

Reading Schedule for November 14-20, 2016

Isn't it nice to read about the resurrection in November?! Is there any event in history that fills you with gratitude more than the resurrection?! We are going slowly progress through the last two chapters of John during this week of readings. I personally want to absorb this passage in fresh and new ways. John's account of the resurrection is unique to the rest of the Gospel writers. I am also delighted to learn about Peter's restoration to ministry. I can always use those hopeful words. A man of failure, nothing but a clay pot, is commissioned by Jesus to serve him, and to serve him well. I think the same is true for you and me.

November 14 – John 20:1-10: "Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first." (v.4) The personal nature of this statement shows that the writer of this Gospel is John, and he is the one who ran faster than Peter. It says that he went inside, he saw and believed. This is the personal testimony of John about the resurrection. He had not seen Jesus yet, but he believed that he was raised. You have not seen Jesus yet, but you believe that he is raised. All that Jesus had been telling them now comes to John's mind, and he remembers that Jesus said that he would die, but that he would also rise again. There is much in these nine verses that can encourage us. You have just read the greatest event in history. How does it impact you? Are you like Peter or John? Why?

November 15 – John 20:11-23: "Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: 'I have seen the Lord!' And she told them that he had said these things to her." (v.18) It is very interesting that Mary is the first one to see Jesus. You would not expect that. It is unique to the Christian faith that a woman would be the main witness of verifying the resurrection of Jesus, because she saw him face to face. The Christian faith turns everything upside-down. The key to her recognizing Jesus is when he calls her by name. I think it would be the most thrilling thing to be the first person to see Jesus. I am looking forward to meeting Mary Magdalene in heaven. She seems like such a significant person. I wonder how God used her after the resurrection. You don't hear much about her. I like that she says, "I have seen the Lord." Everything about Jesus is so attractive to me. But I don't want you to perceive him as anything less than Lord. He is the Son of God, and his authority is from God, and he spoke the very words of God. May this reading stir up your faith, as well as your love for him. What do you notice in these words?

November 16 – John 20:24-31: "Thomas said to him, 'My Lord and my God!'" (v.28) This is a short reading. I want you to be honest with God about your faith. Thomas was very honest and shared his doubts with the disciples, even though they claimed to see Jesus. This would be upsetting if I were Jesus. However, he works with Thomas, and draws him into a deeper faith than ever before. Thomas would never look back. I think that honest doubt leads to questions; questions lead to answers; and the answers birth a deeper faith. That makes doubt fruitful and honesty worthwhile. Give your doubts to the Lord; present them with sincerity to God. I believe he will use them to deepen your faith. How do you respond to this event in Thomas' life?

November 17 – John 21:1-14: "Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!' As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, 'It is the Lord,' he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water." (v.7) This does not sound like the man who isolated himself and felt so much shame

for his denial. He obviously had experienced some separation with Jesus both physically and spiritually. But there is a deep love in Peter for Jesus, and so when this event occurs, he responds from the heart and jumps into the water. This "jump" in the water, to me, is the sign of Peter's repentance. He would not stay isolated or stuck in shame, but would run (swim) to Jesus. If you notice a distance in your relationships with Christ because of your own sin, or a weakening of faith, it is time to run back to him. He has something for you. He will accept you fully and forgive you completely. He will recommission you, just like he did Peter. Do you believe that? How does Peter's example inspire you?

November 18 – 2 Corinthians 5:11-21: The only thing difficult about this reading is trying to do it all in one sermon. You can tell that there is so much expressed by Paul in these words. This is the heart of the letter, and presents the true theme. It shows us how we're motivated, what is true about us, and our calling from Jesus as his ambassadors. What stands out to you? How would you teach this scripture if you were giving the sermon? Think about it!

November 19 – John 21:15-25: "Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written." (v.25) There is much in this passage that I could highlight. I was at the very shore, where Jesus shared these words with Peter, on my trip to the Holy Land. I heard the whisper of Christ through his Spirit telling me to, "Feed my sheep." This is a very meaningful event to me because of that. But this last verse opens the incredible impact of Jesus Christ. He could have written more and more, but he wanted people to know the truth about Jesus so that they could make a decision about their personal faith in him. He clearly and strategically presented the evidence of Jesus' claim as the Son of God. Numerous times he used the title, "I am." We have read through this Gospel and it is meant to strengthen our resolve about Jesus as the Son of God and our desire to serve him. If you believe, that means you have received and are now called to represent him to the world. If you say "yes" to a relationship with him, then please say "yes" to serving him. How do you respond to the phrase, "Feed my sheep?"

November 20 – Joshua 1:1-9: "Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them." (v.6) These are words from God to Joshua. This is no small task, but God assures him that He will be with him. I have thought about thanksgiving and the Book of Joshua. The Hebrews had wandered around for 40 years in the wilderness, and it was time to enter the Promised Land. I think that our reading through Joshua until Christmas is a marvelous way to affirm our desire for God to do a new thing in us, and for his kingdom to advance. Our world seems in disarray, and the church in America seems weak. But God will take a remnant of those who will absolutely trust him and turn this world upside-down. We can advance like Joshua did; his example is for our inspiration today. What do you learn about prosperity in these first nine verses? How does this make you thankful?

Prayers: Pray prayers of thanksgiving. There is no better way to anticipate the celebration of Thanksgiving than with hearts of gratitude.