

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 18 October 2026

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 98:1-3

Opening Psalm: 51C God, Be Merciful to Me (1-4)

Confession of Sin

Most holy and merciful Father; We acknowledge and confess before You; Our sinful nature prone to evil and slothful in good; And all our shortcomings and offenses. You alone know how often we have sinned; In wandering from Your ways; In wasting Your gifts; In forgetting Your love. But You, O Lord, have pity upon us; Who are ashamed and sorry for all wherein we have displeased You. Teach us to hate our errors; Cleanse us from our secret faults; And forgive our sins for the sake of Your dear Son. And O most holy and loving Father; Help us we beseech You; To live in Your light and walk in Your ways; According to the commandments of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: Hebrews 2:17-18

Hymn of Preparation: 234 The God of Abraham Praise

Old Covenant Reading: 1 Samuel 4:12-22

New Covenant Reading: Ephesians 3:14-21

Sermon Title: *The End of the Line*

Psalm of Response: 90A Lord, You Have Been Our Dwelling Place

Confession of Faith: Ten Commandments

Gloria Patri (Hymn 572)

Closing Psalm: 51C God, Be Merciful to Me (5-8)

PM Worship

402 Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation

237 When All Your Mercies, O My God

410 Christian Hearts in Love United

Old Covenant Reading: Exodus 18:13-27

New Covenant Reading: Acts 6:1-7

Sermon Title: *Shared Ministry*

Suggested Preparations

Monday (10/12) Read and discuss 1 Samuel 4:12–22

A man of Benjamin ran from the battle line and came to Shiloh the same day, with his clothes torn and with dirt on his head. When he arrived, Eli was sitting on his seat by the road watching, for his heart trembled for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city and told the news, all the city cried out. When Eli heard the sound of the outcry, he said, “What is this uproar?” Then the man hurried and came and told Eli. Now Eli was ninety-eight years old and his eyes were set so that he could not see. And the man said to Eli, “I am he who has come from the battle; I fled from the battle today.” And he said, “How did it go, my son?” He who brought the news answered and said, “Israel has fled

before the Philistines, and there has also been a great defeat among the people. Your two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God has been captured.” As soon as he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell over backward from his seat by the side of the gate, and his neck was broken and he died, for the man was old and heavy. He had judged Israel forty years.

Now his daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was pregnant, about to give birth. And when she heard the news that the ark of God was captured, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she bowed and gave birth, for her pains came upon her. And about the time of her death the women attending her said to her, “Do not be afraid, for you have borne a son.” But she did not answer or pay attention. And she named the child Ichabod, saying, “The glory has departed from Israel!” because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband. And she said, “The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured.” (ESV)

Rick Phillips writes:

As Eli waited, the high priest “was sitting on his seat by the road watching, for his heart trembled for the ark of God.” This is a telling remark: Eli seems always to be sitting down and waiting when he should be standing up and acting. In this instance, we might expect Eli at least to be waiting optimistically, sure of good news. After all, the ark of the covenant had gone into battle with Israel. When the ark arrived in the camp, Israel’s soldiers “gave a mighty shout,” and when the Philistines learned that the ark had appeared, they “were afraid.” So what did Eli know that the army and the Philistines did not know? Why was he trembling with fear as he waited for news?

There are two answers to this question. The first is that Eli had received a prophecy from an unnamed “man of God” (1 Sam 2:27). Because Eli had allowed his sons to sin in the tabernacle, he was told that “all the descendants of your house shall die by the sword of men. And this that shall come upon your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, shall be the sign to you: both of them shall die on the same day” (2:33-34). This prophecy was later confirmed in God’s first message through Samuel: “I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them” (3:13).

With these prophecies ringing in his ears, we understand why Eli trembled on the day that his two sons had taken the ark into battle. Could this be the day when God’s judgment would fall? The hearts of sinful men are always uneasy in times of danger because their consciences testify to their guilt before God. John Calvin sagely commented, “He who is the boldest despiser of God is of all men the most startled at the rustle of a falling leaf.” Because of God’s threatened judgment on all sin, only those whose sins

have been cleansed by the blood of Christ can face the storms of life with peace in their hearts.

