

## **Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 17 August 2025**

### **AM Worship – Pastor Woods Preaching**

Call to Worship: Psalm 100:1-5

Opening Psalm: 67B O God, Show Mercy to Us

Confession of Sin

Most merciful God, Who are of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and hast promised forgiveness to all those who confess and forsake their sins; We come before You with a humble sense of our own unworthiness, acknowledging our manifold transgressions of Your righteous laws. But, O gracious Father, Who desires not the death of a sinner, look upon us, we beseech You, in mercy, and forgive us all our transgressions. Make us deeply sensible of the great evil of them; And work in us a hearty contrition; That we may obtain forgiveness at Your hands, Who are ever ready to receive humble and penitent sinners; for the sake of Your Son Jesus Christ, our only Savior and Redeemer. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: Hebrews 10:19-22

Psalm of Preparation: 66B Come, All Ye People, Bless Our God

Old Covenant Reading: Psalm 67

New Covenant Reading: 2 Corinthians 4:6-18

Sermon Title: *Shine Upon Us*

Hymn of Response: 211 We All Believe in One True God

Confession of Faith: 1 Heidelberg Catechism (p. 872)

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Diaconal Offering

Closing Hymn: 466 My Faith Looks Up to Thee

### **PM Worship**

465 Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

215 Give to Our God Immortal Praise

227 How Great Thou Art

Old Covenant Reading: Hosea 2:14-23

New Covenant Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:13-21

Sermon Title: A Bond of Faithfulness

**No Sunday School – Fellowship Lunch**

## **Suggested Preparations**

**Monday (8/11)** Read and discuss Psalm 67

May God be gracious to us and bless us  
and make his face to shine upon us, Selah  
that your way may be known on earth,  
your saving power among all nations.  
Let the peoples praise you, O God;  
let all the peoples praise you!

Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,  
for you judge the peoples with equity  
and guide the nations upon earth. Selah  
Let the peoples praise you, O God;  
let all the peoples praise you!

The earth has yielded its increase;  
God, our God, shall bless us.  
God shall bless us;  
let all the ends of the earth fear him! (ESV)

Allen P. Ross writes:

This psalm may be applied on a couple of levels. First, it has to do with the effect of God's gracious blessings on the world. The faithful perceive that God's blessings have a purpose, and so their focus should be on using these gifts from God to bring people to faith. *This may be summarized fairly simply: God blesses His people in order that the people of the world will come to faith in Him.*

This may seem to be too much of a simplification of the psalm, but when the exposition develops the ideas, the details will be clear. God blessed His people with a harvest, and on that occasion they recalled the words of the priestly benediction and turned it into a prayer that God would continue to bless them in the future. But their prayer had as its purpose that people in all the world would learn of God's saving way, come to acknowledge Him for His sovereignty, and rejoice in their worship of Him. The psalmist's prayer has been answered regularly down through history as people in all nations have heard of God's grace and come to faith, but the prayer will find its complete fulfillment when the LORD reigns over all the earth.

And this brings us to the second level of application, the eschatological one. The language of the psalm anticipates the coming reign of the Lord over all the earth, when He will govern and lead the nations, and the nations will worship and praise Him. The anticipation of the coming age should inspire the believers to make better use of their thanksgiving and prayer, knowing that God blesses His people to provoke the nations to jealousy so that they will come to faith and have a share in that kingdom. The psalm does not mention the Messiah, but it points to the glorious messianic age when these prayers will be answered in full.

Read or sing Psalm 67B O God, Show Mercy to Us

**Tuesday (8/12)** Read and discuss Hebrews 11:8–22

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back. By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau. By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff. By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones. (ESV)

Tom Wright comments:

The faith of Abraham and Sarah, which is celebrated in this passage, is faith that the creator God is also the covenant God; that the particular promises made to this one family, at a time when they seemed flatly impossible, were backed up by the power which made the world. Verses 1-6 thus stand behind verses 8-12, and give body to the idea of ‘faith’ which this chapter is all about. It isn’t just that Abraham and Sarah thought they heard a strange being speaking to them and decided to believe it, but rather that the God they came to know was the creator God, the absolutely trustworthy one, the one who could give life where there was none. This will be further developed in the next section.

