

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 31 May 2026

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 105:1-3

Opening Hymn: 249 For the Beauty of the Earth

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: Exodus 34:5-7

Sacrament of Baptism:

Psalm of Preparation: 99A The LORD God Reigns on High

Old Covenant Reading: Exodus 10:1-29

New Covenant Reading: Luke 23:44-49

Sermon Title: *Dark Sky, Dark Heart*

Hymn of Response: 256 God Moves in a Mysterious Way

Confession of Faith: Apostles Creed (p. 851)

Gloria Patri (Hymn 572)

Closing Hymn: 417 Jesus Shall Reign Where'er the Sun

PM Worship

184 Lord, You Love the Cheerful Giver

324 Thou Who Wast Rich beyond All Splendor

291 O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing

Old Covenant Reading: Exodus 16:9-18

New Covenant Reading: 2 Corinthians 8:8-15

Sermon Title: *Knowing Grace and Becoming Poor*

Adult Sunday School: We Confess that the Church is One

Suggested Preparations

Monday (5/25) Read and discuss Exodus 10

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go in to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may show these signs of mine among them, and that you may tell in the hearing of your son and of your grandson how I have dealt harshly with the

Egyptians and what signs I have done among them, that you may know that I am the LORD.”

So Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh and said to him, “Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, ‘How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me? Let my people go, that they may serve me. For if you refuse to let my people go, behold, tomorrow I will bring locusts into your country, and they shall cover the face of the land, so that no one can see the land. And they shall eat what is left to you after the hail, and they shall eat every tree of yours that grows in the field, and they shall fill your houses and the houses of all your servants and of all the Egyptians, as neither your fathers nor your grandfathers have seen, from the day they came on earth to this day.’” Then he turned and went out from Pharaoh.

Then Pharaoh’s servants said to him, “How long shall this man be a snare to us? Let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God. Do you not yet understand that Egypt is ruined?” So Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh. And he said to them, “Go, serve the LORD your God. But which ones are to go?” Moses said, “We will go with our young and our old. We will go with our sons and daughters and with our flocks and herds, for we must hold a feast to the LORD.” But he said to them, “The LORD be with you, if ever I let you and your little ones go! Look, you have some evil purpose in mind. No! Go, the men among you, and serve the LORD, for that is what you are asking.” And they were driven out from Pharaoh’s presence.

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, so that they may come upon the land of Egypt and eat every plant in the land, all that the hail has left.” So Moses stretched out his staff over the land of Egypt, and the LORD brought an east wind upon the land all that day and all that night. When it was morning, the east wind had brought the locusts. The locusts came up over all the land of Egypt and settled on the whole country of Egypt, such a dense swarm of locusts as had never been before, nor ever will be again. They covered the face of the whole land, so that the land was darkened, and they ate all the plants in the land and all the fruit of the trees that the hail had left. Not a green thing remained, neither tree nor plant of the field, through all the land of Egypt. Then Pharaoh hastily called Moses and Aaron and said, “I have sinned against the LORD your God, and against you. Now therefore, forgive my sin, please, only this once, and plead with the LORD your God only to remove this death from me.” So he went out from Pharaoh and pleaded with the LORD. And the LORD turned the wind into a very strong west wind, which lifted the locusts and drove them into the Red Sea. Not a single locust was left in all the country of Egypt. But the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not let the people of Israel go.

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, a darkness to be felt.” So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was pitch darkness in all the land of Egypt three days. They did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days, but all the people of

Israel had light where they lived. Then Pharaoh called Moses and said, “Go, serve the LORD; your little ones also may go with you; only let your flocks and your herds remain behind.” But Moses said, “You must also let us have sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God. Our livestock also must go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind, for we must take of them to serve the LORD our God, and we do not know with what we must serve the LORD until we arrive there.” But the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he would not let them go. Then Pharaoh said to him, “Get away from me; take care never to see my face again, for on the day you see my face you shall die.” Moses said, “As you say! I will not see your face again.” (ESV)

R. Reed Lessing writes:

Not only does Pharaoh’s heart become hard but now his servants join him. Egypt will soon add its army to the list of hard-hearted Hebrew haters. While the locusts don’t end up with hard hearts, they certainly end up with full stomachs! The sevenfold use of the term all in Exodus 10:12-15 underscores the complete destruction caused by these pesky critters. ...

