

Reading Schedule for November 19-25, 2018

This begins a new section entitled “The Future Redeemer.” You can anticipate many statements about the coming of the Messiah. We read that he is a servant, and especially notice that he is a suffering servant. I anticipate many inspiring statements and familiar verses for you as we read this week. We conclude the week in chapter 55, when we learn about the free invitation to receive God’s grace, just like Jesus announced in the Gospel.

November 19 – Isaiah 49: “Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!” (v.15) The heart of God is likened to a mother, and her undying commitment to a child. The next verse says, “I have engraved you on the palms of my hands . . .” as a statement of commitment and affection from our God. When you feel that God has forsaken you, we must ask if we have forsaken and forgotten God instead. It is so encouraging to know that God is faithful and will not let go. Our circumstances may make us feel differently, but the everlasting love of God is a timeless truth. What other verse caught your attention in the reading today?

November 20 – Isaiah 50: “I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting.” (v.6) This is a foreshadowing of what we will read in Isaiah 53. The servant from God will not be treated appropriately. He will endure abusive opposition and intense rejection, as we will read on Friday and Saturday this week. It is amazing to think about Jesus’ resilience. There is a statement in this chapter that goes along with this same idea, “I set my face like flint.” This means that the coming servant chose suffering willingly, and he moves forward with determination, confident in God’s sovereign plan. This past Sunday we read that Jesus learned obedience through suffering. This affirms that truth. How do you face opposition with resilience?

November 21 – Isaiah 51: “I have put my words in your mouth and covered you with the shadow of my hand—I who set the heavens in place, who laid the foundations of the earth, and who say to Zion, ‘You are my people.’” (v.16) These words point to the Messiah, but the people would not notice the wonder of the Messiah, even as the prophet Isaiah predicts that Jerusalem would miss the opportunity as he says, “Awake, awake! Rise up, Jerusalem.” In reality, the people need to wake up. It was God, not their Babylonian captors, who forced on Jerusalem the cup of wrath. Now God invites his people to rise from their stupor of despair. He predicts deliverance, if they would only respond. He began by asking them to listen; challenging them to lift their hearts to heaven; “I am the one who comforts you,” says the Lord.” The prisoners soon will be set free. The Lord is a pursuing God. Why not soften your heart to the Lord and tell him about all the ways you are grateful for his help in your life?!

November 22 – Isaiah 52: Happy Thanksgiving! “See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted.” (v.13) This is actually the beginning of a prophetic word from Isaiah that is so amazing and insightful that we could spend all week just on this section. The truth is that God would lift him up, but many would treat him poorly. I understand this as the beginning of

Isaiah’s messianic message of the suffering servant. He would suffer, but he would also be glorified. I shouldn’t skip the first part of this chapter because it has a message of preparation for the Messiah. It also emphasizes the beauty of being a witness through proclamation of the good news. Verse 7 is a great verse to memorize.

November 23 – Isaiah 53: “Yet it was the Lord’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.” (v.10) I could pick every single verse in this chapter and make it something significant to me. The overall message of this chapter is so closely connected to Jesus, who he was and what he did. But to think that it was in God’s plan that he would crush him and cause him to suffer so that his life would be a guilt offering. That is the message of atonement. It’s brought out in other places in this chapter as well. He was pierced for our transgressions. By his wounds we are healed. But that God had, from the very beginning, a purpose of redemption by sending his Son, is so encouraging to me. That means that God has good purposes in mind for my life, whether I can see it or not. I can trust in the sovereign work of God, even if life appears to be negative and defeating. Does that make sense? How do you respond to this magnificent chapter?

November 24 – Isaiah 54: “The Lord will call you back as if you were a wife deserted and distressed in spirit—a wife who married young, only to be rejected,’ says your God.” (v.6) This continues the message I was trying to communicate yesterday from Isaiah 53. The future of God’s people was not rejection, or even distant acceptance, but joy and blessing similar to a marriage that is renewed. There is no doubt that God disciplines his people, but his affection for us is strong like a man to his young wife. Have you ever been separated from a loved one and then experienced joy when that person returned? This is like the joy God experiences when you repent and return to him. This is the language of these verses, and reminds us that God never turns his back on us because he is longing for us to return if we have drifted away. What else did you notice in this chapter about the nature of God?

November 25 – Isaiah 55: “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.” (v.1) This is one of my favorite verses, as it announces the free gift offered as an anticipation of the Gospel of grace. This offer is not indefinite, because it says in verse 6, “Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near.” As the Lord is stirring a person’s heart, that is the time to respond. There is no guarantee that our hearts will always be soft to the Lord. But when they are, do not miss the opportunity to sing praise to God and surrender to his will. I am also drawn to the idea that his thoughts are higher than my thoughts, and the marvelous words that conclude this chapter about going forth in joy and bursting in song before the Lord. This is a marvelous way to end this week of readings. How are you led to praise him today?

PRAYER: Let your prayers ring out in gratitude to God for his abundance on your behalf.