Working back from the verses about Sarah, then, we find the promise to Abraham concerning the land. Just as Sarah was called to believe that God would give her a child even though she was elderly and barren, Abraham had been called to believe that God would give him a homeland even though he was a wandering stranger, a nomad with no fixed abode. And, of course, though Abraham and Sarah did indeed have a son, they never came to possess for themselves the land which God promised them. All they had was the cave which Abraham bought as a burial place. For the rest, they were living on God’s promise.

That, of course, is what Hebrews wants its readers to learn to do. 'Faith' here is not a general religious attitude to life. It's not simply believing difficult or impossible things for the sake of it, as though simple credulity was itself a virtue. The faith in question, as becomes increasingly clear throughout the chapter, is the faith which hears and believes the promise of God, the assured word from the world's creator that He is also the world's redeemer, and that through the strange fortunes of Abraham's family He is working to build ... the city which is to come.

Read or sing Psalm 66B Come, All Ye People, Bless Our God

**Wednesday** (8/13) Read and discuss 2 Corinthians 4:6–18

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you.

Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. (ESV)

Scott Hafemann writes:

From Paul's perspective, God's power and glory are not abstract theological postulates, but realities to be experienced. Conversion and transformation are brought about not by putting two and two together and making the right decision, but by an encounter with the living God. Men and women are created anew when they come face to face with the presence of God's Spirit. Our attempts to psychologize Paul's thought or to relegate it to the realm of feelings are not a reflection of Paul's perspective, but a reaction to the poverty of our own knowledge of God.

Thus, in drawing out the contemporary significance of Paul's theocentric worldview, we need to keep in focus the ways in which Paul sees the glory of God in Christ at work among the church. Otherwise, it is simply too easy to become enamored with the false glory of the health and wealth gospel. In our day and age, as in Paul's, the moral transformation into God's character pictured in 3:18 and endurance in the midst of adversity modeled in 4:1-8 seem too mundane to be miraculous. To consider health more important than holiness, however, is to slight God Himself and His work in bringing about the new creation in our midst. For Paul, the reality of the resurrection is already being inaugurated in the conversion of believers into the body of Christ.

As a result, the power of Christ in establishing His reign as the Son of God is already taking hold in the lives of believers, who, as children of God, wage war against the flesh. And the return of Christ will consummate God's kingdom with the resurrection of those who are owned by God, as signified by the down payment of the sanctifying Spirit in their lives. We thus live in the overlapping of the ages (the kingdom is here, but not in all its fullness). The life of faith therefore takes place within the context of the suffering of God's people, who, being "saved in hope" (Rom 8:17-25), live and endure by the power of the Spirit while they await the future consummation.

Read or sing Hymn 211 We All Believe in One True God

**Thursday (8/14)** Read and discuss 2 Corinthians 5:13–21

For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 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)

Tom Wright comments:

When a new world is born, a new way of living goes with it.

This is true in so many stages of life. It is true when a couple have their first baby; a whole new chapter has opened in their lives, and nothing will be the

same again. They have new responsibilities; everywhere they go, they see things with new eyes. It is true when people who have lived in a small and badly equipped house move into a large and well-appointed one. No more trips out of the back door to get running water. No more piles of washing in the living room armchairs. And it is true when people move from one country to another. A new language needs to be learnt. New laws apply. If you speak the old language, and live by the old laws, you won't fit in. You won't know what is happening.

But that, Paul implies, is what the Corinthians are still doing. He is still appealing to them to see the world with the new eyes of the gospel, instead of expecting everything, particularly his own style of apostleship, to conform to the fashions and customs of the world they were used to. The old world was a 'merely human' world. Paul uses one of his favorite phrases for this, which literally means 'according to the flesh;' but doesn't mean 'flesh' as in 'physical body.' He means 'flesh' as in 'old, corruptible, passing away.' A new world has come about, through the death of Jesus in the 'flesh' in that sense, and the resurrection of Jesus in a new body, gloriously physical but no corruptible. The challenge of the gospel is to live cheerfully in that new world. Paul's challenge to the Corinthians is to recognize that that's what he is doing.