Like the earlier plague of hail, the locusts are devastating – so much so that Yahweh directs future generations to learn about this unheard-of-event. The idea of telling future generations of Hebrews of Yahweh’s great acts of salvation picks up steam and appears within the Passover liturgy as well as in the liturgy for the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

If you’re an Egyptian living through these unprecedented times, the locusts are a preview of coming disasters. In what way? First, God brings both locusts upon Egypt and parts the Red Sea by means of an east wind. Second, just as locusts end up dead in the Red Sea, so will Pharaoh’s army. Hence, whether it’s locusts or Egyptians, when God sets out to rid the land of enemies, He will finish what He started.

I pointed out earlier that after the plague of gnats, Pharaoh’s magicians jump ship, confessing, “This is the finger of God.” Now the entire court has had enough. “How long shall this man be a snare to us? Let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God. Do you not yet understand that Egypt is ruined?

For the second time, Pharaoh confesses his sin. For the fourth time, he asks Moses to remove God’s agents of judgment. Moses and God again respond with kindness. But Pharaoh? His heart remains hard as a rock.

Read or sing Hymn 249 For the Beauty of the Earth

Tuesday (5/26) Read and discuss Read and discuss Exodus 9:13–35

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Rise up early in the morning and present yourself before Pharaoh and say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, “Let my people go, that they may serve me. For this time I will send all my plagues on you yourself, and on your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth. For by now I could have put out my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth. But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth. You are still exalting yourself against my people and will not let them go. Behold, about this time tomorrow I will cause very heavy hail to fall, such as never has been in Egypt from the day it was founded until now. Now therefore send, get your livestock and all that you have in the field into safe shelter, for every man and beast that is in the field and is not brought home will die when the hail falls on them.”’” Then whoever feared the word of the LORD among the servants of Pharaoh hurried his slaves and his livestock into the houses, but whoever did not pay attention to the word of the LORD left his slaves and his livestock in the field.

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward heaven, so that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, on man and beast and every plant of the field, in the land of Egypt.” Then Moses stretched out his staff toward heaven, and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and fire ran down to the earth. And the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt. There was hail and fire flashing continually in the midst of the hail, very heavy hail, such as had never been in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. The hail struck down everything that was in the field in all the land of Egypt, both man and beast. And the hail struck down every plant of the field and broke every tree of the field. Only in the land of Goshen, where the people of Israel were, was there no hail.

Then Pharaoh sent and called Moses and Aaron and said to them, “This time I have sinned; the LORD is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong. Plead with the LORD, for there has been enough of God’s thunder and hail. I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer.” Moses said to him, “As soon as I have gone out of the city, I will stretch out my hands to the LORD. The thunder will cease, and there will be no more hail, so that you may know that the earth is the LORD’s. But as for you and your servants, I know that you do not yet fear the LORD God.” (The flax and the barley were struck down, for the barley was in the ear and the flax was in bud. But the wheat and the emmer were not struck down, for they are late in coming up.) So Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh and stretched out his hands to the LORD, and the thunder and the hail ceased, and the rain no longer poured upon the earth. But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned yet again and hardened his heart, he and his servants. So the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people of Israel go, just as the LORD had spoken through Moses. (ESV)

In verses 20 and 21 we see that even within the house of Pharaoh himself a distinction has emerged. Some of his servants believed the word of the Lord ... and they acted on it. Others dismissed it. And when the hail came, the consequences were distributed accordingly.

This is remarkable for at least two reasons. First, it tells us that even within the most hostile spiritual environment, the Word of God can find a hearing. The court of Pharaoh was not a church. These were not covenant people. They were Egyptian officials in a nation that was devoted to paganism. And yet some of them heard the word ... and feared it. The Holy Spirit is not limited by geography or culture or the spiritual temperature of our institutions.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, this passage reminds us ... that faith has always been a person-by-person response to revelation. Pharaoh had heard the word of the Lord. His servants had heard it too. They all had access to the same information. But some of them took it seriously, and some of them did not. And that difference ... that difference in how they regarded the word of God ... had life-and-death consequences.

