Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 1 November 2026

AM Worship
Call to Worship: Psalm 105:1-3
Opening Hymn: 486 Rejoice, Believer, in the Lord
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: Ephesians 2:13-16
Hymn of Preparation: 406 Jesus, with Thy Church Abide
Old Covenant Reading: 1 Samuel 6:1-7:1
New Covenant Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:26-31
Sermon Title: *More Than You Bargained For*
Psalm of Response: 126B When in His Might the Lord Arose
Confession of Faith: Apostles Creed (p. 851)
Gloria Patri (Hymn 572)
Closing Psalm: 117C Praise Jehovah, All Ye Nations

PM Worship
448 Union with Thee
450 Jesus, Lover of My Soul
530 Teach Me Thy Way, O Lord
Old Covenant Reading: Jeremiah 9:23-24
New Covenant Reading: 2 Peter 1:1-2
Sermon Title: *Knowing God*

Suggested Preparations

Monday (10/26) Read and discuss 1 Samuel 6

The ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven months. And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners and said, “What shall we do with the ark of the LORD? Tell us with what we shall send it to its place.” They said, “If you send away the ark of the God of Israel, do not send it empty, but by all means return him a guilt offering. Then you will be healed, and it will be known to you why his hand does not turn away from you.” And they said, “What is the guilt offering that we shall return to him?” They

answered, “Five golden tumors and five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines, for the same plague was on all of you and on your lords. So you must make images of your tumors and images of your mice that ravage the land, and give glory to the God of Israel. Perhaps he will lighten his hand from off you and your gods and your land. Why should you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? After he had dealt severely with them, did they not send the people away, and they departed? Now then, take and prepare a new cart and two milk cows on which there has never come a yoke, and yoke the cows to the cart, but take their calves home, away from them. And take the ark of the LORD and place it on the cart and put in a box at its side the figures of gold, which you are returning to him as a guilt offering. Then send it off and let it go its way and watch. If it goes up on the way to its own land, to Beth-shemesh, then it is he who has done us this great harm, but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that struck us; it happened to us by coincidence.”

The men did so, and took two milk cows and yoked them to the cart and shut up their calves at home. And they put the ark of the LORD on the cart and the box with the golden mice and the images of their tumors. And the cows went straight in the direction of Beth-shemesh along one highway, lowing as they went. They turned neither to the right nor to the left, and the lords of the Philistines went after them as far as the border of Beth-shemesh. Now the people of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley. And when they lifted up their eyes and saw the ark, they rejoiced to see it. The cart came into the field of Joshua of Beth-shemesh and stopped there. A great stone was there. And they split up the wood of the cart and offered the cows as a burnt offering to the LORD. And the Levites took down the ark of the LORD and the box that was beside it, in which were the golden figures, and set them upon the great stone. And the men of Beth-shemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices on that day to the LORD. And when the five lords of the Philistines saw it, they returned that day to Ekron.

These are the golden tumors that the Philistines returned as a guilt offering to the LORD: one for Ashdod, one for Gaza, one for Ashkelon, one for Gath, one for Ekron, and the golden mice, according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords, both fortified cities and unwalled villages. The great stone beside which they set down the ark of the LORD is a witness to this day in the field of Joshua of Beth-shemesh.

And he struck some of the men of Beth-shemesh, because they looked upon the ark of the LORD. He struck seventy men of them, and the people mourned because the LORD had struck the people with a great blow. Then the men of Beth-shemesh said, “Who is able to stand before the LORD, this holy God? And to whom shall he go up away from us?” So they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kiriath-jearim, saying, “The Philistines have returned the ark of the LORD. Come down and take it up to you.”

And the men of Kiriath-jearim came and took up the ark of the LORD and brought it to the house of Abinadab on the hill. And they consecrated his son Eleazar to have charge of the ark of the LORD. (ESV)

Rick Phillips writes:

