

July 2026
Volume 7



MONTHLY BIBLE READING



INSPIRED TO LIVE
CHURCH

Isaiah 4-5 • Psalms 114-115 • Jude

Scripture Reading

El Hakkadosh: “The Holy God”

Isaiah 5:1-17

TODAY'S FOCUS

The LORD Almighty will be exalted by his justice, and the holy God will be proved holy by his righteous acts. Isaiah 5:16

In today's reading from Isaiah, we discover that although God planted a vineyard with "the choicest vines," the vineyard "yielded only bad fruit." Through Isaiah, God speaks bitterly here about the spiritual decline of Israel and the consequences of rejecting him.

Why does God get so upset about Israel's disobedience? He is angry because of who he is: El Hakkadosh, "the Holy God." This name for God comes from the Hebrew word kadosh, meaning "one of a kind, utterly unique, set apart, holy." Isaiah uses this name at least 30 times throughout his book.

Showing himself as El Hakkadosh, God reveals himself to Israel as completely upright or righteous. He walks a straight path. His exalted moral character sets him apart from the gods of the surrounding nations. He is not merely a useful dispenser of wishes and desires but is holy in and of himself. Because he is holy, God expects, even demands, that his people Israel be holy too.

So El Hakkadosh, “the Holy God,” became outraged when his “beloved vineyard,” his children Israel, produced only sour grapes. They had become corrupt and unrighteous.

In and through Jesus Christ, who is the true vine (John 15:1), we too are set apart for the Holy God. May we, by the power of his Holy Spirit, produce good fruit for Him!

Prayer

Holy God, you are perfect in holiness and righteous! Yet you have given your Son to make sinners holy. Help us to live holy lives that produce the fruit of righteousness.

Amen.

NOTES

Isaiah 6:1-4 • 2 Chronicles 26-27 • Philemon

Isaiah 6:1-4 • 2 Chronicles 26-27 • Philemon

Scripture Reading

Jesus Is Lord

Isaiah 6:1-4; John 12:37-43

TODAY'S FOCUS

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” Isaiah 6:3

Isaiah here shares with us the story of his commissioning as a prophet. But the focus isn't on himself; it's on the one seated on the throne. The Lord is "high and exalted," with "the train of his robe" filling the temple. The temple represents God's presence among his people. As the angels in Isaiah's vision sing, they remind each other (and us) that God's awesome glory fills "the whole earth." The Lord's majestic presence isn't just a temple experience. It extends beyond the court of heaven to fill the entire creation!

When we go to John's gospel, we find that this passage about Isaiah's commissioning includes a prophetic dimension. Isaiah's prophecy spoke of God's glory extending from the temple into all the world. And several hundred years later, our Savior stood by the temple and declared that he himself was the temple of God!

Destroy the temple of his body and that temple would be raised in three days, he said (see John 2:18-22). In fact, God's glory was revealed supremely in the hour that Jesus was lifted up on a cross to pay the ransom price for our sin (see John 12:23-33).

This glory of the Savior has now shone forth to people everywhere. And today Christ's Spirit lives and works in us so that we ourselves have become God's temple. Is the glory of Christ shining forth from you?

Prayer

***Holy, holy, holy! LORD God Almighty! All
thy works shall praise thy name, in earth
and sky and sea; We acknowledge your
holiness, Lord, and we worship you
today.***

Amen.

NOTES

2 Kings 15-16 • Hosea 1 • Hebrews 1

Know and Tell the Whole Story

Colossians 1:15-20; Hebrews 1:1-3

In these last days he has spoken to us by his Son. Hebrews 1:2

The gospel story can be told narrowly, emphasizing only the center of salvation history: Jesus' incarnation—the Word become flesh, Jesus' life and teaching, Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, Jesus' victorious resurrection, and Jesus' ascension and rule at the right hand of God till he comes again.

Yet as Paul writes in Colossians, the gospel, centered in the life of Jesus, has cosmic proportions. This Jesus “is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created... He is before all things and in him all things hold together.” This cosmic Christ is Lord not only of our lives but over all creation. Creation too “will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God” (Romans 8:21).

The gospel of Jesus is about the whole story of creation and how this world belongs to God. It is about the impact on creation of humankind's fall into sin. It is about Christ's redemptive work, which redeems not only individuals but an entire creation that groans under the weight of sin. Ultimately, the gospel story is about the restoration of all things in a new heaven and new earth. So when we accept Jesus' promise of salvation and follow him, we become part of his kingdom, a here and now kingdom that will someday continue in a new heaven and new earth. Are you part of this story and kingdom?

Lord of creation, King of the universe, we bow before you, the one Savior. Teach us to worship and adore you. Thank you for loving us so much.

