

Reading Schedule for November 5-11, 2018

This week we will transition from the marvel of Matthew to the inspiration of Isaiah. These last few readings from Matthew are very intense, but culminate with the resurrection. I also wanted you to spend significant amounts of time contemplating the Great Commission and how it applies to your life. You can anticipate that on Friday. For 26 days, we will read through the writings of Isaiah and his marvelous picture of a gracious God.

November 5 – Matthew 27:11-26: “Which of the two do you want me to release to you?” asked the governor. ‘Barabbas,’ they answered.” (v.21) It is hard to imagine that the crowd would be so antagonistic to Jesus that they would want a known criminal to be freed. It is hard to understand what was exactly going on, but it does appear that the religious leaders were stirring up the crowd. And there is one explanation that says that Barabbas was one of the common people, and he was one of their heroes, so to speak. He might have been part of a guerilla band that victimized the wealthy upper class, as well as the Romans, and so gained popularity among the commoners. As you read this, I am sure you are motivated to want to stand up for Jesus, and I am sure there were others that wanted to do so as well. But this was God’s plan and fulfillment of the Scriptures. The Messiah would be delivered into the hands of evil men, and Pilate would wash his hands declaring his innocence (Psalm 26.6). What stands out to you as Jesus stands before Pilate?

November 6 – Matthew 27:27-44: “Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads . . .” (v.39) This is one verse amongst several that tells about the response of the crowd and the people that surrounded Jesus. Recently I read Psalm 22, which begins with, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” And then continues in verses 7-18 as prophetic words written 1,000 years before Christ of what we read now that happened to Jesus. I recall visiting the historic site of Jesus’ crucifixion, as it was near a road that many would pass by. Some were stopping and ridiculing him as he suffered on the cross. I always want to interpret this terrible event as a reflection of Christ’s love for me. Clearly Jesus taught that laying down his life for another is the greatest act of love. He mentions that specifically in John 10 & 15. What might be your personal response to Jesus’ suffering on your behalf as he was nailed to the cross?

November 7 – Matthew 27:45-66: “At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split . . .” (v.51) There are many phrases in this reading today that are worth highlighting and have so much meaning. But the picture of the temple curtain being torn in two is so powerful. The curtain was hung between the holy place and the Holy of Holies. It was 60 feet high and 30 feet wide, made of special woven fabric. No one was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies behind the curtain except the high priest, and he could only do it once a year. This signifies the removal of separation between God and you and me. Jesus died to give us access to relationship with the Father God. This particular verse inspires me. Which verse inspires you? Why?

November 8 – Matthew 28:1-15: “. . . telling them, ‘You are to say, ‘His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.’” (v.13) The resurrection is an amazing event and that women would be the first witnesses is quite astonishing, and yet this makes the power of the resurrection even more convincing. However, this story about the disciples stealing the body has been one

that I have investigated quite thoroughly. Of course, it is a lie that circulated, but I was thinking about – if it was actually true, why would the disciples go through so much persecution, and even martyrdom, for something they knew was a lie? The disciples are the greatest proof, in my opinion, of the resurrection because of their amazing tenacity and unwavering faith in the resurrected Jesus. As you know, from our point in history, the Gospel spread everywhere on the globe with a suggested 2 billion followers of Jesus Christ in the world. I love reading these words, and I hope they remind you of the certainty you and I have of Christ’s resurrection. Since we wholeheartedly believe in the resurrection, let us live with wholehearted devotion, knowing that we will be raised one day with him.

November 9 – Matthew 28:16-20: “Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” (v.18) This is a very short reading, which I have assigned to you on purpose. I want you to do something for your spiritual edification. I want you to memorize the great commission. Take some time right now and read through it three or four times, and then recite it out loud to yourself. When you have done that, then write out a paragraph on what this means to you. There are no clearer words that Jesus gives declaring that we are is “sent ones.” How has the Lord impressed you with these timeless words that declare our purpose until the Lord takes us home?!

November 10 – Isaiah 40: “. . . but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. (v.31) This is a great way to begin, as this is one of the most significant chapters in this section of Isaiah. Some have suggested that the very first words that he uses are really the theme of chapters 40-66 . . . “comfort” for God’s exiles. I can still remember enjoying the movie “Chariots of Fire” as Eric Liddell was reading this chapter as various scenes are taking place of athletes competing in the 1924 Olympics. Verse 31 is a verse that I have memorized. But I also am very inspired by verses 8, 11, 28, and of course the one I have highlighted. In some Bibles the word in verse 31 is translated “wait,” and in others “hope.” I prefer the translation of hope because it is this kind of confidence that will renew our strength and we will not grow weary. Hope in the Lord means having confidence and trust in his ability to do exactly what we read about in this chapter. What do you learn about God in this chapter? What is your personal response ?

November 11 – Isaiah 41: “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” (v.10) I was told that the Bible says “fear not” 365 times, but I looked that up and it is actually more than 70 times. I am not sure where I read that, but I do realize that the Lord does not want us to be afraid. He has promised us help. He has also promised to be with us. The whole theme begins with verse 1, that we would be renewed in strength. Again in verse 13 we read similar words because God will hold us up and carry us through. No human opposition can defeat God. The weak people of God are made into a powerful force as obstacle after obstacle is removed, leading to joyful praise to the Lord. What is your response to Isaiah’s words from this chapter?

PRAYER: Pray for the military people serving and their families, with specific prayers for Jacob Baily and Alex Patrick, who are serving right now.