

St Thomas Methodist Church, Exeter

October 2026

Weekly Worship Resources

04 October – A God to honour

On Mount Sinai, God gives Moses instructions – the Ten Commandments – to help the Israelites live according to God’s ways, so that they can stay in a good relationship with God and each other. Today we look at what honour means and how we might understand the link between honouring God and other people.

Lectionary Bible readings for RCL Proper 22 Year A: **Exodus 20:1-4,7-9,12-20**; Psalm 19; Philippians 3.4b-14; Matthew 21.33-46

Exodus 20:1-4,7-9,12-20 [CEV]

The Ten Commandments

20 God said to the people of Israel:

² I am the Lord your God, the one who brought you out of Egypt where you were slaves.

³ Do not worship any god except me.

⁴ Do not make idols that look like anything in the sky or on earth or in the ocean under the earth.

⁷ Do not misuse my name. I am the Lord your God, and I will punish anyone who misuses my name.

⁸ Remember that the Sabbath Day belongs to me. ⁹ You have six days when you can do your work,

¹² Respect your father and your mother, and you will live a long time in the land I am giving you.

¹³ Do not murder.

¹⁴ Be faithful in marriage.

¹⁵ Do not steal.

¹⁶ Do not tell lies about others.

¹⁷ Do not desire to possess anything that belongs to another person – not a house, a wife, a husband, a slave, an ox, a donkey, or anything else.

The People Are Afraid

¹⁸ The people trembled with fear when they heard the thunder and the trumpet and saw the lightning and the smoke coming from the mountain. They stood a long way off ¹⁹and said to Moses, “If you speak to us, we will listen. But don't let God speak to us, or we will die!”

²⁰ “Don't be afraid!” Moses replied. “God has come only to test you, so that by obeying him you won't sin.”



Thought for the week: The common thread in our lives

An employee was feeling the pressure of work and said things to his boss that he immediately regretted. The boss's response had a profound effect on him. Instead of responding in kind, she simply said, 'That wasn't worthy of you.' She knew he wasn't acting in a way that represented the kind of person he wanted to be and the values he usually stood for.

When we read the Ten Commandments, we may wonder why 'taking the name of God in vain' is treated so seriously, particularly since such words are used so regularly by individuals and in public discourse, and usually without obvious ill intention.

Respect and honour for God, leading to honour and respect for those around us, runs through the Ten Commandments and the further instructions that follow. There is not necessarily a commandment to fit every particular situation, so we need to ask ourselves what actions or words would best represent the name and particularly the teachings and way of life of Jesus.

A thread running through both Old and New Testaments is one of people saying the right things and following the correct rules or rituals but acting in a way that contradicts what they represent. In the Old Testament, people are warned that their ritual sacrifices are not acceptable if they are ill-treating those they should be caring for. Jesus heals people on the sabbath, showing that healing and helping someone in need come before strict adherence to rules about keeping the sabbath. To Jesus, the rules are given by God to help in their dealings with one another and with God. We need to keep this in mind.

Consider for a moment, the effects of identity theft – someone steals your identity, probably your money as well. Then they act in a way that you would never act, even on a bad day! Quite apart from the hardship and inconvenience of finding it hard to obtain credit or insurance, there is something sinister and demeaning about being misrepresented and losing control of your reputation.

Translate that into a Christian context. How many people have rejected the Christian faith simply because they have been badly treated by people claiming to follow Christ? What a terrible disappointment to the one we serve. We who take the name of Christ need to be careful not to misuse the identity we have adopted.

So when we congratulate ourselves on not using God's name glibly or in the wrong context, or even for being people who keep all the rules, perhaps we need to look a little deeper. Honouring God runs like a thread through the Commandments: it is not only when we directly give God honour that we fulfil this command, but also through honouring our neighbours that we honour God, because they are

made, like us, in God's image. This is a thread that runs through the commandments and should run through our lives also.