Amen.

NOTES

DAY 186

Hosea 2-5 • Hebrews 2

Scripture Reading

“I Will Betroth You to Me Forever”

Hosea 2:13-20

TODAY'S FOCUS

I will betroth you to me forever... in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the Lord. Hosea 2:19-20

Marriage ceremonies used to contain the vow “I pledge you my troth.” The words would be considered quaint today, but it was a way of making a solemn pledge of unfailing love and loyalty. In more modern English we would say, “I will be true to you.”

The Bible often describes God’s relationship with believers in terms of the loving relationship of marriage. In the Ten Commandments he says, “I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God” (Exodus 20:5). That may sound strange, because often people think of jealousy as bad. But jealousy is not the same as envy. Envy doesn’t like it when other people have good things, and jealousy is about protecting things that belong to you. Jealousy can sometimes be distorted, but basically it is a sign of a burning love that rejects betrayal. In marriage, the bridal couple promise “to forsake all others” and be true to each other.

This God we worship loves us so much that he was willing to give his life for us. His love is forever. It is not here today and gone tomorrow. In return, we must love God with our whole heart and soul and mind (see Matthew 22:37). It must be a total commitment. How could we run after other gods and leave the God who loves us so much?

Prayer

Lord, you sought us with the deepest love when we did not care for you! When you speak tenderly to us, it softens our hearts, that we may love you in return.

In Jesus’ name,

Amen.

NOTES

DAY 187

Hosea 6-9 • Hebrews 3

Scripture Reading

Encourage Each Other Daily

Hebrews 3:7-19

TODAY'S FOCUS

See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily. Hebrews 3:12-13

We all need to pay attention when we see warning signs. But sometimes we get used to seeing warnings, and we begin to ignore them. When that happens, real danger can creep in and do lots of damage.

In the book of Hebrews we have come to a passage that serves as a warning sign, and we do well to pay attention to what the author is saying here. The writer is pointing to the history of God's people and showing how it did not play out so well. People were quick to harden their hearts and turn away from God.

So we need to learn from the mistakes of others. Don't harden your hearts to the Lord, and keep focused on Jesus.

One important lesson we find here is that in living in community together, we need to encourage each other in our walk with God. We cannot keep free from sin and temptation on our own; we need the Lord, and we need each other. We need to encourage each other to keep on following the Lord.

When the people of God ignored warning signs in the past, they ran into real danger. Let's not get so used to warning signs that we begin to ignore them. Let's continue to encourage each other to "fix [our] thoughts on Jesus" (Hebrews 3:1).

Prayer

Lord God, help us to pay attention to warning signs, keep our focus on Jesus, and encourage each other to hear your voice.

Amen.

NOTES

[illegible]

DAY 188

Hosea 10-12 • Hebrews 4

Scripture Reading

Falling Short of God's Rest

Hebrews 4:1-5

TODAY'S FOCUS

Since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it.
Hebrews 4:1

As God led his people into the promised land of Canaan under Joshua's leadership, he promised they would receive the gift of rest (Joshua 1:13). Many battles ensued, but in the end God provided the rest he had promised. Joshua 11:23 reports, "So Joshua took the entire land, just as the Lord had directed Moses, and he gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal divisions. Then the land had rest from war." With its boundaries secure and the threats to its well-being removed, Israel had peace.

What Israel failed to recognize, however, was that the Sabbath rest God ultimately intended for them was much more than anything that a tract of land could provide. God was inviting them into his rest, a rest that was spiritual and eternal.

We receive that rest, God's Sabbath rest, when we respond to the gospel message in faith. When Christ came, many in Israel failed to receive him and the true rest that he came to provide. Yet, thankfully, God makes clear that "the promise of entering his rest still stands." Just as Israel needed to trust in God to experience the physical rest he had promised, so too, eternal rest, is still available to anyone who will simply place their hope and trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Have you experienced that rest?

Prayer

*O God, we never want to fall short of the rest that only you can give! Thank you that the door remains open for all who wish to enter with a believing heart.
In Jesus name,*

Amen.

NOTES

Hosea 13-14 • Hebrews 5

Return of the King

Hosea 13:9-14

“I will deliver them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death.”
Hosea 13:14

The history of Israel is summarized by the failure of its monarchy. From the beginning, Israel's desire for a king represented the rejection of God as their King (1 Samuel 8:7). And over the years, wickedness characterized most of Israel's rulers, with disastrous economic, political, and spiritual results.

In today's reading, God asks the people a rhetorical question. "Where is your king, that he may save you?" The tragic answer is that there is no earthly king powerful enough to undo the consequences of centuries-long disobedience. Israel will be defenseless in the face of God's coming judgment.

