend the church is visible in the church of Rome and its hierarchy. Calvin insists that the true church exists where the Word of God is preached in its purity and the sacraments are rightfully administered. In spite of persecution his people wait for the strong arm of the Lord to rescue and take vengeance. He prays that the King of Kings may establish the king's throne in justice and equity.

Calvin later wrote that he would have been disloyal and a coward had he not defended the holy martyrs and answered the lies of their accusers. He wrote to inform the people of the faith being persecuted by lawless flatterers and to arouse sympathy in foreign lands.

THE INSTITUTES: The Institutes begin with the declaration that religious truth is comprehended in the knowledge of God and of ourselves. God is infinite in wisdom and the source of goodness. We are totally corrupt and exposed to the wrath of God since Adam lost the original perfection. Human effort to merit righteousness is unavailing, but God forgives and gives a new heart. God has predestined his elect for salvation.

The Institutes are divided into six chapters: The Law, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the False Sacraments, and Christian Liberty and the Ecclesiastical Power and Civil Administration.

The Law gives God's just requirements and shows us our condition. It is a discipline for the believer. Good works have no saving value. The Christian life is a fruit of the Spirit of God and evidence of our election.

The Apostles' Creed sets forth the faith of Scriptures. Man cannot gain adequate knowledge of God from nature. God reveals himself in Scripture. The true church is the invisible church of God's elect.
The Lord's Prayer is the model prayer. Prayer must be offered in humility and faith. It is offered to God in the name of Christ only and not in the name of saints.

The Sacraments: There are only two, baptism and the Lord's Supper. Sacraments are external signs given by the Lord to sustain faith. The sacraments are seals of divine approval. Baptism may be administered to infants or adults and by immersion or sprinkling according to the choice of a community. Christ is spiritually present in the Supper.

The False Sacraments: Confirmation, Penance, Extreme Unction, Orders, and Marriage are not sacraments. Sacraments come from the Lord alone and these have no basis in Scripture. The Scriptures recognize no other minister than the preacher of the Word. He serves with the consent of the church.

Christian Liberty: The Christian must submit his conscience to the Law of God. He is free to enjoy God's gifts. Christ is the head of the church. Councils have no authority. Ministers preach the Word of God. The civil government was established by divine authority to preserve an ordered society. All laws must be in keeping with God's law. Full obedience is due the civil authority except when a command contradicts the revealed will of God.

The Institutes with the letter to the king immediately put Calvin in the forefront as the defender of French Protestantism and as one of the leading teachers and theologians of the Reformation. Only a few knew Lucianus of Basel was John Calvin. Calvin was only twenty-six when he completed his Institutes. Throughout his life he would continue to revise and enlarge them. The first edition contained very few references to classical literature or to history. It did contain the basics of the system of doctrine that he would elaborate.

VISIT TO FERRARA: Calvin did not wait in Basel to see what kind of reception his book would receive. The first edition was very quickly sold out. About the time the Institutes came from the press Calvin under the pseudonym of Charles d'Espeville, and accompanied by du Tillet, left Basel for Italy where for a short time they were guests in the court of Renée of Ferrara, who had made her court a refuge for persecuted countrymen. Calvin hoped to make it a center of reform in Italy.

Renée was the daughter of Louis XII and Anne of Brittany and would have inherited the French throne except for the Salic law that excluded women from the throne. Renée, after engagements to Charles V and Henry VIII, was married to Hercule d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, son of Lucretia Borgia. She was on intimate terms with her cousin, Marguerite of Angoulême, who had become queen of Navarre. Calvin stayed long enough to make a lasting impression on her and would encourage her with letters throughout his life. Her husband did not approve of her interest in reform or of her guests, but she insisted that she could not do less for homeless fellow-countrymen. The pope, the emperor and the inquisition put pressure on her husband to clear his court of heretics. When the inquisition began seizing her guests, Calvin and du Tillet did not tarry. Du Tillet set out for Basel. Calvin took advantage of the king's amnesty to religious exiles and six months moratorium on persecution, and returned to Paris to settle his estate. Then with his brother and sister he left France, never to return. War between Francis I and Charles V barred the road to Basel so he made a detour through Geneva, intending only a brief stop. Guillaume Farel learned that Calvin was in the city and came to his room and laid it on his conscience that it was his God given duty to join him as a preacher of the newly established reform in Geneva. Calvin insisted that he wanted to return to Basel for scholarly study and writing. Farel threatened him with the wrath of God. Finally Calvin gave in and consented to join Farel's reform in Geneva.