

Reading Schedule for December 3-9, 2018

We will be reading in Isaiah this whole week, but on Friday, we will transition to messages from Isaiah that focus on the wonder of Advent, which is a season of anticipation.

December 3 – Isaiah 63: “But you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us or Israel acknowledge us; you, Lord, are our Father, our Redeemer from old is your name.” (v.16) I don’t know if you realize that the title “Father” for God is seldom used in the Old Testament. Jesus addressing God as Father, with the intimate term of “Abba” is very profound. But here we see the tenderness of God as Isaiah asks the Lord for compassion and protection. A common understanding of God was one of love, mercy and compassion. Isaiah is highlighting those characteristics. I am delighted that our God is a tender father, even though we read that he is tough as well. His discipline is also a very important aspect of God’s character and so helpful to our lives. But his father heart is emphasized here and clearly predominant in the prayers of Jesus. What does it mean to you that God is your father?

December 4 – Isaiah 64: “Yet you, Lord, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.” (v.8) This is not the first time that the Prophet Isaiah alludes to the fact that we are clay and God is the potter. He elaborates on this thought in Isaiah 29:16 when we are trying to tell the potter how to form the clay. “Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, ‘You did not make me?’” The analogy of God shaping our lives, and the One who is ultimately in control, should lead to humility. Humility is understanding who God is compared to who you are. How does humility come out in this chapter? Who among us is without sin? The answer is no one. Another familiar text in verse 6 says, “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags . . .” May we respond to God in humility. What aspect of this chapter stands out to you?

December 5 – Isaiah 65: “See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.” (v.17) As we move toward the conclusion of the Book of Isaiah, it is not surprising that the Prophet would point to the hope of eternity. It tells us that we will rejoice forever in this new heaven, and live an abundant life on this new earth. The message of the new earth is portrayed in these words, “The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox . . .” (v.25) This refers to a time of the reign of Christ on earth, because sin and death have been destroyed. Most people believe this points to Revelation 21 when the Lord makes all things new for his people. How do you respond to a chapter that emphasizes both judgment and the hope of salvation? What stands out to you?

December 6 – Isaiah 66: “As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me,” declares the Lord, “so will your name and descendants endure.” (v.22) I told you that the author is pointing to eternity. The things that we experience now are only temporary. There will be fire and the sword and challenges and difficulties, but something wonderful awaits the believer. For the faithless there will be a sobering portrayal of judgment. But for the faithful there is a glorious picture of rich reward, where we will enjoy God’s presence

forever. In the Book of Hebrews, he is warning them about the consequences of drifting away and denying the true Messiah, Jesus Christ. May the challenges of this chapter, and the hope of eternity stir your heart to pursue him with a wholehearted commitment. As we culminate this section of readings in Isaiah, won’t you have a heart response to God that is “ALL IN.” The Lord will uphold those who trust in Him. Do you agree? How do you respond to this final chapter after our 26 days of reading through a message of hope and comfort from the Prophet Isaiah?

December 7 – Isaiah 6:1-13: “And they were calling to one another: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.’” (v.3) This is one of the first suggested readings for Advent. The encounter of Isaiah is one that brings worship and inspiration to us all. This may not seem like an Advent reading, but it is connected to the fact that we are sent to speak out about the coming of the Messiah. Who shall I send and who would go for us? He was willing to be God’s spokesman. When God calls will you also say, “Here am I; send me!” There is much to share that is about hope, and provides joy for anyone who will respond to the living God and his son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. As we begin Advent, I want you to put yourself in Isaiah’s shoes. The Lord is high and exalted, and he is calling you. What is your response?

December 8 – Isaiah 7:10-17: “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.” (v.14) This is a Advent verse that ultimately points to one we would perceive to be God with us, which is the meaning of the word “Immanuel.” The prophecy most likely has a double fulfillment. A young woman from the house of Ahaz, who is not married, would marry and have a son. Before three years passed, the two invading kings would be destroyed, giving the people hope. But the greatest hope is expressed in Matthew 1:23, as it quotes this very verse, pointing to the truth that Mary is a virgin, and would be conceived by the Holy Spirit and bear a son named Jesus, who is Immanuel, God with us. What does it mean to you that Jesus represents God with us? How do you understand that? Why is that so encouraging?

December 9 – Isaiah 9:1-7: “Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan.” (v.1) This is the least quoted verse in this uplifting Advent Scripture about the identity of Jesus being the Prince of Peace. In verse 1, it says that these northern tribes, which have little consequence, will be honored in the future, as Jesus will be from Nazareth in Galilee. The very words, “but in the future he will honor Galilee,” are so interesting. This is where Jesus grew up, and where he spent 90% of his life. From Galilee a great light will shine, bringing peace that will have no end. I wanted you to read this text early in our Advent season because it is one of the most inspirational. How do you respond to these timeless words? Which title for the Messiah means the most to you?

PRAYER: Pray for our spiritual pursuit of God during this Advent season.