

## PREPARING AT HOME

October 9-15, 2017

*Focus reading:* Exodus 32:1–14 (<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=373526852>).

*Other lectionary readings:* Psalm 106:1–6, 19–23; Philippians 4:1–9; Matthew 22:1–14

*Theme:* Soothing Our Souls

We live in a culture where people seek instant gratification. We are not good at waiting but insist that things should happen immediately. While smartphones and highspeed internet may feed those expectations, they are not unique to our contemporary society. In this week's Bible reading, the people turn their backs on the eternal God in favor of a God that they could see and touch in the here and now. Moses and his assistant Joshua go up the mountain to meet with God. The people are camped nearby, with Moses' brother Aaron and nephew Hur left in charge. Moses and Joshua are gone for forty days and nights: "forty" being a symbolic number that represents birth, rebirth, and change. The people in the camp below grow restless. Wanting some assurance of God's presence, they turn to the familiar nature religions of the ancient Near East. They make an idol, a golden calf, associated with strength and virility. Worshiping the calf and making sacrifices to it must have brought immediate comfort to their restless, troubled souls. God takes notice, however, and is so angry that God is ready to destroy these "stiff-necked people" (verse 9), while making a great nation of Moses. Moses intervenes on the peoples' behalf, and we catch a glimpse of the surprisingly intimate relationship that God and Moses share. Moses pleads with God who "changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people" (verse 14). Our relationship with God invites anger, ranting, pleading, and persuading. It is a dynamic relationship that depends upon honesty. The promise of the relationship is not instant gratification, but eternal love.

## REMINDERS

The people were impatient and wanted assurance that God was with them. Sometimes we need reminders; but unlike the people who worshipped the golden calf, we do not worship the reminder itself. The bread and juice of communion are such reminders. Create a reminder of God's presence – something that you can look at to help you remember that God is with you.

## A GOLDEN CALF, REALLY?

The golden calf was a familiar to the Hebrew people as the god of their neighbors. They settled for something that was right in front of them but less than God. What are some examples of lesser gods that we might settle for? Draw pictures of those gods and talk about how God is greater.

## PRAYER

Loving God,  
forgive us when we get impatient.  
Help us to remember that  
even though we can't see you,  
you are always with us.  
Amen.

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