> Despite all they had experienced and said, the Philistines still entertained doubts whether the plague had really been caused by the LORD. So they devised a scheme to determine God's ways: "Now then, take and prepare a new cart and two milk cows on which there was never come a yoke, and yoke the cows to the cart, but take their calves home, away from them. And take the ark fo the LORD and place it on the cart and put in a box at its side the figures of gold, which you are returning to Him as a guilt offering. Then send it off and let it go its way and watch." The making of a new cart and the use of cows not previously yoked is an expression of respect. But the Philistines added a wrinkle, using cows that had recently calved. Anyone who has been around farm animals knows that mother cows and their nursing calves are practically inseparable. Thus, if the cows went away on their own to the nearby Jewish city, it could only be a confirmation from the LORD. …
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> God's accommodation to the Philistines' procedure should not encourage us to rely on superstitious approaches to discerning God's will. Subjective signs crafted out of the folly of our minds are no way to discern God's will; instead, they invite us to divinize our own hunches and sometimes provide an opportunity for Satan to deceive us. Instead, we should remember the testimony of Peter, who witnessed several clear divine revelations, including the audible speaking of God's voice. Yet Peter tells us that "we have something more sure, the prophetic word," that is the Bible, "to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place" (2 Peter 1:19). If we want God's revelation to us, the place to look is in the holy Scriptures, which God has given as a lamp to our feet and light for out path.

Read or sing Hymn 486 Rejoice, Believer, in the Lord

Tuesday (10/27) Read and discuss 1 Samuel 5

When the Philistines captured the ark of God, they brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it into the house of Dagon and set it up beside Dagon. And when the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and put him back in his place. But when they rose early on the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the LORD, and the head of Dagon and both his hands were lying cut off on the threshold. Only the trunk of Dagon was left to him. This is why the priests of Dagon and all who enter the house of Dagon do not tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.

The hand of the LORD was heavy against the people of Ashdod, and he terrified and afflicted them with tumors, both Ashdod and its territory. And when the men of Ashdod saw how things were, they said, “The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for his hand is hard against us and against Dagon our god.” So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said, “What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?” They answered, “Let the ark of the God of Israel be brought around to Gath.” So they brought the ark of the God of Israel there. But after they had brought it around, the hand of the LORD was against the city, causing a very great panic, and he afflicted the men of the city, both young and old, so that tumors broke out on them. So they sent the ark of God to Ekron. But as soon as the ark of God came to Ekron, the people of Ekron cried out, “They have brought around to us the ark of the God of Israel to kill us and our people.” They sent therefore and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said, “Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it return to its own place, that it may not kill us and our people.” For there was a deathly panic throughout the whole city. The hand of God was very heavy there. The men who did not die were struck with tumors, and the cry of the city went up to heaven. (ESV)

Andrew Steinmann writes:

> From a Christian standpoint, an astonishing feature of this narrative is what did *not* happen. Despite the deadly results of the Philistines’ capture of Yahweh’s ark and His humiliation, even decapitation, of their idol Dagon, they did not repent of their idolatry nor believe in the God who was so obviously superior to their own. Although they discerned that the punishment came from Yahweh, the God of Israel, never did they call upon Yahweh by name to relent, let alone forgive. They stubbornly clung to their false god despite the increasing severity of the consequences. God desires all people to be saved and promises that “everyone who calls on the name of Yahweh will be saved;” in Rom 10:9-13 Paul quotes that verse after explaining that every who confesses that “Jesus is Lord” and believes in his resurrection will be saved.” To that end, he may send calamities to move people to contrition so that when they hear the Gospel, they may believe and be saved. … The total depravity of fallen human nature is on display when people refuse to repent and call on His saving name.

Read or sing Hymn 406 Jesus, with Thy Church Abide

Wednesday (10/28) Read and discuss 1 Corinthians 1:26–31

For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness

and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.” (ESV)

Richard Hays writes:

> God’s calling excludes human boasting. To illustrate his point, Paul turns the spotlight on the Corinthians themselves. Even though a few members of the community may have enjoyed relative affluence, this church is on the whole not a gathering of the elite. “Not many” of them were highly educated or wealthy or powerful. Nonetheless, as Paul has insisted, they have been called by God as God’s own covenant people. Paul reminds them of this calling. God has not called Caesar or persons of Senatorial rank to represent the gospel in the world; instead He has called this motley assembly which embraces freedmen, tradespeople, and slaves – along with a few people of higher standing (hence, “not many,” rather than “none”). The mixed socioeconomic status of the church was one of the most striking features of the early Christian movement. Then, as now, voluntary societies tended to be socially homogeneous. The fact that the early Christian assembly brought together people of diverse rank and background who acknowledge one another as “brothers and sisters” was one of its distinctive characteristics.
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> God’s mysterious election of this unlikely group of people symbolizes the pattern of eschatological reversal, deeply imbedded in Israel’s prophetic tradition, which also characterizes the message and ministry of Jesus. “God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are” (vv. 27-28). This account of God’s corresponds closely to the story in Hannah’s prayer and Mary’s song of praise. God “raises up the poor from the dust,” and He has “brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly.” Or, in terms of Jesus’ own vision, the tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of those who appear to be respectable and religious.
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> Paul’s understanding of the cross leads him to a similar understanding. If God “justifies the ungodly” (Rom 4:5), then one would expect that the church will be a mixed lot. And, indeed, that was empirically the case in Corinth. In Paul’s view, the relatively low status of most of the Corinthian Christians is a sign of what God did in the cross and therefore is doing in the world: overturning expectations. God is creating His new community out of unimpressive material precisely to exemplify the power of His own unmerited grace. The social composition of the church is an outward and visible sign of God’s paradoxical election.