But all is not lost. God's punishment is compared to the pain a woman feels when her child is born. Like childbirth, God's judgment will be intense and difficult. But the pain will eventually be replaced by the joy of new birth.

Jesus said that for his followers, his death would be like the pain of a woman giving birth (John 16:21), but the pain of the cross would be overcome by the joy of resurrected life. Jesus shares his victory with us, and Paul notes this by quoting from Hosea when he describes Jesus' triumph (1 Corinthians 15:55). Jesus is our true King, given not in anger, but in love. In him the darkness of death is replaced by the light of life.

Lord, sometimes our priorities are all mixed up, and we don't give you, our King, our total allegiance. Help us to serve you in all we do.

We pray in Jesus' name,

Amen.

NOTES

DAY 190

Micah 1-4 • Hebrews 6

Scripture Reading

The Future of God's People

Micah 4:1-5

TODAY'S FOCUS

We will walk in the name of the LORD our God forever and ever. Micah 4:5

Micah describes the coming kingdom of God as a time of peace and blessing. In one sense, God's kingdom is already here, but in another sense, the full glory of the kingdom still needs to be revealed. We don't know when that will be; only the Father knows (Mark 13:32). In the meantime, people of all nations will flock to the Lord to learn His ways, so that they too can walk in his paths.

God will eventually judge all the nations and settle every dispute. And people who were at war "will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks." God's people will be able to enjoy the pleasant shade of their vines and fruit trees.

What a wonderful future! I am looking forward to that day, as I'm sure you are too.

Already today we can begin to enjoy this divine kingdom of shalom (peace and flourishing for all). Already we can experience fellowship with the King and all who are fellow citizens of his kingdom (Ephesians 2:19). Already today God invites us to change our behavior so that we can better experience his peace and reconciliation.

Our thoughts and actions are to be shaped by God's coming kingdom! Walking with God, we can begin to enjoy the future today.

Prayer

Lord, we pray that your kingdom will come soon, so that all your people may enjoy full life in your presence. But help us now to walk faithfully with you and give us a further glimpse of that day.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

NOTES

DAY 191

Micah 5-7 • Hebrews 7

Scripture Reading

Once For All

Hebrews 7:23-28

TODAY'S FOCUS

He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. Hebrews 7:27

In the Old Testament God made a covenant with his people. That covenant included a system of sacrifices that pointed to the forgiveness of sins. But those sacrifices could not fully take away sin because, as Hebrews states later, “it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” (Hebrews 10:4). Those sacrifices only pointed ahead to the one true sacrifice that was really needed: the shed blood of a perfect human being who could offer his own life in place of ours, and that person is Jesus Christ.

We could not pay for our own sins. The only way for us to be saved was for a sinless person to die willingly in our place, for our sake. And only Jesus Christ, who is fully God and fully human, could do that.

For a time, God established the role of priests to offer sacrifices for his people. The priests offered sacrifices from the people to God day after day as payment for sins. And once a year, the high priest would make atonement for everyone on the Day of Atonement.

But all of that ceremony pointed to the once for all, sacrifice of Jesus, the great High Priest. As our text says, “He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.” Once for all. Sacrifices for sin are no longer needed. His sacrifice is enough for all. In Jesus all our sins are atoned for.

What can we do to pay for our sins?
Nothing. Jesus gave the ultimate
sacrifice, once for all.

Prayer

Thank you, Jesus, for sacrificing yourself to pay for our sin. Help us to accept this gift of grace.

Amen.

NOTES

Isaiah 8-10 • Hebrews 8

Isaiah 8-10 • Hebrews 8

Scripture Reading

Shadow Work

Hebrews 8:1-13

TODAY'S FOCUS

They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. Hebrews 8:5

If you walk along a city street on a bright, sunny day, you will come across shadows. The shadows won't really affect your walk. For example, you can walk through the shadow of a light pole because you know it is just a shadow of the pole. But it does make you aware that there is a light pole near you.

The priests that God ordained under the old covenant served in a tabernacle (and later a temple), that was like a shadow, or a copy, of what is in heaven, says Hebrews. That tabernacle and those priests were there to point to the real tabernacle in heaven and the real High Priest, Jesus Christ, who works on our behalf to save us from our sin and gives us new life forever with God.

Jesus represents the new covenant, and his work is far superior to that of the priests of the old covenant. Jesus is the real deal. Unfortunately, people got lost looking only at the shadow, instead of looking to the real work of God in their lives and worshiping him as the only true God.

Jesus Christ came into the world so that we would no longer need the temple priests to intercede for us; he himself intercedes for us.