A prayer of confession

God of truth, it is hard to admit that we have failed to honour you. It is hard to admit that we have disrespected you. It is hard to admit that we have tried to tame you and make you in our own image. It is hard to admit that our standards have fallen below yours, but we bring our confession and our sorrow to you now, to ask for your forgiveness in Jesus's name.

Assurance of forgiveness

Generous God, as Moses reassured the Israelites, so we thank you that his words echo through the ages; equipping us to trust that we need not be afraid of our past; giving us confidence in your healing and restoring grace; enabling us to take the next step, to overcome our mistakes, being guided by your law to live lives worthy of you, reflecting your love and honouring your holiness. Amen

11 October – What kind of God?

Moses has spent over a month with God on Mount Sinai; the Israelites fear something has happened to him and decide they want a different god. Aaron asks them to bring the gold they had plundered from the Egyptians, which they melt and form into a golden calf – a new god to bow down to and worship. God is angry, but Moses appeals to God's promises and honour, resulting in God showing mercy to the Israelites.

Today we think about the types of things we might idolise in our lives and how we can remember how amazing God is, putting God back at the centre.

Lectionary Bible readings for RCL Proper 23 Year A: **Exodus 32:1-14**; Psalm 106:1-6,19-23; Philippians 4.1-9; Matthew 22.1-14

The People Make an Idol To Worship

32 After the people saw that Moses had been on the mountain for a long time, they went to Aaron and said, “Make us an image of a god who will lead and protect us. Moses brought us out of Egypt, but nobody knows what has happened to him.”

² Aaron told them, “Bring me the gold earrings that your wives and sons and daughters are wearing.” ³ Everybody took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron, ⁴ then he melted them and made an idol in the shape of a young bull.

All the people said to one another, “This is the god who brought us out of Egypt!”

⁵ When Aaron saw what was happening, he built an altar in front of the idol and said, “Tomorrow we will celebrate in honour of the Lord.”

⁶ The people got up early the next morning and killed some animals to be used for sacrifices and others to be eaten. Then everyone ate and drank so much that they began to carry on like wild people.

⁷ The Lord said to Moses:

Hurry back down! Those people you led out of Egypt are acting like fools. ⁸ They have already stopped obeying me and have made themselves an idol in the shape of a young bull. They have bowed down to it, offered sacrifices, and said that it is the god who brought them out of Egypt. ⁹ Moses, I have seen how stubborn these people are, ¹⁰ and I'm angry enough to destroy them, so don't try to stop me. But I will make your descendants into a great nation.

¹¹ Moses tried to get the Lord God to change his mind:

Our Lord, you used your mighty power to bring these people out of Egypt. Now don't become angry and destroy them. ¹² If you do, the Egyptians will say that you brought your people out here into the mountains just to get rid of them. Please don't be angry with your people. Don't destroy them!

¹³ Remember the solemn promise you made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. You promised that someday they would have as many descendants as there are stars in the sky and that you would give them land.

¹⁴ So even though the Lord had threatened to destroy the people, he changed his mind and let them live.



Thought for the week: At the centre of my life

Fever Pitch is a memoir by Nick Hornby that recounts his relationship with football, particularly Arsenal Football Club. He readily admits that his support for Arsenal at times became the most important thing in his life.

If you go to any football club or large sports stadium for an event, you are usually surrounded by thousands of fans singing and chanting in praise of their team or particular players. The stadium feels a bit like a cathedral filled with worshippers. It's very moving, and most of the spectators enjoy the relaxation (or drama!) of watching the sport. But are there some for whom this is not just a sport, but rather an obsession and perhaps even a substitute for worship of God? It's an interesting fact that the huge arch, supporting the spanned roof at Wembley Stadium, is much higher than the dome of St Paul's Cathedral. And before we settle cosily into our seats, smug that we don't all have an interest in football, let's consider what else might make us forget all about God.

In the 5th century St Augustine said, 'Thou has made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee.' We need to be careful not to fill this 'God-shaped space' with something else. Where do we even start? Could it be money, security, pride in a skill or in our children, or a special collection?