Thursday (10/29) Read and discuss Jeremiah 9:23–24

Thus says the LORD: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.” (ESV)

Terence Fretheim writes:

> Verses 23-24 seem to be unrelated to vv. 25-26, though they may be linked by a common rejection of trust in any virtue, possession, or practice that blurs the centrality of trust in God. Exilic readers appear to be the audience addressed. First, in a wisdom saying in triadic form, God clarifies the nature of the present situation (vv. 23-24). The exiles have experienced the judgment of God in all its death-dealing horror through the actions of Babylonian armies. The “Why?!” questions, calling for wisdom and discernment, have been fielded and addressed (vv. 12-16). But that is not God’s only word or last word to the exiles. This could be a general response to a people who did boast in wisdom and riches, but the focus is on the experience of judgment.
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> God makes clear that the divine action takes place “in the *earth*” (wherever and whenever), and not in arbitrariness or vindictiveness, but “in steadfast love, justice and righteousness.” These words refer to God, not to the characteristics of human beings brought about by God’s actions. Even in judgment, whatever the appearances (such as the violence of the Babylonian armies), God’s actions are to be so characterized. The judgment has occurred because God is just and does not let sin and evil go unchecked in the world. But in the midst of the judgment, God’s love remains steadfast and God remains faithful to commitments in the relationship with Israel (the basic meaning of “righteousness”).
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> God takes pleasure (!) in acting in these ways, because in so doing God is being true to God’s own self. The people are to understand and know that their God is this kind of God. In their knowledge of this kind of God they are to boast. The boasting is, in effect, a confession of faith. The great judgments through which they have passed, and any future events that they might anticipate, are not to be ascribed fundamentally to human wisdom or strength or wealth, however much human beings were agents of God’s actions. Notably, however, these human “gifts” are not considered negative in and of themselves; so the text does not call for a divestment of them, but rather a proper understanding of their status in life. The confession of faith is to focus on God – a God of steadfast love, justice, and righteousness – and not on self or one’s own virtues and possessions.

Read or sing Psalm 126B When in His Might the Lord Arose

Friday (10/30) Read and discuss 2 Peter 1:1–2

Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. (ESV)

R.C. Sproul writes:

> Here Peter claims the highest authority that anyone could claim in the early church – that of being an Apostle. At the same time, like the Apostle Paul, he identifies himself as a slave. He is simultaneously the highest and the lowest of Christian society. The word Peter uses here, *doulos*, is the same word that Paul uses in Romans; it refers to a purchased slave. There is a close connection in the Scriptures between the word *doulos* and the word *kyrios*. A *kyrios* was the lord or master; one could not be a *kyrios* unless he owned slaves. Carrying the metaphor even further, the Apostle Paul wrote, "You were bought at a price."
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> Peter and Paul saw themselves as slaves of Christ, and that idea extends to everyone purchased by Jesus. We are all bondservants of Christ. The supreme irony is that Jesus comes to set us free from slavery, and He tells us, "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). Those who are delivered from the slavery of sin take on a new kind of slavery; they become slaves to Christ. If you think you are free outside of bondage to Christ, your freedom is so much slavery. We have to lose our lives to find them; we have to give them away to get them back. All of that and more is found simply in Peter's self-designation.

Read or sing Psalm 117C Praise Jehovah, All Ye Nations

Saturday (10/31) Read and discuss 1 Samuel 6

The ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven months. And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners and said, "What shall we do with the ark of the LORD? Tell us with what we shall send it to its place." They said, "If you send away the ark of the God of Israel, do not send it empty, but by all means return him a guilt offering. Then you will be healed, and it will be known to you why his hand does not turn away from you." And they said, "What is the guilt offering that we shall return to him?" They

answered, “Five golden tumors and five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines, for the same plague was on all of you and on your lords. So you must make images of your tumors and images of your mice that ravage the land, and give glory to the God of Israel. Perhaps he will lighten his hand from off you and your gods and your land. Why should you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? After he had dealt severely with them, did they not send the people away, and they departed? Now then, take and prepare a new cart and two milk cows on which there has never come a yoke, and yoke the cows to the cart, but take their calves home, away from them. And take the ark of the LORD and place it on the cart and put in a box at its side the figures of gold, which you are returning to him as a guilt offering. Then send it off and let it go its way and watch. If it goes up on the way to its own land, to Beth-shemesh, then it is he who has done us this great harm, but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that struck us; it happened to us by coincidence.”

