

**8**

Mar

## Companion for the Journey

Renewed in Mercy

**THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT, YEAR A**

The psalms often provide us with an excellent map for planning worship. In a world where we struggle to acknowledge our emotions as individuals, much less as a community, the psalms are master classes in how to faithfully express our emotions and experiences to God as a gathered body.

### REFERENCES

Exodus 17:1-7

Psalm 95

Romans 5:1-11

John 4:5-42

### COLORS

Purple

One of our central texts today is Psalm 95, a hymn of praise for God's sustaining and a hymn of warning about what happens when we turn away from God's guidance and provision. When I come to psalms like Psalm 95, the worship planner in me starts itching to rearrange it a little. Doesn't the psalmist know that it's better to start joyful, bring the energy down a bit, and then have a crescendo of hope at the end? Why end the psalm with such a sobering warning and no resolution?

The psalms often provide us with an excellent map for planning worship. In a world where we struggle to acknowledge our emotions as individuals, much less as a community, the psalms are master classes in how to faithfully express our emotions and experiences to God as a gathered body. Often, the emotional movement of the psalms maps well onto a basic fourfold pattern of

worship—Gathering, Proclamation, Response, and Sending. While not all services need to end with a high-energy sending forth, it is important, even in Lent, that we send people into the world with some level of hope and reassurance that they are not alone. To that end, consider how Psalm 95 might help you structure the Gathering and Proclamation—a move from praise of God, who gathers us, to proclamation of God’s goodness and what happens when we turn away from God as our companion on the journey. But then, it is for us, the worship planners, and those gathered for worship to choose how we will respond and be sent out in light of Psalm 95. So, while you might want to sing a glorious setting of Psalm 95 as an opening hymn, such as “All People That on Earth Do Dwell” (*United Methodist Hymnal* 75) and unpack what the psalmist means about not hardening our hearts like those in Meribah during the sermon, how will you help your people respond, to choose God’s companionship and our companionship as the body of Christ over the things that lead us astray in the world?

Perhaps Romans 5:1-11, our other focus reading for the day, can help shape those responses. As Derek Weber discusses in the preaching notes, Paul’s notion of “boasting” can have many meanings. What are the ways your community might boast in hope of God’s provision and guidance? How might we boast or rejoice in our reconciliation to God and one another? How do we express the joy of reconciliation in a world full of chaos and division? These are questions we can help those gathered ask and begin to answer as we continue on the Lenten journey of encountering mercy anew together.

//

**Notice at collection**

**Your Privacy Choices**