There is a second reason why Eli trembled with anxiety. He was surely aware that the ark was to go forth only at God's command. In all of Israel's great victories, God sent His people into battle, promising His mighty help: the people did not rush into battle on their own, commanding God to bring His power. Even godly men and women will lose their peace when they act in ways contrary to God's Word. The only safe way for us to face the troubles of life is, first, to be justified with God through faith in Christ, and second, to act in obedience to God's Word.

Read or sing Psalm 51C God, Be Merciful to Me (1-4)

Tuesday (10/13) Read and discuss Read and discuss 1 Samuel 4:1–11

And the word of Samuel came to all Israel.

Now Israel went out to battle against the Philistines. They encamped at Ebenezer, and the Philistines encamped at Aphek. The Philistines drew up in line against Israel, and when the battle spread, Israel was defeated before the Philistines, who killed about four thousand men on the field of battle. And when the people came to the camp, the elders of Israel said, "Why has the LORD defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD here from Shiloh, that it may come among us and save us from the power of our enemies." So the people sent to Shiloh and brought from there the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, who is enthroned on the cherubim. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.

As soon as the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel gave a mighty shout, so that the earth resounded. And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shouting, they said, "What does this great shouting in the camp of the Hebrews mean?" And when they learned that the ark of the LORD had come to the camp, the Philistines were afraid, for they said, "A god has come into the camp." And they said, "Woe to us! For nothing like this has happened before. Woe to us! Who can deliver us from the power of these mighty gods? These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with every sort of plague in the wilderness. Take courage, and be men, O Philistines, lest you become slaves to the Hebrews as they have been to you; be men and fight."

So the Philistines fought, and Israel was defeated, and they fled, every man to his home. And there was a very great slaughter, for thirty-thousand-foot soldiers of Israel fell. And the ark of God was captured, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died. (ESV)

Andrew Steinmann writes:

The title for the ark when it was taken from Shiloh is unique and one of the most complete in the OT: “the ark of the covenant of Yahweh of armies, who is enthroned [over] the cherubim.” This emphasis that Israel was seeking to use the ark to make Yahweh into the king they would later request: a king to judge them, go out before them, and fight their battles. There is an ironic anticipation of that request here. In all their idolatrous actions they rejected Yahweh as their king, and so they would eventually seek to be ruled by a human monarch.

The text emphasizes that when the ark was retrieved from Shiloh, Eli’s sons Hophni and Phinehas were with it. They must have accompanied the ark as it was transported into the camp and then into the battle because they were killed on the battlefield when the ark was captured. These two unfaithful priests were complicit in the idolatrous use of the ark, demonstrating their lack of faith in Yahweh. The presence of these priests and the ark gave the Israelite army a false confidence, as evidenced. By their loud shout when the ark entered the camp.

Throughout these verses the ark is called “the ark ... of Yahweh” or “the ark of God.” Using the ark was using God’s name. The elders of Israel and Hophni and Phinehas by their actions – and Eli by his inaction of not preventing the ark’s misuse – were all guilty of breaking the Second Commandment. Luther reminds us: “If you are asked, ‘How do you understand the Second Commandment? What does it mean to misuse or take the name of God in vain?’ you should answer briefly: ‘It is a misuse of God’s name if we call upon the LORD God in any way whatsoever to support falsehood or wrong of any kind.’ Therefore what this commandment forbids is appealing to God’s name falsely ... when our heart knows or should know that the facts are otherwise.” And in a passage that applies to the priests Hophni and Phinehas and to pastors today, Luther reminds us: “The greatest abuse, however, occurs in spiritual matters, which pertain to the conscience, when false preachers arise and peddle their lying nonsense as the Word of God.” The Israelite misuse of the ark reminds us that in addition to deceiving others by using God’s name in vain, we can also deceive ourselves. His is the only saving name, and both the deceivers and the deceived will be cast into the lack of fire.