He begins by describing, in sweeping terms, the view from where he now is. He is on the threshold of the new creation itself, and everything looks different because everything *is* different. When he looks at other people, other Christians, himself, anyone, he sees them in a new way from how he did before. When he looks at the Messiah, he sees Him, too, in a new way; there was a time when all his dreams of a Messiah were concentrated on 'purely human,' that is, 'fleshly,' ideals – a Messiah who would conquer the enemies of God, build the Temple of God, establish a 'purely human' kingdom. All such dreams must come to dust; that's what the Messiah's death and resurrection have taught him. The way to the true kingdom is through *death*, and out the other side into God's new world.

**Friday** (8/15) Read and discuss Hosea 2:14–23

“Therefore, behold, I will allure her,  
and bring her into the wilderness,  
and speak tenderly to her.  
And there I will give her her vineyards  
and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope.  
And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth,  
as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt.

“And in that day, declares the LORD, you will call me ‘My Husband,’ and no longer will you call me ‘My Baal.’ For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be remembered by name no more. And I will make for them a covenant on that

day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety. And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD.

“And in that day I will answer, declares the LORD,  
I will answer the heavens,  
and they shall answer the earth,  
and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine, and the oil,  
and they shall answer Jezreel,  
and I will sow her for myself in the land.  
And I will have mercy on No Mercy,  
and I will say to Not My People, ‘You are my people’;  
and he shall say, ‘You are my God.’” (ESV)

The LORD is bringing about a great reversal. “Valley of Achor” means “Valley of Trouble,” but the LORD is going to turn it into a “Door of Hope.”

Thomas McComiskey writes:

When Yahweh allures Israel into the wilderness, he will betroth her to Himself, and a new marriage will take place. ... Because of her spiritual adultery, she deserved to be cast off forever, but her lover will initiate a new marriage covenant with her. This covenant, unlike the old, will never end; it is eternal. In order for the new marriage contract to be inviolable there must exist not only unbroken fidelity on the part of Yahweh to His commitment of love, but a change of heart in His beloved, whose evil propensities had severed the earlier relationship. ...

Because this new relationship will be characterized by ... expressions of loving obedience, the blessing of the covenant will be secured because its conditions have been met. Obedience on the part of God’s people will be facilitated by Yahweh’s sovereign act of love. The words of Hosea foresee the new covenant of which Jeremiah would speak (Jer 31:31-34). As a result of this loving act of betrothal, the people will know God. They will enter into an intimate relationship with Him; they will understand His ways and enjoy His fellowship.

The concept of a restored wife of Yahweh is not to be identified only with national Israel. It also includes the church. This is an important factor in the theology of Paul. He quotes two passages from the prophesy of Hosea in support of Gentile inclusion in promise (Rom. 9:25-26). The prospect of security associated with the promise of the land in the Old Testament becomes the promise of landedness in Christ in the New Testament (Heb. 3-4).

Read or sing Hymn 466 My Faith Looks Up to Thee

**Saturday** (8/16) Read and discuss Psalm 67

May God be gracious to us and bless us  
and make his face to shine upon us, Selah  
that your way may be known on earth,  
your saving power among all nations.  
Let the peoples praise you, O God;  
let all the peoples praise you!

Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,  
for you judge the peoples with equity  
and guide the nations upon earth. Selah  
Let the peoples praise you, O God;  
let all the peoples praise you!

The earth has yielded its increase;  
God, our God, shall bless us.  
God shall bless us;  
let all the ends of the earth fear him! (ESV)

Tim Keller writes:

Like Abraham, we are blessed (verse 1) only that we might be a blessing to all the peoples of the earth (verse 2; Genesis 12:2-3). If you truly enjoy something, you instinctively want to help others praise it too. Praising it to others “completes the enjoyment (C.S. Lewis).” So true enjoyment of God must lead naturally to mission – to helping others see the beauty you see. God never draws us in except to send us out - to serve and reach others. We want a multiethnic, international church of worshippers and world of justice (verses 3-4). We must not take credit for our own blessings but point beyond ourselves to God.

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