And he has made the perfect sacrifice,
providing forgiveness of sins once and for all.
Instead of looking at shadows, we are called
to look to Jesus.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, help us to keep our eyes on you, knowing that you provide all that we need for salvation and full life forever.

Amen.

NOTES

Isaiah 11-14 • Hebrews 9

Isaiah 11-14 • Hebrews 9

Scripture Reading

Can You Be Sure?

Hebrews 9:23-28

TODAY'S FOCUS

He has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Hebrews 9:26

When a Christian dies, the believer's body goes into the ground, waiting to be resurrected when Christ returns to earth. But, upon death, a Christian's soul is brought into the presence of God! Jesus promised the criminal who was being crucified alongside him that on that very day the man's soul would be with him in paradise!

How can you know for sure that you too will be with Jesus after you die?

In the Old Testament, countless animals were sacrificed to assure people of God's forgiveness. But as our reading today says, Jesus did not need to "offer himself again and again." Instead, he "appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself." "Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many."

If being in paradise somehow depended on you and your life, you would have every reason to be uncertain about your eternal future. But if your destiny depends on what Christ has done for you, you can be sure that one day he will say to you also, "Today, you are with me in paradise!" (see Luke 23:43).

If you have confessed your sins to God and turned your life over to him, Christ's one sacrifice has completely cleansed you from sin! Nothing can prevent you from entering paradise for eternity!

Prayer

Thank you, God, that my destiny doesn't depend on my life, my devotion, my love, my giving, my serving, or my attitudes. Jesus died in my place so that I can know eternity with you!

Amen.

NOTES

Isaiah 15-18 • Hebrews 10

Isaiah 19-21 • Hebrews 11

Isaiah 19-21 • Hebrews 11

Scripture Reading

By Faith: Going Home

Hebrews 11:8-16

TODAY'S FOCUS

He was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. Hebrews 11:10

Ask travelers, “Where is home?” and they will not point to the tent or hotel room in which they are staying. They will mention the name of their country, town, or city instead.

Abraham lived in a tent. So did his son Isaac and grandson Jacob. These were people on the move. Ask them, “Where’s home? Describe your neighborhood,” and they may well have shrugged their shoulders. They had no fixed address, except for the region God had called them to. In their lifetime, the land they were in (Canaan) never got beyond being a land of promise. They were looking forward “to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.”

Where is your home? If all you can answer is an earthly city and street address, you have missed the point the writer of Hebrews is making. Christians are Abraham's spiritual offspring. We have no more permanent home in this world than he did. Home points to the future, our life in God's presence forever. Home summons us to lift up our eyes of faith to see that we are citizens of the kingdom of God. Home is where Jesus is. Home is where God is and where the New Jerusalem, the city of his kingdom, has fully come. Home is a new earth under a new heaven.

And it is coming. Believe it!

Prayer

Father, help us not to get so comfortable that we fail to look or long for anything better. By faith, help us look forward to the city you have built. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

NOTES

DAY 196

Isaiah 22-24 • Hebrews 12

Scripture Reading

Run!

Hebrews 12:1-3

TODAY'S FOCUS

Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us ... run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Hebrews 12:1

Our physical bodies need daily exercise and activity. If we rarely stretch, exercise, do physical work, or play sports, our bodies will grow inflexible and heavy. In the long run, we will risk all sorts of health problems, and by midlife, we will feel the aches and pains of old age prematurely.

Though we don't often think of our spiritual life in the same way, we need to work at being spiritually fit as well. We need to exercise our souls and do faith-building exercises.

These are not exercises we do by our own strength, however. Through Jesus Christ, God has given us a "new nature" that needs to grow up and become strong. The apostle Paul explains that Christians together are like a body that needs to be attached to Christ as their Head, and "the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow" (Colossians 2:19).

As we grow in Christ, we need to exercise all the muscles of our faith. As our text tells us, we must "run with perseverance the race marked out for us." We are called not to shuffle or trudge along in our spiritual life, but to press on, with exertion, for God's glory.

Prayer

Creator God, thank you that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. Help us not only to be physically fit but also to be active in your kingdom work so that we may bring you glory and honor.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

NOTES



Isaiah 25-28 • Hebrews 13

Rest

cornerstone on which we can rely. This is a reference to Jesus, who invites the weary and burdened to come to him for rest (see Matthew 11:28; Ephesians 2:20).

Isaiah 29-31 • James 1

Be Quick to Listen

TODAY'S FOCUS

We need to ask the Holy Spirit to help us learn to listen. Ask someone in your family to let you know when you are too quick to speak and too slow to listen. Begin to practice the art of listening.

Amen.