Read or sing Hymn 234 The God of Abraham Praise

Wednesday (10/14) Read and discuss Ephesians 3:14–21

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength

to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (ESV)

James Montgomery Boice writes:

Although we cannot exhaust the love of Christ by our knowledge, we can nevertheless know this love truly. It is the same with the knowledge of God generally. We cannot know exhaustively, but we can know truly. So although, in the same way we cannot know all of Christ's love for us, we can know that what we perceive as Christ's love is truly love. The love of Christ that we know at the beginning of our Christian life is the same love that we will know (though more fully) at the end.

... We are to grow in our awareness of that love, particularly through the routine hardships, sufferings, and persecutions of life. Here is where the matter of the dimensions "wide and long and high and deep" comes in.

In the last century, when Napoleon's armies opened a prison that had been used by the Spanish Inquisition they found the remains of a prisoner who had been incarcerated for his faith. The dungeon was underground. The body had long since decayed. Only a chain fastened around an anklebone cried out his confinement. But this prisoner, long since dead, had left a witness. On the wall of his small, dismal cell this faithful soldier of Christ had scratched a rough cross with four words surrounding it in Spanish. Above the cross was the Spanish word for "height." Below it was the word for "depth." To the left of the word "width." To the right, the word "length." Clearly this prisoner wanted to testify to the surpassing greatness of the love of Christ, perceived even in his suffering.

[As Frederick Lehman put it]

Could we with ink the oceans fill
And were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill
And every man a scribe by trade –
To write the love of God above
Would drain the oceans dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole
Though stretched from sky to sky.

Thursday (10/15) Read and discuss Acts 6:1–7

Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. (ESV)

Eckhard Schnabel writes:

Authentic priorities imply institutional flexibility. The priorities of the Twelve allowed them to accept the criticism of part of the congregation, to admit that they had failed to see the problem of the neglected Greek-speaking widows, and to solve the shortfall of assistance with the proposal of a restructuring of the ministries of the congregation. Leaders with the right priorities focus not on their prestige in the congregation, but on God’s word. As all believers in Jesus are sinners who have repented of failures, churches’ leaders should find it easy to admit breakdowns in communication, setbacks in programs, lack of oversight, or one-sided priorities. And they will be prepared to cede authority for the benefit of the congregation.

Leaders with the right priorities are always willing to find flexible solutions that allow them to “stay on message.” They will not be defensive, defending the status quo, but offensive, looking for creative solutions. ... Paul states that “there are different kinds of service, but the same LORD. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work” (1 Cor 12:5-6).

Read or sing Psalm 90A Lord, You Have Been Our Dwelling Place

Friday (10/16) Read and discuss Exodus 18:13–27

The next day Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood around Moses from morning till evening. When Moses’ father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, “What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone, and all the

people stand around you from morning till evening?” And Moses said to his father-in-law, “Because the people come to me to inquire of God; when they have a dispute, they come to me and I decide between one person and another, and I make them know the statutes of God and his laws.” Moses’ father-in-law said to him, “What you are doing is not good. You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone. Now obey my voice; I will give you advice, and God be with you! You shall represent the people before God and bring their cases to God, and you shall warn them about the statutes and the laws, and make them know the way in which they must walk and what they must do. Moreover, look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. And let them judge the people at all times. Every great matter they shall bring to you, but any small matter they shall decide themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. If you do this, God will direct you, you will be able to endure, and all this people also will go to their place in peace.”

So Moses listened to the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said. Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. And they judged the people at all times. Any hard case they brought to Moses, but any small matter they decided themselves. Then Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went away to his own country. (ESV)

Christopher Wright comments:

The redeemed people have already shown themselves to be a grumbling and cantankerous crowd. If they were like that with Moses, we can well imagine they were like that with each other. So, Moses the savior finds himself required to be Moses the judge – hearing and settling disputes all day long.

His father-in-law’s observation, disapproval, and sound advice is delightfully narrated with a mixture of parental rebuke and respectful courtesy. His proposal reinforces Moses’s mediatorial role – representing the people before God while teaching God’s “decrees and instructions” to them. It also reduces the burden of that responsibility by a program of delegation that makes obvious sense (and has been followed in principle by wise leaders everywhere).

