

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 2 August 2026

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 105:1-3

Opening Hymn: 245 Great Is Thy Faithfulness

Confession of Sin

O great and everlasting God, Who dwells in unapproachable light, Who searches and knows the thoughts and intentions of the heart; We confess that we have not loved You with all our heart, nor with all our soul, nor with all our mind, nor with all our strength; Nor our neighbors as ourselves. We have loved what we ought not to have loved; We have coveted what is not ours; We have not been content with Your provisions for us. We have complained in our hearts about our family, about our friends, about our health, about our occupations, about Your church, and about our trials. We have sought our security in those things which perish, rather than in You, the Everlasting God. Chasten, cleanse, and forgive us, through Jesus Christ, who is able for all time to save us who approach You through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for us. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: Isaiah 55:7-9

Psalm of Preparation: 77 I Cried Aloud to God for Help (1-4)

Old Covenant Reading: Exodus 14:1-14

New Covenant Reading: Romans 9:14-26

Sermon Title: *Fearful Israel, Faithful LORD*

Hymn of Response: 474 If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee

Confession of Faith: Apostles Creed (p. 851)

Gloria Patri (Hymn 572)

Closing Psalm: 77 I Cried Aloud to God for Help (5-7)

PM Worship

276 Jesus Paid It All

213 Glory Be to God the Father

519 I Asked the Lord That I Might Grow

Old Covenant Reading: Isaiah 40:9-31

New Covenant Reading: 2 Corinthians 12:1-10

Sermon Title: *Boasting in Weakness*

Suggested Preparations

Monday (7/27) Read and discuss Exodus 14:1–14

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Tell the people of Israel to turn back and encamp in front of Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, in front of Baal-zephon; you shall encamp facing it, by the sea. For Pharaoh will say of the people of Israel, ‘They are wandering in the land; the wilderness has shut them in.’ And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and he will pursue them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD.” And they did so.

When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the mind of Pharaoh and his servants was changed toward the people, and they said, “What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?” So he made ready his chariot and took his army with him, and took six hundred chosen chariots and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them. And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the people of Israel while the people of Israel were going out defiantly. The Egyptians pursued them, all Pharaoh’s horses and chariots and his horsemen and his army, and overtook them encamped at the sea, by Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon.

When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they feared greatly. And the people of Israel cried out to the LORD. They said to Moses, “Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: ‘Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians’? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.” And Moses said to the people, “Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.” (ESV)

Doug Stuart writes:

Now comes a radical reversal of direction. ... Surely such a route would look to anyone observing its contrast to the Israelites’ previous direction as an indication of confusion. ...

All this constituted a divine ruse to trap Pharaoh one last time. ...

The theme of God’s superiority over Pharaoh, seen repeatedly previously, continues here. But how could Pharaoh be expected to conclude that the Israelites were suddenly unable to leave Egypt after he had just been so severely taught the power of Israel’s God in the ten plagues? What would give him the sense that suddenly he could gain victory over the Israelites when their God had just shown total superiority to him and his gods? The answer requires appreciating Egyptian religion in its ancient Near Eastern context. To all the ancients (except those Israelites who were beginning to understand the only true God) the gods and goddesses that controlled the world were arbitrary and capricious, quick to change their actions and attitudes, constantly vying with one another for power, not omnipresent but manifesting themselves at given locations and then leaving those locations unpredictably. James could say of Satan, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” because Satan, who is finite and cannot be in all places at once, will soon lose interest in trying to tempt someone who resists him and will move on to someone else more likely to yield to temptation. Likewise, the

Egyptians' gods were considered beings who might not always be present among their people. Accordingly, Yahweh knew that it would be natural for Pharaoh to think that He, Yahweh, after having expended great effort to demonstrate His power to the Egyptians, might now no longer be directly involved in helping the Israelites so that he, Pharaoh, could once again assert his power over them unhindered. Indeed, the Israelites themselves were not above assuming at times pessimistically that they had been abandoned by Yahweh. Once again all of this was a plan of God announced in advance, so that Moses and the Israelites would not (if they could maintain their faith) be surprised or discomfited by the coming Egyptian pursuit.