Read or sing Psalm 99A The LORD God Reigns on High

Wednesday (5/27) Read and discuss Luke 23:44–49

It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, while the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last. Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent!" And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts. And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things. (ESV)

David Garland writes:

The centurion makes a profound theological announcement: "This man was really righteous"; that is, Jesus stood in the right relation to God. It recalls the righteous people introduced in the opening chapters of the gospel, Elizabeth and Zechariah and Simeon. Declaring a crucified man to be righteous, however, requires a redefinition of righteousness. It may seem incongruous for a righteous and innocent man to meet such a cruel death, but it was entirely consistent with God's purposes for His Righteous One as

outlined in Scripture: “After He has suffered, He will see the light of life and be satisfied; by His knowledge My righteous servant will justify many, and He will bear their iniquities” (Isa 53:11).

Jesus is the one who is truly righteous because of His obedience to God’s salvific plan in His suffering and death: “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God” (1 Pet 3:18). The declaration by the centurion and Jesus’ emphatic statement that the criminal will be with Him in paradise open the way to understanding that “through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous” (Rom 5:19).

Read or sing Hymn 256 God Moves in a Mysterious Way

Thursday (5/28) Read and discuss Exodus 16:9–18

Then Moses said to Aaron, “Say to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, ‘Come near before the LORD, for he has heard your grumbling.’” And as soon as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud. And the LORD said to Moses, “I have heard the grumbling of the people of Israel. Say to them, ‘At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.’”

In the evening quail came up and covered the camp, and in the morning dew lay around the camp. And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as frost on the ground. When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, “It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat. This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Gather of it, each one of you, as much as he can eat. You shall each take an omer, according to the number of the persons that each of you has in his tent.’” And the people of Israel did so. They gathered, some more, some less. But when they measured it with an omer, whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack. Each of them gathered as much as he could eat. (ESV)

Duanne Garrett writes:

The account of the manna is straightforward but remarkable. A number of interpreters suggest that manna was the secretion of the tamarisk plant, but the properties of manna defy natural explanation. Manna appeared in the early morning hours, like dew, and continued to appear for the Israelites wherever they were in their wilderness wanderings. That is, it kept coming regardless of the season and regardless of the local terrain, indicating that manna was not related to local vegetation. It ceased coming at the end of

the wilderness wanderings. The fact that it had to be described for posterity tells us that later generations could not find it by venturing into the wilderness. If kept for more than a day, it would spoil and breed worms. But on the Sabbath it did not become foul and could be safely stored. Manna that was not gathered but left on the ground melted away in the heat of the day. In appearance it was delicate, like hoarfrost. Nevertheless, it could be ground and used as a meal for baking, and it could be boiled, possibly like noodles in a soup. Therefore, although it could not withstand the heat of the sun, it retained its qualities when baked or boiled. Finally, as people ate their allotted share, it always satisfied their hunger. It was never more than they could eat and it never left them hungry. The text may imply that try as they might, the people had difficulty gathering more than an omer per person per day, except on the day before the Sabbath, when they easily gathered two omers per person. We can only conclude that, as the text says, it was of heavenly origin.

Friday (5/29) Read and discuss 2 Corinthians 8:8–15

I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich. And in this matter I give my judgment: this benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work but also to desire to do it. So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have. For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. As it is written, “Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack.” (ESV)

Tom Wright comments:

People often say they are looking for a new challenge, but often what that means is that they aren’t prepared to face the real challenge of staying where they are, working through the present tiredness and boredom, and completing the job they have started.

That’s how it is with Paul and Corinth. They made a good start, but now they have to go on and finish the job. Presumably this means that they began, as Paul had earlier instructed them, to set aside money every Sunday, so that a fund would gradually build up which could be taken all at once to Jerusalem. Then, it seems, with the cooling of relations between Paul and the church in Corinth, they may just have stopped doing it. Now, Paul says, don’t leave the job half done! Complete what you started!

But the sense of not leaving a job half done isn't the deepest motivation he calls upon. At the center of this passage, as of all Paul's thought, there lies not simply an obligation to other people, but the beating heart of the gospel itself: the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Lord, the Messiah. Verse 9 has been made famous through a well-known Christmas hymn written by F. Houghton:

Thou who wast rich beyond all splendour
All for love's sake becamest poor.