My 'danger zone' may be different from yours, but let's think about money or wealth, since it crops up in both the Old and New Testaments. We have the story of a rich fool (Luke 12:13-21), for example, busy building barns, to the exclusion of what might please God and help him store real, lasting treasure. Or the story of the rich man, with Lazarus, begging outside his gate (Luke 16:19-31). Then we have two people who met Jesus: a ruler (Luke 18:18-27) who walks away sadly because wealth prevents him from following a better life, and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10) who realises he has to restore part of his wealth to others, to follow a different path.

We also have direct warnings from Jesus about the dangers of setting too much store by wealth.

Money is a useful and necessary tool, and finding out and accepting how much we really need is perhaps one of the trickiest balances people have to grapple with. Amassing it for its own sake turns it from a tool into an idol. Moses coming down from the mountain to be confronted by the golden calf is a vivid and extreme example of misguided priorities and satisfying human longings for tangible representations of God.

This is captured by the words of the psalmist: 'They exchanged the glory of God for the image of an ox that eats grass'! It might be obvious to us that a golden statue can't replace God, but what might we be putting our hope in and how might we be missing out on knowing more of this gracious and loving God?

A prayer of adoration

God of all time and all places:

You are a kind God, a generous God, a merciful God.

You are a holy God, a loving God, a creative God.

You are an approachable God, a just God, a joyful God.

You are a challenging God, a fair God, a compassionate God.

You are our kind of God, and we worship you now in Jesus's name.

Amen

18 October – In God's presence

Moses asks God to help him lead the Israelites, and God reminds Moses that God's presence goes with him. Moses then encounters God in a new way – he goes to the mountain and is hidden while God passes by. Moses doesn't see God fully, but catches a glimpse of God's glory.

This week, we will examine the times and places where we might experience God's presence and consider how we can create more space and awareness in our lives to know God more fully.

Lectionary Bible readings for RCL Proper 24 Year A: **Exodus 33:12-23**; Psalm 99; 1 Thessalonians 1.1-10; Matthew 22.15-22

Exodus 33:12-23 [CEV]

¹³If this is true, let me know what your plans are, then I can obey and continue to please you. And don't forget that you have chosen this nation to be your own."

¹⁴The Lord said, "I will go with you and give you peace."

¹⁵Then Moses replied, "If you aren't going with us, please don't make us leave this place. ¹⁶But if you do go with us, everyone will know that you are pleased with your people and with me. That way, we will be different from the rest of the people on earth."

¹⁷So the Lord told him, "I will do what you have asked, because I am your friend and I am pleased with you."

¹⁸Then Moses said, "I pray that you will let me see you in all of your glory."

¹⁹ The Lord answered:

All right. I am the Lord, and I show mercy and kindness to anyone I choose. I will let you see my glory and hear my holy name, ²⁰but I won't let you see my face, because anyone who sees my face will die.

²¹There is a rock not far from me. Stand beside it, ²²and before I pass by in all of my shining glory, I will put you in a large crack in the rock. I will cover your eyes with my hand until I have passed by. ²³Then I will take my hand away, and you will see my back. You will not see my face.



Thought for the week: Finding love, right where we are

The following is an extract from a recent Yorkshire bulletin:

‘The meeting wholeheartedly supported a proposal to recruit an Outdoor (or Wilderness) Pioneer, to take a lead in helping us establish faith communities and spiritual activities based outside in our beautiful countryside. We will aim to develop new pilgrimage routes with self-guided walks, and to provide a monthly faith walk where we do church as we walk. We will explore Forest Church (it doesn’t have to be in a forest!), drawing on the rhythms of nature and exploring our part within it, naturally reflecting on our Christian faith as we do so.’

Traditionally, we tend to think of worshipping in a building, often specifically designed for the purpose. These can range from the mundane to the beautiful, and the buildings themselves sometimes help people in their worship. Increasingly, though, people are exploring other ways of meeting to worship and of course we know that God can never be confined to any space.

