

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 25 October 2026

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 100:1-5

Opening Hymn: 244 A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

Confession of Sin

O eternal God and merciful Father, we humble ourselves before your great majesty, against which we have frequently and grievously sinned. We acknowledge that we deserve nothing less than eternal death, that we are unclean before you and children of wrath. We continually transgress your commandments, failing to do what you have commanded, and doing that which you have expressly forbidden. We acknowledge our waywardness, and are heartily sorry for all our sins. We are not worthy to be called your children, nor to lift up our eyes heavenward to you in prayer. Nevertheless, O Lord God and gracious Father, we know that your mercy toward those who turn to you is infinite; and so we take courage to call upon you, trusting in our Mediator Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Forgive all our sins for Christ's sake. Cover us with his innocence and righteousness, for the glory of your name. Deliver our understanding from all blindness, and our hearts from all willfulness and rebellion, we pray through Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. *Amen*

Assurance of Pardon: Psalm 106:43-45

Hymn of Preparation: 263 O Savior, Precious Savior

Old Covenant Reading: 1 Samuel 5:1-12

New Covenant Reading: Romans 10:5-13

Sermon Title: *The Supremacy of Our God*

Hymn of Response: 215 Give to Our God Immortal Praise

Confession of Faith: 1 Heidelberg Catechism (p. 872)

Doxology (Hymn 569)

Closing Hymn: 281 Rejoice, the Lord Is King

PM Worship

452 Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me

118A O Thank the LORD for All His Goodness (1-4)

118A O Thank the LORD for All His Goodness (5-8)

Old Covenant Reading: Psalm 118:1-29

New Covenant Reading: Matthew 21:1-11

Sermon Title: *Open the Gates*

Suggested Preparations

Monday (10/19) 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)

Rick Phillips writes:

The episode of the ark in Philistia speaks powerfully to God’s people and to the Philistine world. What was the message to Israel and the church? The point for us is to understand rightly the cause of our defeat in the world. The fall of Dagon before the ark of the LORD shows that we suffer defeat not because our enemy is so strong, much less that the Philistine god is stronger than our God. Rather, the cause of our weakness and defeat is our estranged relationship with the LORD.

We frequently hear that Christianity is waning because today’s society is too hostile to the gospel. We cannot expect educated people to seek truth from the Bible rather from the certified results of science. We cannot hope for people who are drunk on sensual pleasures to be interested in a church service – especially worship that fails to conform to popular tastes and demands. We cannot expect today’s people to give their video-short attention spans to serious Bible preaching. The Philistines of secularism, sensualism, and relativism are just too strong, and biblical Christianity lacks sufficient appeal. It is on this view that so many Christians and churches have concluded that we must join the Philistines if we are ever to win them. So it seemed for Israel: the Philistines had better technology and

organization, and even bigger and stronger men. Yet how easy it was for God to cast the Philistine idol upon his face!

This shows, by the way, that it is not the church's job to cast down the Philistine gods. The job of God's people is to honor the LORD in all things, refusing to join in the world's idolatry and remaining faithful. Thus Christians are told "to stand against the schemes of the devil" (Eph. 6:11). We are not told to go on the offensive against Satan, but "to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm" (6:13). This is not to say that Christians should not speak out against lies and evils. It simply means that the church in its spiritual mission is not called to wage worldly warfare against our enemies. In His own time, in His own ways, we can be sure that God will humble the idols of the world. We are to remember the LORD, trusting in Him and spreading His gospel.

Read or sing Hymn 244 A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

Tuesday (10/20) Read and discuss 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)

Robert Chisholm makes two important observations about this passage:

1. *The LORD's word is reliable.* This story shows how God's decree of judgment begins to fall inexorably upon the house of Eli. Like so many passages in the Bible, it illustrates the truth that God's word is reliable and must be taken seriously. In the case of decrees of judgment, this principle is terrifying: it means that those who are the recipients of such decrees are doomed, with no hope of escape. Such a frightening prospect should motivate all people to respond properly to God now before it is too late. But not all of God's decrees pertain to judgment: some are promises of salvation. The recipients of these can take great comfort in knowing that such promises are reliable and trustworthy.
2. *The LORD cannot be manipulated into granting His favor.* Israel too closely identifies the LORD with the symbol of His presence. They think that by bringing the ark to the battle, they can manipulate God into granting a victory. Surely God will protect Himself! He will never allow Himself to be hauled away into captivity! But such thinking is foolish and betrays a pagan notion. God is not a good-luck charm and should never be treated as such. Obedience is the key to experiencing God's favor, as the ancient covenant list of blessings and curses makes clear and as Jesus teaches His disciples.

