

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 30 August 2026

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 105:1-3

Opening Psalm: 40A I Waited Long upon the LORD (1-5)

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: Galatians 2:20

Psalm of Preparation: 42C As Thirsts the Hart for Water Brooks

Old Covenant Reading: Exodus 15:22-27

New Covenant Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Sermon Title: *Bitter Water Made Sweet*

Psalm of Response: 40A I Waited Long upon the LORD (6-10)

Confession of Faith: Apostles Creed (p. 851)

Gloria Patri (Hymn 572)

Closing Hymn: 429 Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing

PM Worship

98C Sing a New Song to Jehovah

119R O LORD, You Are the Righteous One

491 Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee

Old Covenant Reading: Jeremiah 17:5-10

New Covenant Reading: 2 Corinthians 13:1-10

Sermon Title: *Test Yourself*

Suggested Preparations

Monday (8/24) Read and discuss Exodus 15:22–27

Then Moses made Israel set out from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness of Shur. They went three days in the wilderness and found no water. When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter; therefore it was named Marah. And the people grumbled against Moses, saying, “What shall we drink?” And he cried to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a log, and he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.

There the LORD made for them a statute and a rule, and there he tested them, saying, “If you will diligently listen to the voice of the LORD your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, your healer.”

Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees, and they encamped there by the water. (ESV)

Doug Stuart writes:

From a human point of view, it is entirely understandable that the Israelites would have begun to worry about water by the third day without finding any. They and their animals probably had consumed nearly all the water they had carried with them in skins, and it is not inconceivable that as they approached Marah in expectation of being able to drink all they wanted, many of them drank their last water and/or gave it to the animals. Accordingly, finding foul water at Marah was not merely a disappointment but a cause of panic. “Bitter” water is often clear so that it looks potable but in fact contains large percentages of dissolved mineral salts that render it undrinkable. Thirsty people and animals will try to drink any water they find, but if they find it simply offensive, they will resist any consumption unless delirious with thirst. The Israelites may not yet have been at the delirious stage, but they certainly were not happy about what they encountered at Marah. This represented a test of faith of a sort they had not before experienced. It bore some resemblance to what the Egyptians had to deal with when the Nile was turned to blood, but that was a problem alleviated by digging temporary wells. Some Israelites may even have tried to dig around the edges of the water at Marah, presumably without success.

Their question, “What are we to drink?” was not in itself outrageous or even unfair. Their sin manifested itself rather in their attitude, which is suggested in the statement at the beginning of v. 24, “So the people grumbled against Moses.” Moses was, of course, God’s human representative among them and a likely target for blame. What is noteworthy, however, is that the people were following the pillar of cloud and therefore knew perfectly well that it was Yahweh who had led them to this location. But since Moses was the LORD’s spokesman, they expected the answer to their complaint to come from him. The people did not have what they had expected and failed to trust God to provide it. Since the Garden of Eden that has been a formula for disobedience.

Read or sing Psalm 40A I Waited Long upon the LORD (1-5)

Tuesday (8/25) Read and discuss Read and discuss Exodus 15:11–21

“Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods?
Who is like you, majestic in holiness,
awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?
You stretched out your right hand;
the earth swallowed them.

“You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed;
you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode.
The peoples have heard; they tremble;
pangs have seized the inhabitants of Philistia.
Now are the chiefs of Edom dismayed;
trembling seizes the leaders of Moab;
all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away.
Terror and dread fall upon them;
because of the greatness of your arm, they are still as a stone,
till your people, O LORD, pass by,
till the people pass by whom you have purchased.
You will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain,
the place, O LORD, which you have made for your abode,
the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established.
The LORD will reign forever and ever.”

For when the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and his horsemen went into the sea, the LORD brought back the waters of the sea upon them, but the people of Israel walked on dry ground in the midst of the sea. Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women went out after her with tambourines and dancing. And Miriam sang to them:

“Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously;
the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.” (ESV)

Speaking of verse 18, Christopher Wright comments:

The song reaches its climax affirming that Yahweh reigns – the first announcement of the Kingdom of God in the Bible. Yahweh’s name is put emphatically first in the sentence, implying that it is Yahweh who reigns and no other – certainly not Pharaoh, nor any of his gods. And not Baal either – the god whose reign was acclaimed in the Ugaritic myths of ancient Canaan.

Yahweh reigns: Yahweh alone and Yahweh forever.