Perhaps the most notable feature of his advice is the qualities he demands in the subordinate judges. They must be “capable.” The word is “men of worth,” a word that can mean substance or valor but also implies noble character, moral worth. It is applied both to Boaz and to Ruth and describes the model wife in Proverbs 31:10. The marks of such persons are that they fear God, are “trustworthy,” “men of truth,” and of impeccable integrity. Moses’s recollection of this incident fills out the description with “wise, understanding, and respected” (Deut 1:13). Such was the ideal of judicial

leadership in Israel. Sadly, the prophets would have increasing cause to complain that the realities of Israel's courts in the monarchic period fell shamefully short of the ideal.

Still, for the moment, Jethro's words promised that his plan would bring peace to the people and to Moses. With that, "Jethro returned to his own country," though he, or his family, will return to the story later.

Read or sing Psalm 51C God, Be Merciful to Me (5-8)

Saturday (10/17) Read and discuss 1 Samuel 4:12–22

A man of Benjamin ran from the battle line and came to Shiloh the same day, with his clothes torn and with dirt on his head. When he arrived, Eli was sitting on his seat by the road watching, for his heart trembled for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city and told the news, all the city cried out. When Eli heard the sound of the outcry, he said, "What is this uproar?" Then the man hurried and came and told Eli. Now Eli was ninety-eight years old and his eyes were set so that he could not see. And the man said to Eli, "I am he who has come from the battle; I fled from the battle today." And he said, "How did it go, my son?" He who brought the news answered and said, "Israel has fled before the Philistines, and there has also been a great defeat among the people. Your two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God has been captured." As soon as he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell over backward from his seat by the side of the gate, and his neck was broken and he died, for the man was old and heavy. He had judged Israel forty years.

Now his daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was pregnant, about to give birth. And when she heard the news that the ark of God was captured, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she bowed and gave birth, for her pains came upon her. And about the time of her death the women attending her said to her, "Do not be afraid, for you have borne a son." But she did not answer or pay attention. And she named the child Ichabod, saying, "The glory has departed from Israel!" because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband. And she said, "The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured." (ESV)

Rick Phillips writes:

The loss of the ark to Israel's enemies did signal a time of divine chastisement. The dying woman spoke the truth when she wrote Ichabod over the scene that she was leaving. For God was temporarily removing his blessing and protection from the people. Shiloh would soon be destroyed, and the Philistines would once again place Israel under their hated yoke.

The Old Testament shows that when God's people persist in rebellion, walking in ways of wickedness and bowing down to the idols of the world,

God will inevitably withdraw His glory – that is, the power and blessing of His presence – from His people. The greatest Old Testament instance of God’s glory departing was not the loss of the ark in Eli’s time, but rather the removal of God’s Holy Spirit before the fall of Jerusalem over four hundred years later. The prophet Ezekiel saw a vision not merely of the ark of the covenant departing the temple, but of the actual presence of God’s Spirit rising up and leaving. “The glory of the LORD went out from the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubim,” Ezekiel reported. “And the cherubim lifted up their wings and mounted up from the earth before my eyes as they went out ... And they stood at the entrance of the east gate of the house of the LORD, and the glory of the God of Israel was over them” (Ezek. 10:18-19). With this, the glory of the LORD departed from Jerusalem, and the word *Ichabod* was written over its doomed walls. Now there was nothing to protect God’s people from the Babylonian army, and shortly afterward the city and temple were destroyed and the people who were not slaughtered were sent off in chains.

If we think this withdrawal of God’s presence is only an Old Testament phenomenon, then we should remember the seven letters of Jesus to the churches in Asia, in which the exalted Christ threatened to remove the lampstands of wayward churches (Rev. 2-3). Individual believers are likewise warned not to “grieve the Holy Spirit of God” (Eph. 4:30) through ungodly living, suggesting that Christians may experience God’s absence as a form of discipline. The Westminster Confession of Faith asserts, “True believers may have the assurance of their salvation divers ways shaken, diminished, and intermitted; as, by negligence in preserving of it; by falling into some special sin, which woundeth the conscience, and grieveth the Spirit” (WCF 18:4).

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