NOTES

Isaiah 32-35 • James 2

Isaiah 32-35 • James 2

Scripture Reading

The Joy of a Holy Walk

Isaiah 35

TODAY'S FOCUS

A highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness; it will be for those who walk on that Way. Isaiah 35:8

Sometimes when we walk with God, we might wonder if we are really getting anywhere. It may seem that others, by cutting ethical corners, are making names for themselves and really getting ahead. It may seem that our walk with God has kept us on a treadmill to nowhere. If so, take heart from this chapter from Isaiah.

Isaiah paints a beautiful picture of our future. A kingdom is coming, and it is God's kingdom, in which all evil will be destroyed, and all will be at peace. Those who faithfully obey God's commands will enjoy full life in this wonderful place. God is making a highway we can follow to get there. While traveling on it, God will protect us from danger. God personally cares for everyone on this road by becoming a fellow traveler and walking with us.

Only those who believe in Jesus Christ may journey on this road, for it is “the Way of Holiness.” Real holiness is possible only through Jesus. He is the Way (John 14:6). Only those who walk faithfully with him will be permitted to enter God’s new heaven and new earth. And God’s Spirit gives them the strength to walk faithfully. They will enter with singing and with everlasting joy, and sorrow will give way to joy and gladness.

Come! Believe in Jesus and join the throng
that is traveling to the kingdom of God!

Prayer

***Lord Jesus, I want to join that throng.
Please wash away my sins and help me to
come into your holy presence. Help me
to walk with you every day.***

Amen.

NOTES

2 Kings 17 • 2 Chronicles 28
Psalms 46 • James 3

Walk the Talk

TODAY'S FOCUS

As we get ready to begin each new day, we should ask the Holy Spirit to guard our tongues. Each one of us should learn to pray the prayer of Psalm 141:3: “Set a guard over my mouth, Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips.”

Amen.

2 Chronicles 29-31 • James 4

Our Will or God's?

TODAY'S FOCUS

Are you seeking God's kingdom and walking in his will, even when you cannot control your circumstances?

NOTES

2 Kings 18-19 • 2 Chronicles 32 • James 5

The Praying King

2 Kings 18:1-12; 19:9-19

There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him. 2 Kings 18:5

“Hezekiah trusted in the LORD ... He held fast to the LORD ... and the LORD was with him.” One reason? Hezekiah prayed. Most kings tried to look great on their thrones; Hezekiah did his best work on his knees--and not just when he was in trouble. For Hezekiah, prayer was a habit.

In our reading for today, Hezekiah and his people are in deep trouble. Assyria is like a shark. It has already gobbled up the ten tribes of Israel, and it is circling back to devour Judah. The Assyrians mock and belittle Hezekiah and his God. Sennacherib even sends a letter to Hezekiah full of trash talk against the Lord.

Hezekiah reads the letter, walks straight into the temple with it, and shows it to God. He “spreads it out,” as if to have God read it.

Is prayer difficult for you? Join the club. There are likely some Christians for whom prayer is easy, but for most of us, it is a discipline.

It does help, though, to get physical about it. Kneel. Or stand. Like Hezekiah, take your calendar, your checkbook (and your paycheck), your kids' report cards--and spread them out before God. Show him your life. Show God your trouble.

This is the most powerful commitment you can make today. Be like Hezekiah and pray.

Father, give me the courage to lay open my life before you. You see me and know me. Teach me how to pray, Lord, and give me the discipline to make it a habit.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.

NOTES

DAY 203

Isaiah 36-37 • Psalms 76 • 1 Peter 1

Scripture Reading

Faith Stronger Than Gold

1 Peter 1:1-25

TODAY'S FOCUS

In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. 1 Peter 1:6-7

Have you ever wanted to give up? Sometimes the difficulties we face in our lives can feel overwhelming. At times we want to surrender to the difficulties in our lives. We may feel tempted to take matters into our own hands or return evil for evil to those who are hurting us.

In 1 Peter 1 the Apostle Peter encouraged believers to trust God when we are tired and want to give into difficult situations. As we reflect on Peter's life as recorded in the gospels, Peter knows what it is like to give up and stop trusting God. Peter would have never believed that he could go through a trial that would cause him to stop trusting in God. However, when Jesus was arrested and taken to the Sanhedrin, Peter denied knowing the Lord three times. Even though the Lord warned him that he would abandon him, Peter thought he had more faith and hope in God than he really did. (Mark 14:27-31, 66-72)

Like Peter, our faith will be tested. We may be able to handle smaller tests, but all tests are not lightweight or easy. In our reading today, Peter compared our faith to gold. The value of gold is tied to its boiling point.

When gold is under high heat, it is refined of its impurities. Gold, however, does have a boiling point (1,064 degrees Celsius or 1,948 degrees Fahrenheit) at which time it will perish, but our faith is more precious than gold and is eternal. This means that our faith can withstand the enormous weight of trials if we trust in God and apply God's truth to them.