The verb is in the imperfect tense, which gives it a flexibility of meaning. Coming at the end of the narrative content of the song, it means: “Yahweh has demonstrated that He is king above all the claims of Pharaoh; therefore

Yahweh is now reigning in His mighty power; and so *Yahweh will go on reigning* in all the future that lies ahead.”

Three important points emerge for the significance of the Kingdom of God in the rest of the Bible.

First, it is a polemical claim. That is, it affirms that Yahweh is king, as over against all the claimed and resistant sovereignty of Pharaoh. Yahweh is king because He has won the victory over all that oppose Him. That will remain true and be supremely demonstrated in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. God’s kingship means victory over evil.

Second, it is an “interested” claim in the context in which it is made. Yahweh has demonstrated His kingship precisely on behalf of [His people]. ...

Third, and most importantly, it is an eternal kingship. The final two words of the song, “for ever and ever,” doubly emphasize this. Yahweh’s victory over Pharaoh will not turn out to be a lucky break, vulnerable to being overturned by some stronger enemy.

Read or sing Psalm 42C As Thirsts the Hart for Water Brooks

Wednesday (8/26) Read and discuss 1 Corinthians 10:1–13

For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.” We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. (ESV)

Richard Hays writes:

When Paul begins to retell the story of Israel in the wilderness, he refers to the Israelites in the wilderness as “our fathers.” It may seem odd that Paul would describe the Israelites in this way in a letter addressed to the predominantly Gentile congregation at Corinth, who of course are not the physical descendants of Israel, but Paul’s language reveals something essential about his understanding of the church. His Gentile converts, he believes, have been grafted into the covenant people in such a way that they belong to Israel. Thus, the story of Israel is for the Gentile Corinthians not somebody else’s story; it is the story of their own authentic spiritual ancestors. Whether the Corinthians were used to thinking of themselves in this way is doubtful, but Paul is trying to teach them to think in these terms; “I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters.”

The linkage is strengthened by the bold metaphorical correspondences that Paul sketches in verses 1-4. Just as the Corinthians have left behind their pagan past through baptism into Christ, so also the Israelites after leaving Egypt were “baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea;” the two elements correspond to Spirit and water in Christian baptism. Just as the Corinthians receive spiritual food and drink at the Lord’s Supper, so also the Israelites were given spiritual food and drink in the wilderness: manna (cf: Exodus 16:1-36) and water from the rock. To make the correspondence complete, Paul goes so far as to suggest that Christ was present with Israel in their wanderings: the rock from which they drank “was Christ.” Thus, in every respect Israel enjoyed the grace and presence of God. ...

The important point in verses 1-4 is that Israel – whose legacy the Corinthians have inherited – experienced powerful spiritual signs of God’s favor and sustaining power. Paul’s summary narration highlights the fact that these signs were given to all the Israelites: the word “all” appears five times in these verses. All were “baptized,” and all enjoyed the blessings of spiritual food and drink. And yet, despite these signs of grace, “God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness.” The verb “struck down” conveys the vivid and appalling image of the bodies of the Israelites strewn across the desert sand. With that sobering note, Paul begins to develop the hortatory application of Israel’s story to the situation of his Corinthian readers: Just because you have received spiritual blessings, he says, do not suppose that you are exempt from God’s judgment.

Read or sing Psalm 40A I Waited Long upon the LORD (6-10)

Thursday (8/27) Read and discuss Jeremiah 17:5–10

Thus says the LORD:

“Cursed is the man who trusts in man

and makes flesh his strength,
whose heart turns away from the LORD.
He is like a shrub in the desert,
and shall not see any good come.
He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness,
in an uninhabited salt land.

“Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD,
whose trust is the LORD.
He is like a tree planted by water,
that sends out its roots by the stream,
and does not fear when heat comes,
for its leaves remain green,
and is not anxious in the year of drought,
for it does not cease to bear fruit.”

The heart is deceitful above all things,
and desperately sick;
who can understand it?
“I the LORD search the heart
and test the mind,
to give every man according to his ways,
according to the fruit of his deeds.” (ESV)

Terence Fretheim writes:

Those who turn away from God and put their trust in hum beings are cursed, that is, their lives are marked by judgment – the divinely mediated negative effects of such misplaced trust. They are likened to a desert shrub that lives in the parched and salt-filled lands of the wilderness. They will not experience the seasonal changes that bring life-giving water on a regular basis and will shrivel up in the heat and drought. At the same time, such shrubs commonly do stay alive in the desert, so the metaphor is inexact. This word is a reminder to exilic readers regarding the negative effects of a lack of trust in the LORD.