For the Israelites in the desert, a nomadic people, a tent was an obvious place for them to expect God to live, and of course God did! It was right where they were, and they were starting to understand that God was not remote. Moses left his own tent and went to a specific place for intimate conversations with God. Maybe this was just to escape from the noise and constant complaining of the people, to be able to focus on God. Later, in more settled times, came the Temple

with its Holy of Holies and with areas restricted to various groups of people. So where and how do we experience God's presence?

Jesus said to the woman at the well 'the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem... when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth' (John 4:21- 23). If we do worship God in a building, our focus always needs to be on helping everyone to worship, feel welcome and experience the presence of God. It may also mean finding other places and ways of worshipping where more people can feel at home.

The 'where', of course, is never as important as experiencing God's presence. There is an urgency in Moses request and even after God has assured him 'My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest', he asks to be shown God's glory. This leads to a mysterious and strange encounter with God, a tantalising glimpse of the glory of God.

Ed Sheeran sings of 'finding love, right where we are'. Surely this is exactly where we can find God! The chorus of Bernadette Farrell's song has the words, 'For you are always here with me, following all my ways. May I be always close to you, following all your ways, Lord.' As we look expectantly, we catch glimpses of God – sometimes in unexpected people, places or experiences. Perhaps a shaft of light, a piece of music or art, a glorious sunset, a new insight, someone sharing an event in their lives, or even a kind word when needed most, has taken us beyond ourselves and closer to God. God's presence is always with us, but being aware of this can make all the difference in our lives. May we keep reminding ourselves to 'look out for God' at all times and in all places, and to be honest and open so that we recognise the glimpses or close encounters we are offered.

A prayer of praise and thanksgiving

God of all ages and all generations, we praise you for graciousness.

We praise you for mercy.

We praise you for your faithfulness.

We praise you for generosity.

We thank you for those who have gone before us.

We thank you for your guidance.

We praise and thank you for one another, for this church, this community as we worship you today and every day . Amen

25 October – Living legacy

Moses comes to the end of his life. He sees the Promised Land, but he will not enter it. It is time to hand over the next stage of the Israelites' journey to Joshua. Moses is remembered for being an amazing prophet of God.

Today, we consider what it means to leave a legacy and how our actions might be impacted now if we think about the importance of the future.

Lectionary Bible readings for RCL Proper 25 Year A: **Deuteronomy 34:1-12**; Psalm 90:1-6,13-17; 1 Thessalonians 2.1-8; Matthew 22.34-46

Deuteronomy 34:1-12 [CEV]

The Death of Moses

34 Sometime later, Moses left the lowlands of Moab. He went up Mount Pisgah to the peak of Mount Nebo, which is across the Jordan River from Jericho. The Lord showed him all the land as far north as Gilead and the town of Dan. ²He let Moses see the territories that would soon belong to the tribes of Naphtali, Ephraim, Manasseh, and Judah, as far west as the Mediterranean Sea. ³The Lord also showed him the land in the south, from the valley near the town of Jericho, known as The City of Palm Trees, down to the town of Zoar.

⁴ The Lord said, “Moses, this is the land I was talking about when I solemnly promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that I would give land to their descendants. I have let you see it, but you will not cross the Jordan and go in.”

⁵And so, Moses the Lord's servant died there in Moab, just as the Lord had said. ⁶The Lord buried him in a valley near the town of Beth-Peor, but even today no one knows exactly where. ⁷Moses was 120 years

old when he died, yet his eyesight was still good, and his body was strong.

⁸The people of Israel stayed in the lowlands of Moab, where they mourned and grieved 30 days for Moses, as was their custom.

Joshua Becomes the Leader of Israel

⁹Before Moses died, he had placed his hands on Joshua, and the Lord had given Joshua wisdom. The Israelites paid attention to what Joshua said and obeyed the commands that the Lord had given Moses.

Moses Was a Great Prophet

¹⁰ There has never again been a prophet in Israel like Moses. The Lord spoke face to face with him ¹¹and sent him to perform powerful miracles in the presence of the king of Egypt and his entire nation.

¹²No one else has ever had the power to do such great things as Moses did for everyone to see.