Are you in the midst of an intense trial? Do you feel tempted to give in and sin against God? Remember, with the power of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, activating God's word, there is no trial or difficulty that can overtake you if you trust God.

Prayer

Father, when we are tested by intense situations and tempted to disobey You by doing things our own way, help us to believe and apply Your Word to our situation. Help us to walk through it by faith in You and obedience to You.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

NOTES

DAY 204

2 Kings 20 • Isaiah 38, 39
Psalms 75 • 1 Peter 2

Scripture Reading

Prayer Makes the Difference

2 Kings 20:1-11

TODAY'S FOCUS

"Go back and tell Hezekiah, the ruler of my people, 'This is what the LORD, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will heal you. On the third day from now you will go up to the temple of the LORD. 2 Kings 20:5

Have you ever been in a difficult situation and did not know what to do?

King Hezekiah was one of the few godly kings in the southern kingdom of Judah. He devoted his life to doing what was right. Unlike Ahaz, his father, the king before him, he trusted in God. He demonstrated his trust in God by destroying all the places of idol worship. He even crushed the bronze snake that Moses had made because the Israelites were using it for worship (Number 21:4-8). No other king trusted God like Hezekiah did.

When King Hezekiah became terminally ill, the prophet Isaiah came to him and told him to prepare for death. He was young, only 39 years old. At this point, he had been serving the Lord as king for 14 years and he believed he had a right to ask God for healing. King Hezekiah believed in the power of God and knew God was his only hope; he had seen God deliver him from the King of Assyria. So he cried out to God for help. God heard Hezekiah and gave him 15 more years of life.

God uses our faith and prayers to do many things in our lives. Our prayers in faith are significant to God. King Hezekiah could have

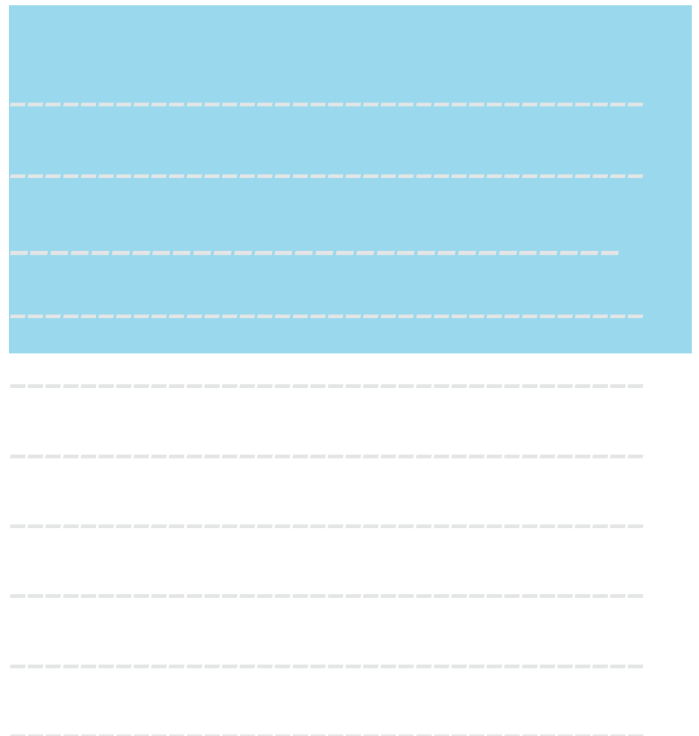
accepted the pronouncement of death by the prophet Isaiah, but he chose to pray instead. He had lived his life by faith in God and knew that it was only by faith and prayers to God that his situation could be turned around. Because King Hezekiah prayed, he received an extension of life.

1 Peter 5:7 instructs us to cast all our cares on God because He cares for us. How many times have we not turned to God in prayer and missed a blessing?

Prayer

Father, help us to live our lives for Your glory, trusting You to do exceedingly and abundantly more than we could ask or think. In Jesus' name, Amen.

NOTES



Isaiah 40-42 • 1 Peter 3

Being Like-Minded Believers

1 Peter 3:1-12

TODAY'S FOCUS

Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. 1 Peter 3:8

In 1 Peter 3, the apostle Peter encourages believers how to think and behave toward others. He calls us to “be like-minded” and “love one another,” calling for sympathy, compassion, and humility. This means responding in such a way that malicious accusers will be ashamed. It means letting our actions speak louder than our words. Nothing new, right?

How is it possible for married couples to be sympathetic and compassionate while living with the sharp edges of another's flaws? How is it possible for children to submit to self-righteous parents who do not admit their mistakes? Or how can we be humble when we know that our supervisor is using us for their advancement? The words "truth", "test", and "trust" may help.