The men did so, and took two milk cows and yoked them to the cart and shut up their calves at home. And they put the ark of the LORD on the cart and the box with the golden mice and the images of their tumors. And the cows went straight in the direction of Beth-shemesh along one highway, lowing as they went. They turned neither to the right nor to the left, and the lords of the Philistines went after them as far as the border of Beth-shemesh. Now the people of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley. And when they lifted up their eyes and saw the ark, they rejoiced to see it. The cart came into the field of Joshua of Beth-shemesh and stopped there. A great stone was there. And they split up the wood of the cart and offered the cows as a burnt offering to the LORD. And the Levites took down the ark of the LORD and the box that was beside it, in which were the golden figures, and set them upon the great stone. And the men of Beth-shemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices on that day to the LORD. And when the five lords of the Philistines saw it, they returned that day to Ekron.

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And he struck some of the men of Beth-shemesh, because they looked upon the ark of the LORD. He struck seventy men of them, and the people mourned because the LORD had struck the people with a great blow. Then the men of Beth-shemesh said, “Who is able to stand before the LORD, this holy God? And to whom shall he go up away from us?” So they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kiriath-jearim, saying, “The Philistines have returned the ark of the LORD. Come down and take it up to you.”

And the men of Kiriath-jearim came and took up the ark of the LORD and brought it to the house of Abinadab on the hill. And they consecrated his son Eleazar to have charge of the ark of the LORD. (ESV)

Rick Phillips writes:

> So God's holy ark returned to Israel after seven months in Philistine hands. The Philistines had wanted only to escape God's wrath and discern enough of God's will to think themselves free from His judgment. Now, as the ark returned to. Israel, we ask, "How can His people abide in the presence of so holy a God?"
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> The first answer is that God's people are to receive God's presence *with joy*. We see such joy modeled by the people of Beth-shemesh: they "were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley. And when they lifted up their eyes and saw the ark, they rejoiced to see it." The Philistines may have wanted only to be rid of so holy a God, but the LORD's people knew of His mighty grace. Nehemiah said that "the joy of the LORD is your strength." Christians are strongest when we are rejoicing in the LORD, and God is never more fully praised by us than when we most rejoice in Him.
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> Second, God's people are to dwell with Him *in reverence*. It turns out that Beth-shemesh was a Levitical city in which the clan of Kohath lived, the clan assigned to care for the ark of the covenant within the tabernacle. It is not surprising, then, for them to arrange an immediate sacrifice: "the cart came into the field of Joshua of Beth-shemesh and stopped there. A great stone was there. And they split up the wood of the cart and offered the cows as a burnt offering to the LORD."
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> What is surprising, however, is their failure to observe the commandment that only bulls be offered. This was followed by a more fatal transgression. The ark was set on a great stone in the field of a man named Joshua. There, God "struck some of the men of Beth-shemesh because they looked upon the ark of the LORD. He struck seventy men of them, and the people mourned because the LORD had struck the people with a great blow."
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> Remarkably, the Levites had allowed God's holy ark to become a tourist attraction. What a sight it must have been to the eyes of country folk: a large, shining golden box, adorned with such finely crafted angels that God had employed craftsmen specially anointed by the Holy Spirit. How natural it was for crowds to gather to see the great ark of the covenant, now in Beth-shemesh for the first time! But what seems natural to us is sometimes sacrilege to God. Indeed, the LORD had specified that only priests were allowed even to see the exterior of the ark, while not even the Kohathites were allowed to look inside. According to Numbers 4:20, no. one was to "look on the holy things even for a moment, lest they die." This rule expressed the utter holiness of the God represented by the ark. The [first duty of the priests], which they would have realized with even a cursory inspection of God's Word, was to safeguard the ark from view.

The example of Beth-shemesh reminds us that we do not show reverence for God by treating Him according to our own wisdom and sentiments, but only by obeying he commands and precepts of His Word.

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