

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 8 March 2026

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 96:1-3

Opening Psalm: 103A Bless the LORD, My Soul (1-3)

Confession of Sin

Almighty and everlasting God, Glorious Creator of all things, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; We have sinned against Your holy Name, by failing to glorify You in our lives as your redeemed children. Our unthankfulness extends to every thought and deed, as well as to our failure to thank you with our lips. We have not lived to the praise of the glory of Your grace. We have not esteemed the reproach of Jesus Christ our Savior to be greater than the riches of this world. We have failed to estimate the infinite cost of the salvation won for us at the cross through the shed blood of Jesus. We have not been faithful to You as You have been faithful to us in all things. Father, forgive us for our ingratitude through the reconciling sacrifice of Jesus Christ our all-sufficient Mediator, we pray. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: Isaiah 44:21-23

Psalm of Preparation: 91B Who with God Most High Finds Shelter

Old Covenant Reading: Exodus 4:27-31

New Covenant Reading: Matthew 13:1-9

Sermon Title: *Initial Joy*

Hymn of Response: 229 Holy God, We Praise Your Name

Confession of Faith: Nicene Creed (p. 852)

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Closing Psalm: 103A Bless the LORD, My Soul (4-6)

PM Worship

485 Like a River Glorious

455 I Need Thee, Precious Jesus

466 My Faith Looks Up to Thee

Old Covenant Reading: Psalm 30

New Covenant Reading: 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Sermon Title: *Heavenly Perspective*

Adult Sunday School – The Doctrine of the Church

Suggested Preparations

Monday (3/2) Read and discuss Exodus 4:27–31

The LORD said to Aaron, “Go into the wilderness to meet Moses.” So he went and met him at the mountain of God and kissed him. And Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD with which he had sent him to speak, and all the signs that he had commanded him to do. Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the people of Israel. Aaron spoke all the words that the LORD had spoken to Moses and did the signs in

the sight of the people. And the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD had visited the people of Israel and that he had seen their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshiped. (ESV)

Christopher Wright comments:

We already knew that Aaron was on his way to meet Moses, but now we are told why. He, too, was acting in obedience to an instruction from God. The narrator sees no more problem in this rather disjointed chronology (disjointed in the eyes of some textual critics) than we do in the well-known technique of flashbacks in novels and movies. The main action focuses on getting Moses out of Midian and back to Egypt. But the camera angle swivels twice to Aaron, showing us that the meeting of the brothers, recorded so lovingly after some forty years, was not a frustrated reaction by God to Moses's reluctance but part of God's plan for Aaron even before the encounter at the burning bush. Moses shares with Aaron both the words and the signs with which God had sent him.

Interestingly, then, when they call the meeting with the elders of the people, Aaron is the one who speaks the words and performs the signs. Initially, it seems, Aaron does occupy the role that God had assigned him, and indeed goes beyond it, since he performs the signs rather than Moses at this stage. Most like the reason for this is that Aaron was known and trusted by the people among whom he had lived all his life, whereas Moses was the absent fugitive all that time.

The reaction of the people is gratifyingly different to what Moses had feared at the mountain. They do not ask the questions he anticipated. They do not refuse to listen or believe. On the contrary, this part of the story ends with a most positive triple affirmation. Sadly, it will not survive the first encounter with pharaoh, but for the moment, in grateful response to the news that Yahweh had come to visit them and had seen their suffering, the people believed, bowed down, and worshipped.

For Moses, this transitional narrative ends with him being reunited not only with his brother but also with the rest of his true kinship. He has been a man with three families in this narrative: his Midianite family in the household of Jethro; his adoptive family in the Egyptian court where he had grown up (but that court had now died out); and his own Hebrew family again – in Egypt. He is home again – for the moment – but with his eyes on a promised home that lay ahead.

Read or sing Psalm 103A Bless the LORD, My Soul (1-3)

Tuesday (3/3) Read and discuss Exodus 4:19–26

And the LORD said to Moses in Midian, “Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead.” So Moses took his wife and his sons and had them ride on a donkey, and went back to the land of Egypt. And Moses took the staff of God in his hand.

And the LORD said to Moses, “When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go. Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me.” If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.’”