Read or sing Hymn 245 Great Is Thy Faithfulness

Tuesday (7/28) Read and discuss Read and discuss Exodus 13:17–22

When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near. For God said, “Lest the people change their minds when they see war and return to Egypt.” But God led the people around by the way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea. And the people of Israel went up out of the land of Egypt equipped for battle. Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for Joseph had made the sons of Israel solemnly swear, saying, “God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones with you from here.” And they moved on from Succoth and encamped at Etham, on the edge of the wilderness. And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people. (ESV)

To understand why taking Joseph's bones out of Egypt matters, we have to go back to the very end of Genesis, to Joseph on his deathbed in Egypt. Joseph is dying as the second most powerful man in the most powerful nation on the face of the earth. And what does he ask for? At the very end of Genesis, Joseph tells his brothers:

“I am about to die, but God will visit you and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.” Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, “God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.” So Joseph died, being 110 years old. They embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

That is an act of extraordinary faith. Joseph had every earthly reason to believe that Egypt was permanent. Yet he died believing a promise which the LORD had made generations earlier a promise that had not yet, in Joseph's lifetime, shown the slightest sign of coming true.

Now count the years. Well it wasn't just years or even decades it was centuries before the LORD would bring His people out of Egypt. Generations are born, they live, and they die. Pharaohs rise and fall. An entire nation of slaves is *built and broken* in Egypt's brickyards. And that coffin Joseph's embalmed bones in an Egyptian sarcophagus sits waiting and silent; bearing witness to the fact that Joseph trusted the LORD more than he trusted what he could see.

Then, on the very night Israel walks out of Egypt, in the chaos of the exodus, with plagues still smoking behind them and Pharaoh's fury still fresh, it is Moses himself who remembers. Moses does not forget the bones of Joseph. In the middle of organizing the greatest deliverance in Israel's history, Moses pauses everything to keep a four-hundred-year-old promise.

Hebrews rightly declares, "that by faith Joseph gave instructions concerning his bones." Yet here in Exodus the shoe is on the other foot. The point in Exodus 13 is that Joseph's faith was not in vain that He who promised is faithful.

This is not really a story about a corpse. This is a story about the faithfulness of the LORD stretching unbroken across four centuries of silence. Joseph believed a promise that neither his children nor grandchildren would see fulfilled in this life. And the LORD our God proved faithful.

Read or sing Psalm 77 I Cried Aloud to God for Help (1-4)

Wednesday (7/29) Read and discuss Romans 9:14–26

What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?" Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? As indeed he says in Hosea,

"Those who were not my people I will call 'my people,'
and her who was not beloved I will call 'beloved.'"
"And in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,'

there they will be called ‘sons of the living God.’” (ESV)

R.C. Sproul writes:

God’s sovereignty in election is revealed so “that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory (v. 23).” The treasure of God’s glory is likened to riches untold, riches that can never be counted. That is what the doctrine of election is about. We must never study the doctrine of predestination in the abstract. In the final analysis, although predestination certainly involves God’s sovereignty – his omnipotence and omniscience – the doctrine is about the riches of God’s glory. Paul cannot rehearse these things without breaking out into doxology: “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!” (11:33a). I initially struggled to embrace the doctrine of election, but contemplating the riches of God’s glory enables me to see the sweetness of this doctrine. It screams not so much sovereignty as unfathomable grace and mercy.

This doctrine more than any other reveals that grace really is amazing. “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I am found” – we sing that hymn not because we were searching but because the hound of heaven found us with the sweetness of his mercy and grace. That is why we talk about doctrines such as justification and election as the doctrines of grace. Grace is the idea here in the text we are considering. From a corrupt mass of clay God chose to make vessels of glory. If you are in Christ Jesus, that is what God has done for you in his mercy and grace. He has made you a vessel of mercy that he prepared before the foundation of the world for glory.

Read or sing Hymn 474 If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee

Thursday (7/30) Read and discuss Isaiah 40:9–31

Go on up to a high mountain,
 O Zion, herald of good news;
lift up your voice with strength,
 O Jerusalem, herald of good news;
 lift it up, fear not;
say to the cities of Judah,
 “Behold your God!”
Behold, the Lord GOD comes with might,
 and his arm rules for him;
behold, his reward is with him,
 and his recompense before him.