On the other hand, those who trust in the LORD are blessed, that is, their lives will be marked by bounty and well-being. They will be like a tree that is planted near a steady supply of water so that its roots can depend on this regular source of nourishment. When heat or drought do come, and come they will, its leaves will stay green and it will continue to bear fruit. In the context of judgment, this means that those who are faithful to the LORD will survive the heat of the LORD’s anger, or any other adversity, and continue to thrive.

Friday (8/28) Read and discuss 2 Corinthians 13:1-10

This is the third time I am coming to you. Every charge must be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. I warned those who sinned before and all the others, and I warn them now while absent, as I did when present on my second visit, that if I come again I will not spare them—since you seek proof that Christ is speaking in me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you. For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but in dealing with you we will live with him by the power of God.

Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test! I hope you will find out that we have not failed the test. But we pray to God that you may not do wrong—not that we may appear to have met the test, but that you may do what is right, though we may seem to have failed. For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. Your restoration is what we pray for. For this reason I write these things while I am away from you, that when I come I may not have to be severe in my use of the authority that the Lord has given me for building up and not for tearing down. (ESV)

Tom Wright comments:

The Corinthians had been asking Paul for proof that the Messiah really was living and speaking in and through him. Paul has assured them that plenty of proof will be forthcoming if they are so bold as to challenge him in person (13:3). But now he turns the tables on them and suggests that they too, should submit to a self-test. Before he arrives, they would be well advised to run through a checklist of the signs that indicate whether the Messiah's life, his crucified and risen life, is present. For Paul, that is the very center of what it means to be a Christian. When you look at yourself in the mirror, do you see someone in whom King Jesus is living and active, or someone who once knew Him but now seems not to? When you listen to the sort of things you yourself say, does it sound like words that might have come from King Jesus Himself, or are you simply talking the same way everyone else does? When you find yourself with your brother and sister Christians, do you respond to them as brothers and sisters, as people in whom you see King Jesus also living, or are they just 'other people'? And when you settle down and quieten your mind and heart, to pray and wait for God, do you know and sense the presence, the life and the love of King Jesus close to you, within you, warming and sustaining guarding and guiding, checking and directing you?

These are searching tests, but they are the kind of thing Paul has in mind. And he longs to find that they have passed the test. ... It wouldn't say much about his apostleship, after all, if he turned out to be a genuine Christian and

all the people in a church he'd founded turned out to be fakes. He has no interest, any more than he has had throughout the letter, in proving himself to be someone extra special. He is simply an apostle of the crucified and risen Messiah – though that of course is quite special enough. It isn't a matter of his wanting to demonstrate his own status over against theirs, as though they were in a lawsuit one against the other. He is only interested in working for the truth (verse 8). If that means that he will appear weak and they strong, so be it.

Read or sing Hymn 429 Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing

Saturday (8/29) Read and discuss Exodus 15:22–27

Then Moses made Israel set out from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness of Shur. They went three days in the wilderness and found no water. When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter; therefore it was named Marah. And the people grumbled against Moses, saying, “What shall we drink?” And he cried to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a log, and he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.

There the LORD made for them a statute and a rule, and there he tested them, saying, “If you will diligently listen to the voice of the LORD your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, your healer.”

Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees, and they encamped there by the water. (ESV)

Duane Garrett offers some helpful theological observations on this passage:

1. God tests His people to see if they look to Him in time of need. There are also seasons of prosperity, as indicated by the oasis at Elim, that God gives His people in order to induce them to do right by positive encouragement.
2. As a general rule, a life of obedience to God leads to well-being and disobedience leads to woe. There are exceptions to this, as when God is testing someone who fears Him. Prosperity is not necessarily a sign of God's approval and hardship is not necessarily a sign of one's guilt. But the general rule, as described in the oracular poem of vv. 25-26, is still true.
3. The Marah episode is an apt metaphor for the believer's pilgrimage, as everyone goes through experiences both of the Marah variety and of the Elim variety. This echoes 1 Pet. 1:6-7, that we rejoice in our election even though now we endure various trials, knowing that these trials refine faith as fire refines gold.

4. It would have been better for Israel to have cried out vigorously and with some protesting to God than to mumble against Moses. At least then they would have been clear about who was responsible for their well-being. The prayers of the Psalms can be extraordinarily direct, but the important point is that the psalmist, even when distraught, is looking to God for help. The fact that the Israelites were distressed was no great offense; being low on water for themselves, their children and their livestock was very hard, and finding water that turned out to be impossible to drink would be bitter indeed. Their offense was their complete reliance upon, and subsequent hostility toward, Moses. Their focus should have been on God.

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