At a lodging place on the way the LORD met him and sought to put him to death. Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son’s foreskin and touched Moses’ feet with it and said, “Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me!” So he let him alone. It was then that she said, “A bridegroom of blood,” because of the circumcision. (ESV)

Kenneth Cherney writes:

In 4:22, Yahweh puts in Moses’ mouth the striking expression “Israel is My son, My firstborn.” The reference is to God’s election of Israel to its unique status as His “treasured possession.” The special relationship begins when God first speaks to Abram and promises him one blessing after another – and gives no reason why Abram should be singled out for such blatant favoritism. The relationship perseveres through the patriarchal narratives, through the Israelites’ sojourn in Egypt, through the oppression there, and even through those many moments when God’s love for Israel is not reciprocated. God’s stubborn and inexplicable infatuation with Israel should have been an incentive for gratitude, love, and obedience on their part – never for feelings of entitlement or superiority. The same holds true for those God has grafted into His family by faith in Jesus Christ.

God’s “firstborn son,” Israel, means so much to Him that He is prepared to kill the firstborn of Pharaoh and all Egypt for that son, although nothing in the text suggests that Egypt’s firstborn deserves killing any more than God’s firstborn deserves saving. Better said: in the final plague, there is an equal taking by God of both the Egyptian and Israelite firstborn, although the manner of the taking’s is entirely different.

Ex 4:23 is a condensed version of God’s prediction of the final plague in 11:4-10 and its fulfillment in 12:29-36, after the institution of the Passover. The death of the Egyptian firstborn is the basis for the law that every Israelite firstborn, whether human or animal, belongs to Yahweh. Animal firstborn are to be sacrificed on the eighth day of life, except in the case of

unclean animals. In lieu of the sacrifice of human firstborn, which Yahweh forbids, the Levites will be consecrated to Yahweh as His exclusive property. “Redeem” is the term used when an Israelite is allowed to give Yahweh a substitute in place of the firstborn as His right.

Read or sing Psalm 91B Who with God Most High Finds Shelter

Wednesday (3/4) Read and discuss Matthew 13:1–9

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: “A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear.” (ESV)

Grant Osborne writes:

The quasi-Christian will fail to withstand the anxieties of life on the lure of materialism and will eventually fall away to spiritual ruin. The thorny-ground followers also have no strong roots in Christ and are easily choked off by the pressures of life. Without a deep-seated trust in God, the worries of everyday life stifle what little spiritual life they have. Their true priorities are their bank account and status in the community, and so the pleasures of life will ultimately seduce them away from God. This is an area too often ignored in churches, and I believe the major strategy of every church must be to wake up these people and to help them realize how they are wasting their lives on what ultimately will not matter.

Read or sing Hymn 229 Holy God, We Praise Your Name

Thursday (3/5) Read and discuss Psalm 30

A Psalm of David. A song at the dedication of the temple.

I will extol you, O LORD, for you have drawn me up
and have not let my foes rejoice over me.

O LORD my God, I cried to you for help,
and you have healed me.

O LORD, you have brought up my soul from Sheol;
you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit.

Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints,
and give thanks to his holy name.
For his anger is but for a moment,
and his favor is for a lifetime.
Weeping may tarry for the night,
but joy comes with the morning.

As for me, I said in my prosperity,
“I shall never be moved.”
By your favor, O LORD,
you made my mountain stand strong;
you hid your face;
I was dismayed.

To you, O LORD, I cry,
and to the Lord I plead for mercy:
“What profit is there in my death,
if I go down to the pit?
Will the dust praise you?
Will it tell of your faithfulness?
Hear, O LORD, and be merciful to me!
O LORD, be my helper!”

You have turned for me my mourning into dancing;
you have loosed my sackcloth
and clothed me with gladness,
that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent.
O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever! (ESV)

Allen P. Ross writes:

The central focus of this psalm is the content of the praise: God’s anger is but for a moment, but His favor lasts a lifetime. This truth has to be treasured in the minds of the people of God, so that whenever God withholds His favor and there is suffering and trouble they may keep things in proper perspective as they sort through their trouble. This is what kept the apostle Paul ministering when he encountered severe trouble on every side – he looked on things eternal and not temporal. Even if the trouble is a result of pride or some other sin, the believer knows that the lifetime in God’s favor includes and requires divine discipline. If God disciplines His people, it is to restore them to the celebration of being in fellowship with Him. [In brief,] *God heals and restores His people whom He has chastened so that they*

might declare to the congregation that he lifetime in His favor overshadows the time of suffering.