Read or sing Hymn 263 O Savior, Precious Savior

Wednesday (10/21) Read and discuss Romans 10:5–13

For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. But the righteousness based on faith says, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down) “or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” (ESV)

Paul rounds out this section, in verse 8, by connecting the words of Moses with his own theme verses from Romans chapter 1, verses 16 and 17. Verse 8:

“The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim).

The word of faith, here, is not a word about our faith. This is another way of saying: “Gospel.” “The Gospel is in your mouth and in your heart. The Gospel is what we proclaim.” And yet “word of faith” is such a fitting way to designate the gospel here

– because Paul is emphasizing that the Gospel is to be received by faith *alone* in Christ *alone* – and that this is what marks you out as a true member of the people of God.

Do you hear the echoes from Romans chapter 1?

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

What is this faith that we live by? Verses 9 and 10:

... because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

Confessing and believing are not two separate ideas in these verses. Paul is simply connecting with the heart and mouth language of Deuteronomy 30 which he has just quoted. As C.E.B. Cranfield puts it:

[Paul] does not mean to imply that the mouth is to confess anything other than that which the heart believes. But the two formulations interpret each other, so that what is to be both believed and confessed is more precisely defined.¹

Nevertheless, Paul is reminding us that it isn’t enough to simply believe. We have to be believing the true gospel. Confessing with our mouth that Jesus is Lord – is not merely to confess that He is an important person. In context, it means to confess that Jesus is Yahweh.

Cranfield again:

For Paul, the confession that Jesus is LORD meant the acknowledgment that Jesus shares the name and nature, the holiness, the authority, power, majesty and eternity of the one true God.²

Do you confess that?

Thursday (10/22) Read and discuss Matthew 21:1–11

¹ C.E.B. Cranfield, Romans, p. 527.

² C.E.B. Cranfield, Romans, p. 527.

Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, “Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them at once.” This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying,

“Say to the daughter of Zion,
‘Behold, your king is coming to you,
humble, and mounted on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’”

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, “Who is this?” And the crowds said, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.” (ESV)

Grant Osborne writes:

Jesus is not coming as conquering king but as the humble Messiah bringing peace through suffering. The crowds acclaim Him king by strewing garments and leafy branches before Him, turning His entry into a royal procession. But Jesus’ lengthy preparations show He intends this as a prophetic-acted parable that fulfills Zech 9:9, as He rides a donkey (the symbol of peace) rather than a warhorse.

Moreover, in Matthew’s quotation of Zech 9:9 the emphasis is on Jesus’ “meekness,” or humility (John 12:15 is the only other gospel to quote Zech 9:9, but he omits “meek”). This is a Christological point made often in Matthew and points to Jesus as the lowly Messiah who has come to serve by dying as a “ransom” and has brought salvation to humankind. Also, Jesus becomes the paradigm for disciples who are characterized by humility and place their interests last.

Read or sing Hymn 215 Give to Our God Immortal Praise

Friday (10/23) Read and discuss Psalm 118

Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures forever!

Let Israel say,
“His steadfast love endures forever.”

Let the house of Aaron say,
 “His steadfast love endures forever.”
Let those who fear the LORD say,
 “His steadfast love endures forever.”

Out of my distress I called on the LORD;
 the LORD answered me and set me free.
The LORD is on my side; I will not fear.
 What can man do to me?
The LORD is on my side as my helper;
 I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.

It is better to take refuge in the LORD
 than to trust in man.
It is better to take refuge in the LORD
 than to trust in princes.