The “truth”; is that we are to love as Christ has loved, extending to others the very grace we receive from him. The “test”; is whether our actions are Christlike. Even an appeal to pure motives is not an excuse to “repay evil with evil or insult with insult.” Finally, we are to “trust”; the ways of Christ. Peter asks, “Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?” Even if some do us harm, at least we have been faithful to the proven ways of God.

The apostle Peter challenged all believers to live by the higher standard of love, which requires us to love people regardless of how we are treated. We can only do this if we have the compassion and humility of Christ. (Philippians 2:1-8)

Prayer

Father, help us to have a spirit of humility that is fueled by being like-minded in Christ with other believers, according to Your Word, so that we treat others with love regardless of how they treat us.

In Jesus' name,

Amen

NOTES

Isaiah 43-45 • 1 Peter 4

Distributors of God's Grace

TODAY'S FOCUS

Whatever gifts we have need to be used. That begins by recognizing and acknowledging what gifts we have. We need to discover our giftedness so that we can use it to express love. If we are reluctant or prefer to be modest in acknowledging our giftedness, let's remember that we will be held accountable for how we used the gifts God gave us (Matthew 25:15-30).

Are people around us enjoying God's love because you are using your gift?

Amen

NOTES

Isaiah 46-49 • 1 Peter 5

Is Suffering Eating You Alive?

TODAY'S FOCUS

As Christ-followers, we must accept the teaching of the New Testament. Jesus warned his apostles to anticipate suffering (John 16:33). He taught that suffering is a part of the Christian life. If we accept this as true, then we should not be shocked when we are mistreated for being kind, giving and loving toward others.

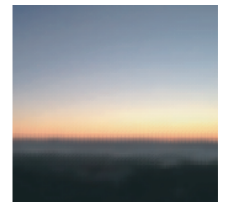
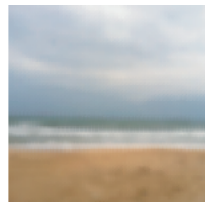
NOTES

Isaiah 50-52 • 2 Peter 1

The Supplement of Self-control

Spiritual growth is a lifelong journey. Peter may have learned the value of self-control the hard way, but he did learn. Have you?

Amen.



Isaiah 53-56 • 2 Peter 2

A Man Familiar With Suffering

Isaiah 53:1-6

TODAY'S FOCUS

He was despised and rejected by others, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.
Isaiah 53:3

"You can't truly know people unless you walk a mile in their shoes," we sometimes say. Jesus walked in our shoes and showed that he genuinely knew the full range of human experience.

The Bible often reminds us that Jesus was one of us. He experienced joy and sorrow, feasting and hunger, the fruits of hard work and the setbacks of poverty. He also knew the grief of losing a close friend, which led him to weep (John 11:32-35). In addition, Jesus was sometimes discouraged by the spiritual numbness of his disciples (Matthew 16:8-12), and weary from hot, dusty travel (John 4:6). He became angry when people mistreated God and others (Matthew 21:12-13), but he also took children in his arms and taught and blessed them (Matthew 19:13-14). In the account of his crucifixion, as Isaiah foretold, Jesus even experienced total rejection and unimaginable suffering.

Our salvation was not won in the beauty and safety of a royal palace. Jesus pioneered our salvation through the experience of human living in this world. He faced all the temptations and struggles we meet daily—and yet he never sinned (Hebrews 4:15). His words from the cross “I am thirsty” (John 19:28) assure us that he willingly and obediently dealt with all human experiences as he worked to defeat sin.

Prayer

Thank you, Jesus, for being willing to enter the grit and grime of our humanity to save us. There has never been a greater sacrifice!

Amen.

NOTES

DAY 210

Isaiah 57-59 • 2 Peter 3

Scripture Reading

Soon and Very Soon?

2 Peter 3:1-9

TODAY'S FOCUS

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise ... Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 2 Peter 3:9

"Soon and very soon, we are going to see the King." Perhaps you have sung this song at a worship service. The way some people sing it leaves no doubt that they really believe it.

But how soon? Nearly two thousand years have passed since Jesus told his disciples that he was going to come back. For two thousand years God's people have been asking, "Lord, when will you return?" But he has not returned.

Already in the first century some believers doubted Jesus' return. They had believed the promise of his coming, but times were hard, and persecution was severe. Scoffers were asking, "Where is this 'coming' he promised?" They had no answer.

Sometimes we might wonder too. We hear about persecution and ask, "Why doesn't Jesus come to end it?" We read about poverty and hunger and deprivation, and we think, "When will it end?" We hear about natural disasters and tragedies, and we wonder why Jesus does not end it all by coming back.

