

## Reading Schedule for December 10-16, 2018

This week I have chosen readings from the Book of Psalms that are associated with the Advent season. As you read them, you will notice the message of hope and anticipation, along with the loving character of God: that he is a shepherd, he lights up our world; he is reliable and faithful. These Psalms will not sound like messianic prophecies, but they are filled with hope through what God will do for his people. Sending Jesus is the greatest gift, and reveals the father-heart of God. I think you will be inspired by these Psalms.

**December 10 – Psalm 23:1-6:** “Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” (v.6) Obviously, it was difficult to choose just one verse in such a familiar Psalm. But the fact that the Lord is my shepherd, and that Jesus would be the good shepherd, is a marvelous connection for us as we read this in the season of Advent. But I am even more drawn to the invitation to join the Lord for a meal at his table, and that his desire is to promise us goodness and love. In the scene of Psalm 23, we see that believers will dwell with the Lord forever. He is the perfect shepherd; he is the one who guides us; he is the gracious host; he promises to protect us; and will bring us to be with him in his house forever. This will all be accomplished through Jesus, the Savior of the world. What do you love about this Psalm? How does it inspire you?

**December 11 – Psalm 25:1-10:** “Remember, Lord, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old.” (v.6) This is an affirmation of God’s character. It is in the context of receiving God’s hopeful protection. We want his guidance. He is good and upright, and he guides those who are humble before him. This may not seem like an obvious Advent Psalm, but it does portray the true character of God. We have a covenant with the Lord that is offered through Jesus. It is the new covenant. It reflects God’s character in the deepest way. He wants to bring us to himself. He loves us and is absolutely faithful to carry out his promises. Advent reminds us of the loving nature of God, and that he pursued us by sending his Son. What aspect of these ten verses means the most to you? Why?

**December 12 – Psalm 27:1-14:** “The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?” (v.1) There has been a noticeable increase in fear among people. I think many people are trapped by fear: the fear of the future, the fear of rejection, the fear of death, the fear of being misunderstood. . . Fear can lead to hopelessness. But when the psalmist, David, ends this chapter he uses the word “wait” or it can also be translated “hope” in the Lord. Lamentations 3:24-26 calls us to hope in and wait for the Lord because often God uses waiting to refresh, renew and teach us. There is no reason to be afraid. God is in control. How does this Psalm help you to overcome fear? What aspects of this Psalm stirs up your hope? What does it mean to you to wait for the Lord?

**December 13 – Psalm 85:1-13:** “Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?” (v.6) Since the beginning of time, people have asked God to bring revival. He is the only one who can do it. If apathy or complacency have set in, we need our souls to be revived. God is capable of reviving both the church, and individuals who make up the church. He can pour out his love on us, renewing a love for him. We need revival. So let’s ask God to give us a fresh touch of his

presence and love, which is sure to show us his salvation and his faithfulness in fresh and new ways. This may be a surprising Psalm for you to read during Advent, but it is one about restoration, forgiveness of sins, renewal of faith, and being close to the Lord. I think experiencing his deep love for us will make Advent come alive. I am asking God to restore our love and joy for him. I want Advent to be a spiritually enriching time for my life and yours. How do you respond to this Psalm?

**December 14 – Psalm 98:1-9:** “Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.” (v.1) We have talked about Advent being a season of worship. This Psalm is giving praise to God as we anticipate his appearance before us. Jesus fulfilled this anticipation when he came to save all people from their sins, and he will come again to judge the world. These are themes highlighted in this Psalm. There is much to praise God for. His promises are abundant. His provision is reliable. His presence is felt day after day. How does this Psalm help you to praise God? The theme of this Psalm is simply put, a song of joy and victory. How are those true for you?

**December 15 – Psalm 118:14-29:** “The Lord has done it this very day; let us rejoice today and be glad.” (v.24) I am continuing to think about the emphasis of worship and praise to our God. This simple truth about every day being a gift from God is a primary reason to praise him. Verse 22 is a common reference to Jesus. The idea of the Lord saving us is strong in this text, and that he made his light shine upon us emphasizes the ministry of Jesus, as he came to shine light in a dark world. I think there are several references to the coming of the Messiah, and what he would mean to us. This is all stirring up gratitude and anticipation. The fact that Jesus is the capstone of the church means that he is the most important part. He is the center stone in the top of the arch, holding the whole arch together. Jesus used this reference for himself in Luke 20:17. It also was used by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 2:20. I wanted you to see this Psalm as one that anticipates the coming of Christ. What verse stood out to you the most? Why?

**December 16 – Psalm 126:1-6:** “Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy.” (v.5) Both this verse and verse 6 refer to the marvelous change that God can bring about as he intervenes in our lives. This Psalm is sometimes associated with the return of the exiles from captivity in Ezra 1. Our God is a God of restoration, and he brings hope in the midst of our despair. Our tears can be seeds that will grow into a harvest of joy because God is able to bring good out of tragedy. When burdened by sorrow, know that your times of grief will end and that you will again find joy. As we wait on him, we can anticipate God moving on our behalf. Advent represents the coming of Christ in the specific way that Jesus came to the earth, but also in the marvelous way that God surprises us with his kindness and goodness on our behalf. How has the Lord helped you? May the joy of Advent come alive in our lives in fresh and new ways.

**PRAYER: Pray for our Christmas Food Bank that happens this coming Saturday, as well as our ministry to the families of Angel Tree children who will receive their gift this coming Sunday.**