He will tend his flock like a shepherd;
 he will gather the lambs in his arms;
he will carry them in his bosom,
 and gently lead those that are with young.

Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand
 and marked off the heavens with a span,
enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure
 and weighed the mountains in scales
 and the hills in a balance?

Who has measured the Spirit of the LORD,
 or what man shows him his counsel?

Whom did he consult,
 and who made him understand?

Who taught him the path of justice,
 and taught him knowledge,
 and showed him the way of understanding?

Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket,
 and are accounted as the dust on the scales;
 behold, he takes up the coastlands like fine dust.

Lebanon would not suffice for fuel,
 nor are its beasts enough for a burnt offering.

All the nations are as nothing before him,
 they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness.

To whom then will you liken God,
 or what likeness compare with him?

An idol! A craftsman casts it,
 and a goldsmith overlays it with gold
 and casts for it silver chains.

He who is too impoverished for an offering
 chooses wood that will not rot;
he seeks out a skillful craftsman
 to set up an idol that will not move.

Do you not know? Do you not hear?
 Has it not been told you from the beginning?
 Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?

It is he who sits above the circle of the earth,
 and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers;
who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,
 and spreads them like a tent to dwell in;
who brings princes to nothing,

and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness.

Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown,
scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth,
when he blows on them, and they wither,
and the tempest carries them off like stubble.

To whom then will you compare me,
that I should be like him? says the Holy One.
Lift up your eyes on high and see:
who created these?
He who brings out their host by number,
calling them all by name;
by the greatness of his might
and because he is strong in power,
not one is missing.

Why do you say, O Jacob,
and speak, O Israel,
“My way is hidden from the LORD,
and my right is disregarded by my God”?
Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The LORD is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He does not faint or grow weary;
his understanding is unsearchable.
He gives power to the faint,
and to him who has no might he increases strength.
Even youths shall faint and be weary,
and young men shall fall exhausted;
but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles;
they shall run and not be weary;
they shall walk and not faint. (ESV)

Alec Motyer writes:

Even if we wouldn't dream of saying it, circumstances can easily prompt the unbidden thought, “Where is God in all this? And why is He not doing something about it? Has He forgotten?” There is, of course, a god who is not there when we need him (1 Kings 18:27), but not the LORD God Almighty. He is ‘unfainting, unwearying,’ that is, He lacks neither energy nor commitment; His strength does not ebb away, nor does He tire of the

task in hand. It's just that 'He is unfathomable in His discernment' – He sees to the heart of the situation in a way we never can and in ways we are not equipped to appreciate. The sooner we learn that lesson the better. It will meet us again in Isaiah in the famous words (55:8), 'My thoughts are not your thoughts ... your ways are not My ways.' But please remember: our inability to 'discern' does not mean that no discernment is at work; our inability to see point or purpose does not mean there is no point or purpose. The more we exalt the greatness of our God, the more we learn to appreciate our smallness, weakness, incapacity. We need to learn not to fret and fume; we need to accept our limitations of knowledge, wisdom, and foresight. Or, as Isaiah tells us, we need to practice 'waiting' for the LORD. Waiting is looking. When Isaiah puts Israel's grouching into words (v. 27) what does he do next? He directs our eyes to the LORD. Look away from yourself, *look at Him*. Next comes, *expect from Him*; He is the ever-giving God – giving strength to surmount the problem, to run the race, and (best of all) to walk the path. But this is not (so to speak) a hypodermic syringe operation – the injection of some transforming serum called 'strength.' It is what the LORD is in Himself: the unfainting, unwearying One imparts His own unfainting unwearying nature.

Friday (7/31) Read and discuss 2 Corinthians 12:1–10

I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it, I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. And I know that this man was caught up into paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter. On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses—though if I should wish to boast, I would not be a fool, for I would be speaking the truth; but I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me. So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (ESV)

Scott Hafemann writes:

When making the move from Paul's day to our own, it is increasingly common to ... [picture] Paul as a mystic. There is no doubt, of course, that he had profound visionary experiences. This should not be denied or played down. The important issue, however, is the role they played in Paul's

ministry. What must be emphasized is that Paul never derived his authority or the content of his message from such supernatural experiences. Even when the polemic situation in Corinth forced him to speak about them, which he considered the act of a fool, he still refused to mention their content.

