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Behold the Face

Praise Break

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, YEAR A

This opening week of a praise-focused series invites us to recognize God's presence in both ordinary and extraordinary moments. Centered on awareness, it encourages embodied worship practices that engage the whole self—helping individuals and congregations connect action with reflection as they grow in gratitude, attentiveness, and praise.

REFERENCES

Genesis 32:22-31

Psalm 17:1-7, 15

Romans 9:1-5

Matthew 14:13-21

COLORS

Green

Worship Planning Notes

Focus text: Psalm 17:1-7, 15

Praise Jesus! It's a phrase I utter regularly. Sometimes it comes on the tail of a sigh, as relief floods through my body when potentially bad news turns out better than expected. Sometimes it bursts forth in excitement when I finally find a parking spot that's not a half mile away from the entrance to the mall. And sometimes it fills my heart without ever leaving my lips, as I take in the majesty of snow-capped mountains. The praise we give to God in the large and small moments of our lives matters. Praise is a fruit of our growth in love for God and neighbor, an expression of our

recognition of and cooperation with God's grace at work all around us. But how do we praise? Over the next three weeks, we turn to the psalmist to help us start answering that question.

As you plan for this series, consider how you might incorporate the themes of each week into the acts of worship. This first week focuses on awareness. How might you practice awareness of God's presence and work during gathered worship? The psalmist focuses on embodiment. How might you cultivate embodied awareness of God's presence and work? You might try a grounding exercise together, like the 5-4-3-2-1 grounding technique, where you focus on five things you can see, four things you can touch, three things you can hear, two things you can smell, and one thing you can taste. If your congregation tends to have a lot of wiggles, you might try something more active by inviting everyone to test out how different parts of the body can give praise. How do hands give praise? How do lips give praise? How do feet give praise? How do ears give praise? How do knees give praise? Anything that helps the group embody their response to God!

And then, reflect in worship (and in planning) on how these embodied responses help us cultivate awareness of God. If you do a grounding practice, follow up with a time to meditate and reflect on how awareness of God among us changes after we ground ourselves in our bodies. Or, if you do something more active, invite your congregation to use those same body parts to notice and tell the truth about God's work all around you. What truths do hands tell about God? What truths do our lips tell about God? How do feet demonstrate God at work? Whether you have your congregation actively respond to these questions or you enter into a time of prayer and reflection around these questions, this is an opportunity to connect action with contemplation, to learn to be aware of God's presence and give God praise, not just in our minds but with our full, embodied selves.

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