Having the proper understanding in mind of what it means to be in God's favor for a lifetime will certainly keep things in perspective. There is also in this psalm the major application of praise. When people are restored from their trouble to a good life, no matter what the reason for the difficulty was, they are by duty bound to praise the LORD in the congregation. The psalm makes it clear that God delivers people from illnesses and dangers in order that they might praise. This is not because God needs to have our praise; it is because praise is edifying, and in a praise like this people would learn a great deal of truth about God's dealings with His people, and also an important warning about becoming self-sufficient. In so many places today believers do become self-sufficient, until God does something in their lives that brings them to their knees. Those moments are often very troubling, but understood in the light of His favor, will lead to greater devotion and greater glory for God.

Friday (3/6) Read and discuss 2 Corinthians 4:16–18

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)

David Garland writes:

The battering Paul has taken in the service of Christ has left him the worse for wear and makes him a shamed figure in the eyes of the world. His deteriorating physical condition and shameful plight caused some in Corinth, who took account of such things, to wonder out loud about his power as an apostle. They may have assumed God would do a better job of safeguarding and bringing honor to an authorized messenger of the gospel. Some in the ancient world interpreted affliction as a sign of god's judgment and as something dishonorable. After surviving the shipwreck on the journey to Rome and landing safely on the island of Malta, the islanders were sure when they saw a viper hanging from Paul's hand that he was guilty of some great crime for which the gods were now belatedly punishing him. "Even though he has escaped the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live" (Acts 28:4). They expected him "to swell up or suddenly drop dead. After they waited a long time and saw nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god" (Acts 28:6). Like the Maltese islanders, some Corinthians judged Paul only from outward appearances and from a wrongheaded view about how God works in this world and what

God has in store for those who faithfully serve. Paul will confess in 5:16 that he too once judged Christ from the same outward, worldly criteria and, as a result, entirely misjudged Him. Only after his conversion could he see beyond the law's damning judgment that everyone hanged on a tree is accursed of God and recognize that the crucified Jesus was "the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal 2:20). He now no longer looks at persons from this superficial, worldly perspective; and the Corinthians should not either – particularly God's apostles, who pattern their lives after the sacrificial suffering and death of Christ.

Read or sing Psalm 103A Bless the LORD, My Soul (4-6)

Saturday (3/7) Read and discuss Exodus 4:27–31

The LORD said to Aaron, "Go into the wilderness to meet Moses." So he went and met him at the mountain of God and kissed him. And Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD with which he had sent him to speak, and all the signs that he had commanded him to do. Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the people of Israel. Aaron spoke all the words that the LORD had spoken to Moses and did the signs in the sight of the people. And the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD had visited the people of Israel and that he had seen their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshiped. (ESV)

Duanne Garrett writes:

This passage begins prior to Moses's Sinai experience, with God telling Aaron to go meet Moses at the "mountain of God." The means by which God communicated to Aaron are not disclosed, but the fact that Aaron was able to receive such a message suggests that he already had some kind of priestly or prophetic function. The scene quickly shifts to the meeting of Aaron and Moses, after the theophany. Aaron's response to Moses's words is not recorded, but subsequent events imply that he accepted Moses's story completely. The detail of Aaron's kiss opens the story on a very positive note, with joy and love. This contrasts with the end of the passage, where Moses and Aaron are put under a curse.

With equal abruptness, the scene shifts to Egypt, where Moses and Aaron tell the story and do the miracles before the Israelite elders. The initial response of faith and worship by the Israelites is passed over quickly, but it is of critical importance. It is hard to imagine how the exodus could have ever happened had the Israelites refused to believe. Notably, they did not ask what God's name was, as far as we can tell. If they had any doubts about Moses, these were allayed when they saw the miracles. Subsequent events would show that the Hebrews were semi-paganized, but they were not

thoroughly paganized. They still remembered the God of their fathers. Whatever else the narrative tells us about the Israelites, it tells us that they began the pilgrimage of the exodus in faith.

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