The answer Peter gives is that Jesus has not forgotten about his promise to return. He is "not slow in keeping his promise." Instead, he is patient! And today God wants his church to call people back to him.

Prayer

Lord, help us to keep on praying for your return, and while we wait, please use us to call people to repentance.

For your name's sake,

Amen.

N O T E S



Isaiah 60-62 • John 1

Garments of Praise

TODAY'S FOCUS

I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul
rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me
with garments of salvation. . . . Isaiah 61:10

Much of Isaiah's prophecy predicts the destruction of God's people because of their sin. But the last section, beginning with chapter 60, calls on the people to wake up to their God-given glory so that they can display God's splendor to others. The Spirit tells Isaiah to put the oil of joy on God's people and give them a garment of praise.

How could such a turn of events be possible for God's people who were exiles, miserable slaves in a foreign land? Look closely at today's theme verse. God's people can praise him because he has already clothed someone with salvation and a robe of righteousness.

In the New Testament Jesus reads from Isaiah 61 as he preaches for the first time in his hometown, Nazareth. Then he says, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:18-21). The New Testament also states that by faith in Jesus we are clothed with Christ (Galatians 3:27). And later we are challenged with these words: “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4).

Let's put on garments of praise today. Let's wake up to the glory and goodness God has given us through salvation in Christ Jesus, and live so that others may be drawn to him as their Lord and Savior.

Compassionate Lord Jesus, thank you for restoring us as your daughters and sons. May we joyfully praise your name and share your good news with others in response to your great love.

In your name we pray,

Amen.

NOTES

DAY 212

Isaiah 63-64 • Psalms 107 • John 2

Scripture Reading

The Cross Predicted

John 2:13-25

TODAY'S FOCUS

"Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." John 2:19

A very common belief today is that if you live a good life, God will welcome you into heaven. Along with that, many people think of Jesus as little more than a meek, mild, caring, good teacher. While Jesus was and is all of those things, he is much more. In fact, because he is God, there is much more to him than we can imagine. (See Ephesians 3:20.)

In our reading for today we see a side of Jesus that many of us might find surprising. He violently attacks what is going on in the temple. He enters the heart of worship and cleans house. The Jewish leaders ask, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?" Jesus draws their attention to the cross when he answers, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." The Jews think he is crazy: "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" John adds, "But the temple he had spoken of was his body."

John includes this statement to point out that this is about Jesus' death and resurrection. For God and humans to connect, a cleansing must happen. Jesus models that in the temple in Jerusalem, and this is a graphic picture of what the Spirit of God does to us as Jesus comes to live in the temple of our lives—body and soul. Are you prepared to be cleaned out?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, come in and cleanse the temple of my life. My good life is not enough to make me right with God, but yours is. Only by your shed blood can I be made clean and whole.

Amen.

NOTES

DAY 213

Is. 65-66 • Ps. 62 • John 3

Scripture Reading

Seeking Jesus

John 3:1-21

TODAY'S FOCUS

He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him." - John 3:2

How did you come to know Jesus? Many of us first learned about Jesus in a large crowd at church or a large evangelistic event. Later, in a smaller group such as a Life group, Sunday school class, or through discipleship we learned more about Christ by asking questions and exploring biblical concepts. In John 3:1-21 we read about Nicodemus' personal encounter with Jesus. Nicodemus was a Pharisee who came to know Jesus by following "the buzz" generated by the large crowds of people.

However, Nicodemus realized that if he was going to truly understand Jesus and His teaching, he needed to meet with Jesus personally. Because of the crowds and his fellow Pharisees' unbelief, he decided to meet with Jesus secretly. Nicodemus, convinced by the miracles Jesus performed, began the conversation with a statement acknowledging his belief in Christ. Jesus then began to tell Nicodemus how he could inherit eternal life and Christ's purpose in the world as one sent by God to express God's love. Nicodemus' journey of faith did not happen all at once. He heard about Jesus, believed Jesus came from God, and then met with Jesus for clarity. According to John 7:50 and John 19:39, his faith and belief in Jesus grew to the extent that he "went public" with his faith by participating in the burial of Jesus.

Many times, it takes seeing a miracle as well as studying the teachings of Christ before someone can put their faith in Him. Is there a "Nicodemus" watching your life? Can they see miracles happening in and through you? Some of the miraculous signs that we can perform through the power of God are; loving hateful people, caring for and giving to those who are outcasts in our society, and forgiving those who have treated us wrongfully. This may open the door for you to introduce them to Christ.

Prayer

Father, help us to be Christ-like in our character and actions so that people seek Jesus as a result of the miracles that You perform in and through our lives. In Jesus' name,

Amen.

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