All nations surrounded me;
 in the name of the LORD I cut them off!
They surrounded me, surrounded me on every side;
 in the name of the LORD I cut them off!
They surrounded me like bees;
 they went out like a fire among thorns;
 in the name of the LORD I cut them off!
I was pushed hard, so that I was falling,
 but the LORD helped me.

The LORD is my strength and my song;
 he has become my salvation.
Glad songs of salvation
 are in the tents of the righteous:
“The right hand of the LORD does valiantly,
 the right hand of the LORD exalts,
 the right hand of the LORD does valiantly!”

I shall not die, but I shall live,
 and recount the deeds of the LORD.
The LORD has disciplined me severely,
 but he has not given me over to death.

Open to me the gates of righteousness,
 that I may enter through them
 and give thanks to the LORD.
This is the gate of the LORD;
 the righteous shall enter through it.

I thank you that you have answered me
and have become my salvation.
The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.
This is the LORD's doing;
it is marvelous in our eyes.
This is the day that the LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Save us, we pray, O LORD!
O LORD, we pray, give us success!

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!
We bless you from the house of the LORD.
The LORD is God,
and he has made his light to shine upon us.
Bind the festal sacrifice with cords,
up to the horns of the altar!

You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;
you are my God; I will extol you.
Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures forever! (ESV)

Tim Kellor writes:

The nation's leaders rejected the psalmist as builders discard a useless stone. But God made Him a cornerstone. When He came to the temple's gates, where only the righteous might pass, He was welcomed up the horns of the altar. Later Jesus came to Jerusalem to the shouts of Psalm 118:26: "Blessed is He who comes." He too was rejected by the leaders and went to the altar, but as a sacrifice for sin, making us righteous so we can go to God. When we pray, the "gates of righteousness" are opened. Through His sacrifice we have access to the Father by the Spirit.

Read or sing Hymn 281 Rejoice, the Lord Is King

Saturday (10/24) 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)

Rick Phillips writes:

By casting down the Philistine idol and striking the people in His wrath, God delivered a message not only to His own people but also to the Philistine world.

First, God proved that He is *a living God*. The Philistines thought of their gods as objects – idols that they worshiped to gain an edge in the problems of life, but still objects. Israel had fallen into this kind of thinking when it puts its confidence in the ark, while forgetting God Himself. But God is not a thing to be manipulated and controlled, an object to be put on the shelf and taken down at our whim. He is still today what He was in the Bible times: “The LORD is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King” (Jer. 10:10). Lloyd-Jones says, “When you think you have Him defeated, then He is active; when you think you have Him captive, He knocks down your god. He is God who cannot be restrained, illimitable, absolute, eternal – the living God.” For this reason, we must reckon with God, before whom we “live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28, quoting Job 12:10).

Second, the LORD taught that He is the only true God. God is jealous of His exclusive status: “I am the LORD your God ... You shall have no other gods before Me” (Ex. 20:2-3). God is not placated if we make a little room for Him on the shelf beside our other gods. He demands exclusive

sovereignty of in our lives. He will not share His reign with idols, but ruthlessly casts them down and smites those who serve them. On the national level, if we make a god of government, then God will send corrupt and incompetent leaders. If we make a god of the economy, God is able to make the stock market plummet. If we use science to violate His laws, then God will make our technology a curse to our lives. God demands that all things – presidencies, corporate earnings, fighter planes, and microscopes – be submitted to his sovereign rule. “I am God, and there is no other,” He decrees, “I am God, and there is none like me” (Isa. 46:9). Likewise, on the personal level, God calls for us to submit all things to His service. He is not willing to share sovereignty in our hearts with false gods such as fame, pleasure, and wealth.

Third, the living and true God proved that He is *powerful and mighty*. How swiftly and surely the Philistines were crushed when the heavy hand of God struck them, just as God struck Pharaoh and the Egyptians in the time of Moses. There is no chance of withstanding God’s judgement, either now or in the end. For this reason, the odds of the evolutionary worldview’s prevailing indefinitely are precisely zero. The chances of sexual liberty’s producing happiness are nil. God will strike down every rebel power with His infinite might.

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