Thought for the week: Gifts to the future

In the very same week that Sister Carole was elected by her fellow sisters to become Prioress at St Hilda's Priory, Whitby, she was diagnosed with cancer, and the prognosis was not good. Despite this, she accepted the challenge and continued in the role until her death approximately three years later. During this time, the Order needed to move. She was able to contribute towards the planning and building

of a new priory and find worthy uses for the original one. She worked tirelessly towards this goal, although, like Moses, she was unable to enjoy the results of all her hard work.

Throughout her time in the Order, she taught and mentored many pupils and spent time helping to run an orphanage in Swaziland. She had no goods or wealth to leave behind but, in a humble and unassuming way, she left a living legacy as an inspiration to her fellow sisters and friends.

At Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee, her wish was that trees should be planted for the future. There may be a statue erected after her death, but the trees will be a living legacy along with the values she represented. Sometimes politicians are said to be considering what legacy they might leave behind. Surely to do this they must make the best use of present opportunities but with a long-term view. How legislation enacted now will affect our children and grandchildren is more important than how it will affect the party's chances at the next election! Similarly, a farmer can farm thinking only of an immediate return from the land, but a wise farmer will plan to 'plough something back' into the soil for the future, maybe planting trees for shelter for cattle or looking forward to more sustainable, nature-friendly farming.

In today's reading, we have a wonderful summary of Moses' legacy – and it's not about how many herds of goats or sheep he was passing on to his family. Instead, we read: 'Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face. He was unequalled for all the signs and wonders that the Lord sent him to perform...' He led the people, he gave them laws to order their society, he mediated with God on their behalf. Yet it was not his calling to lead them into the Promised Land – that was for someone else. Part of his legacy was passing on the responsibility to others. In the passage from his letter to the Thessalonians, Paul speaks of being 'entrusted with the message of the Gospel'. He says, 'so deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you the Gospel but also our own selves'. What a commitment, and what a

legacy he and the other apostles left behind for the Thessalonians and many others, including ourselves.

When we consider the legacy of Moses, as described in Deuteronomy, we cannot help but think of an even greater prophet who has since 'arisen in Israel'. Someone who, like Moses, knew God face to face and mediated between God and the people. This prophet was also the Saviour and Lord of all. And what a living legacy he left behind! A legacy that continues and does not come to an end.

Prayers of intercession

God of love, we read stories and see images of people around the world enduring difficult situations. We feel as if we are helpless and yet through our prayers we can stand alongside those who are suffering; those whose faces we do not recognise; whose names we do not know.

We praise you for your love for us; help us to show your love for one another.

God of peace, it is easy for us to feel helpless in the face of global politics. We ask ourselves how we can influence world leaders. We show our love through our prayers. We ask for wisdom, insight and compassion for the leaders of all nations so that all your children throughout the world may live in safety and in peace.

We praise you for your love for us; help us to show your love for one another.

God of healing and wholeness, your love is shown but seldom acknowledged through the work of those who are involved in all forms of healthcare. We pray for those through whom your love is shown and those who receive its power. Bring healing to those who are sick in body, mind and spirit. Make them whole in you.

We praise you for your love for us; help us to show your love for one another.

God who calls your children to live and worship together as communities, your love unites and strengthens us through prayer. We

pray for the Church in all its different traditions and places, and for all who worship you that we may receive your guidance, to live and love as you would have us do. May the places where we gather be places of welcome, where love is shown to those who enter and those who remain outside.

We praise you for your love for us; help us to show your love for one another.

God who has called us to be your children, we celebrate your love for us. We bring to you our needs and the needs of our neighbours. We humbly seek comfort, wisdom, hope and strength. May we not be selfish in how we use the gifts you give us. May your gifts for us become an expression of our love for you. In Jesus's name we pray. Amen

The ROOTS ecumenical partnership



Bringing together Churches and other
Christian organisations since 2002

© Roots for Churches Ltd (www.rootsforchurches.com) 2002-2026.
Reproduced with permission.

Contemporary English Version (CEV)
Copyright © 1995 by American Bible Society.