It sometimes surprises people, when they wonder where that idea came from, that it isn't in a great passage about the heights and depths of incarnational theology, discussing in wonderful detail all the complex questions about how Jesus can be both God and man, but instead in a passage which is basically saying 'Isn't it time you finished taking the collection?' And yet, on second thoughts, perhaps this passage *is* about the heights and depths of incarnational theology; because if theology is truly incarnational, truly about the way in which the eternal God took human flesh, and lived and died as one of us, the best way of expressing this is not in flights of abstract theory, leaving us with a nice set of well-organized ideas and beliefs, but in the practical, down-to-earth and often messy details of ordinary life, with its arrangements that go wrong and have to be put right, its plans that get half-finished and have to be completed after the initial energy has run out, its personal relationships that go sour and have to find reconciliation.

Read or sing Hymn 417 Jesus Shall Reign Where'er the Sun

Saturday (5/30) Read and discuss Exodus 10

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may show these signs of mine among them, and that you may tell in the hearing of your son and of your grandson how I have dealt harshly with the Egyptians and what signs I have done among them, that you may know that I am the LORD."

So Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, 'How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me? Let my people go, that they may serve me. For if you refuse to let my people go, behold, tomorrow I will bring locusts into your country, and they shall cover the face of the land, so that no one can see the land. And they shall eat what is left to you after the hail, and they shall eat every tree of yours that grows in the field, and they shall fill your houses and the houses of all your servants and of all the Egyptians, as neither your fathers nor your grandfathers have seen, from the day they came on earth to this day.'" Then he turned and went out from Pharaoh.

Then Pharaoh's servants said to him, "How long shall this man be a snare to us? Let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God. Do you not yet understand that Egypt is ruined?" So Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh. And he said to them, "Go, serve the LORD your God. But which ones are to go?" Moses said, "We will go with our young and our old. We will go with our sons and daughters and with our flocks and herds, for we must hold a feast to the LORD." But he said to them, "The LORD be with you, if ever I let you and your little ones go! Look, you have some evil purpose in mind. No! Go, the men among you, and serve the LORD, for that is what you are asking." And they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, so that they may come upon the land of Egypt and eat every plant in the land, all that the hail has left." So Moses stretched out his staff over the land of Egypt, and the LORD brought an east wind upon the land all that day and all that night. When it was morning, the east wind had brought the locusts. The locusts came up over all the land of Egypt and settled on the whole country of Egypt, such a dense swarm of locusts as had never been before, nor ever will be again. They covered the face of the whole land, so that the land was darkened, and they ate all the plants in the land and all the fruit of the trees that the hail had left. Not a green thing remained, neither tree nor plant of the field, through all the land of Egypt. Then Pharaoh hastily called Moses and Aaron and said, "I have sinned against the LORD your God, and against you. Now therefore, forgive my sin, please, only this once, and plead with the LORD your God only to remove this death from me." So he went out from Pharaoh and pleaded with the LORD. And the LORD turned the wind into a very strong west wind, which lifted the locusts and drove them into the Red Sea. Not a single locust was left in all the country of Egypt. But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the people of Israel go.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, a darkness to be felt." So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was pitch darkness in all the land of Egypt three days. They did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days, but all the people of Israel had light where they lived. Then Pharaoh called Moses and said, "Go, serve the LORD; your little ones also may go with you; only let your flocks and your herds remain behind." But Moses said, "You must also let us have sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God. Our livestock also must go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind, for we must take of them to serve the LORD our God, and we do not know with what we must serve the LORD until we arrive there." But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go. Then Pharaoh said to him, "Get away from me; take care never to see my face again, for on the day you see my face you shall die." Moses said, "As you say! I will not see your face again." (ESV)

R. Reed Lessing writes:

“Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt.’” This plague strikes at the heart of Egyptians who worshipped their sun god, Amon Re – one of the nation’s top deities – along with his wife Mut and their son, Khons.

Many of us know that a blizzard is sometimes called – a whiteout. Well, this was just the opposite. It was a blackout. Human movement came to a standstill. All movement was reduced to desperate groping. Pharaoh finally had had enough of Moses. “Get away from me; take care never to see my face again, for on the day you see my face you shall die.”

Negotiations are called off. Things are at an impasse. Everything has come to a standstill. But not for long.

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