Paul's gospel does not come from his experience in heaven, but from the history of redemption recorded in the Scriptures, from early Christian tradition concerning the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, and from his own encounter with the resurrected Christ on the Damascus Road. Paul provides no support for a personalized, subjective approach to the truth of the gospel, not to mention the common move in our culture to consider private, immediate experience of more value than God's objective, self-revelation in time and space. As important as such experiences were for Paul personally, his private visions never became the subject of his teaching, nor are they held up as a model for others. In this sense, Paul was no mystic. ...

Paul's refusal to boast in his visions, in contrast to his ready and repeated references to his Damascus Road experience, demonstrates [that Paul his authority upon these visions]. There is no evidence that Paul derived any aspect of his teaching from a mystical experience. Though his visions may have been a central feature of his personal experience, he kept them to himself, at best viewing them as confirmatory but not determinative of his public ministry. It was not Paul's private, visionary experiences that established his apostolic authority and formed his self-understanding (he mentions them only because he is forced to do so by the false apostles). Rather, the "Lord's commendations" (10:18) is seen in Paul's public call, his suffering in public, his public work of the Spirit among the churches, and his public performance of the signs of an apostle, which the Corinthians could see and hear (12:6).

Read or sing Psalm 77 I Cried Aloud to God for Help (5-7)

Saturday (8/1) Read and discuss Exodus 14:1–14

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Tell the people of Israel to turn back and encamp in front of Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, in front of Baal-zephon; you shall encamp facing it, by the sea. For Pharaoh will say of the people of Israel, 'They are wandering in the land; the wilderness has shut them in.' And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD." And they did so.

When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the mind of Pharaoh and his servants was changed toward the people, and they said, "What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" So he made ready his chariot and took his army

with him, and took six hundred chosen chariots and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them. And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the people of Israel while the people of Israel were going out defiantly. The Egyptians pursued them, all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and his horsemen and his army, and overtook them encamped at the sea, by Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon.

When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they feared greatly. And the people of Israel cried out to the LORD. They said to Moses, "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness." And Moses said to the people, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent." (ESV)

Doug Stuart writes:

The sight of hundreds – perhaps thousands – of approaching chariots apparently drove all memory of God's assurances through Moses to the Israelites in 14:1-4 out of their minds. Those assurances were relatively generally worded, and it is possible that many or most Israelites had mistakenly regarded them as promises that Pharaoh's pursuit would not reach them but fail en route. Accordingly, when they actually saw the Egyptian chariotry coming at them and realized their helpless position (from a human point of view) as a poorly armed, untrained, unprepared army encamped with its back to the sea, they panicked. To their credit they at least "cried out to the LORD," showing that they regarded Him as the one to save them.

Verses 11-12 provide a summation of the complaints spoken to Moses. ...The Israelites and those who joined them had hardly been forced to depart from Egypt. They had been only too glad to accept freedom from their bondage. In light of the bitter reproach of the Israelite foremen when Pharaoh had increased their workload as a result of Moses' demands it is conceivable that some percentage of Israelites may have said at one time or another prior to the commencement of the plagues something like "Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians." That that had not been what anyone consistently said, nor was it the prevailing attitude at the time. Now they suddenly "recalled" those words and the "fact" that they had all along thought the exodus was a bad idea. Faced with what they believed to be their imminent death; they redefined their recent history. Their pessimism was ill-founded entirely. The Egyptians were interested in capturing them and returning them to slavery rather than killing them, so their claim that "it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians" was only a statement

of the very thing the Egyptians had in mind for them. So they were wrong on two counts: they thought the Egyptians were coming to kill them, and they did not believe that God would rescue them. This as the first of the post exodus declarations by Israelites that they should have stayed where they came from. The others share considerably the theme of this one: when hardship is encountered, the miserable past suddenly looks like the good old days.

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