Advent Reading 2022

Week 2  Dec 5-Dec 11
Monday, December 5, 2022  (Aaron Buchanan)

Before Breakfast: Read  Isaiah 24:1-16a
“To err is human.” This is a quote from poet, Alexander Pope who understood our strong desire to always be right about basically everything. But more so, he understood that this wasn’t remotely possible because something he saw in all people is our uncanny ability to error, be wrong, or make mistakes. But the problems Isaiah is dealing with here in chapter 24 aren’t just God’s people (The Israelites) making some minor mistakes or errors. They had completely abandoned the way of life God had directed them to live when he gave them the Law through Moses. When he gave them the Law he told them that if they follow it, life will go well for them, but if they ignore it and walk away from it, destruction would follow (Deuteronomy 28:1-2;15). Isaiah and other prophets throughout the Old Testament had the role of calling God’s people back to Him. To help them see when they had truly gone off the path and what the consequences would be. But this is also a lesson for you and me. I truly believe when we follow the ways of Christ, life goes better. One pastor/author puts it this way - “Life is better with Jesus and Jesus makes us better at life.”

Consider: If the ways of Christ are a path we walk, how close or far from this path are you? How could getting closer to this path help make your life better?

Before Bed: Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12
Here is the rest of this morning’s quote from Alexander Pope, “To err is human, to forgive, divine.” The central aspect of our faith is the forgiveness we received through the Grace of God. And while we will never be without error; we’ll always have a sinful nature to fight with. This doesn’t give us the liberty to live however we want but it does put us in the right standing with God as we continue to refine our life and try to be more like Christ. Or as verse three puts it, we should become more and more sanctified. So we try to correct or avoid the ways we as humans typically err. But we also must extend that grace to others, learning to love them even when they’re not at the same point in their faith or sanctification journey as we are.

Consider: How often are you tempted to correct others’ behaviors or actions, but forget the same mistakes you used to make, or are currently working through?
Before Breakfast: Read Isaiah 41:14-20
I love a good challenge. Maybe a little too much and often it becomes more about my pride than anything else. I want to prove I can pull it off, I want others to see how well I can perform or be trusted. I want everyone to know that I can do it! But these verses are a great reminder that while the people of God will do a few things, it is God himself who makes them happen. It is He who helps us do everything. This is a great reminder for me (and maybe you too) to trust the Lord in all things. To lean on him instead of my own will, strength, and pride when a challenge comes my way.

Consider: When a challenge comes your way, do you first think about how you will handle it or do you start by praying for God’s help?

Before Bed: Read Romans 15:14-21
I love to read. As life goes on, I wish I could find more and more time to read, but it seems to be working the opposite way. One of the reasons I love to read the most is to learn new things. But a few years ago, I was actually convicted that I was reading a lot but wasn’t really retaining or learning anything new. So I made a strange commitment to read the same book once a month for a year. This commitment came from a phrase I stumbled upon; “Instead of learning something new, we need to relearn something we already knew.” And Paul is kind of hitting this same drum in these verses. He tells his readers that he’s convinced they’re filled with the goodness and knowledge of Christ. But he just can’t help himself, he wants to continue to point them and others to Jesus. He’s not about finding new, interesting, or obscure things about God. He wants them to know Jesus and to know him only. To Paul, that’s what going “deep” really means.

Consider: Do you ever find yourself looking for something new or “deeper” when you should go back to the basics of being like Christ?
Before Breakfast: Read Genesis 15:1-18
I am a curious person, I love to ask questions. It helps me to understand the bigger picture and to also understand and get to know people better. During this passage we see Abraham asking God some questions. When God promises Abraham that he will make him a great nation, Abraham is confused because he has no children and is old. He is so unsure he says to God “How am I to know?” God then initiates a covenant with Abraham. God promises him that through him every nation will be blessed. God would offer protection and land to Abraham and his descendants, but they must follow the path of God. God is making a separate nation out of Abraham and his descendants, the Jewish people, through Isaac and the twelve tribes of Israel. And one of those tribes led to the promised Messiah Jesus.

Consider: Is there something you feel God is pushing you to do? What questions do you have? How can you see God answering those questions?

Before Bed: Read Matthew 12:33-37
Most of the time when we look at fruit we can tell if it is good or bad, if we want to eat it or not. In this passage, Jesus is comparing our hearts with fruit. Just like if a tree is bad it will produce bad fruit if our heart is filled with evil it will come out of our mouths.

Consider: What does your heart look like? When people look at you and hear your words will they see Jesus?
Before Breakfast: Read Ruth 1:6-18
One thing that always sticks out to me about this passage is the unwavering decision that Ruth makes to stick by Naomi, no matter what. Ruth and Naomi had no providers without their husbands. The smartest move for Ruth would have been to return home, to her people, and marry someone else. I don’t think that Ruth made this decision carelessly. It was a decision made in faith. Faith that the God of Naomi would provide and care for them. Faith that this God sees them and their circumstance. Whenever I read a story about bold faith in the Bible, as Ruth had, I wonder if I will be able to show that same boldness when the time comes. About three and half years ago I was given such an opportunity. I was living in a city I loved with some close friends. I knew that God was calling me to full-time ministry in a church. I didn’t know what church or where God was asking me to go. I was working a dead-end job, but at least I had a job. A good friend called me on the phone one day and point blank asked me, “what are you doing with your life when clearly, you know you felt God was asking you to do something different?” I told her that I was scared, and it wasn’t like God had given me an interview somewhere. Obviously, I was making excuses when I knew she was right. A couple of weeks later I made the bold move to quit my job and move back to Indiana. Within a matter of months, God made some extraordinary things happen in my life to get me working at Lakeside. I boldly put my faith in God and he saw me in my circumstance and provided in so many more ways than just a job at Lakeside. Ruth stepped out in faith and God provided for her and Naomi in so many ways. Ruth boldly put her faith in God and had no idea how her faith would impact the world, through Jesus, her direct descendant.

Consider: What is holding you back from boldly putting your faith and trust in a God who wants to provide care and hope in your circumstance?

Before Bed: Read 2 Peter 3:1-10
Believers 2,000 years ago waited for the Messiah, which ended up being baby Jesus. Reading this passage in 2 Peter we find ourselves waiting, just as they did, but with the promise of Jesus returning forever. I don’t know about you, but sometimes I can get impatient with tv shows. I was recently watching a tv show and the storyline was taking way too long to develop, but I wanted to know what happened in the end. So, I stopped watching the tv show and googled the ending. I was so surprised by the ending that I started watching the show again to see how everything played out. Somehow knowing the end of the story made it easier for me to be patient with the slow development of the tv show. In 2 Peter, we get to see the end of the story too. Jesus returns forever and creates His eternal Kingdom. Knowing the end of the story should give us an immense amount of hope. So, we are here, on earth, waiting for Jesus’ return. The author of 2 Peter gives us, not a warning, but a reminder to stand firm in the Faith and introduce others to our Savior. The Savior, who entered the world as a baby.

Consider: Do you find hope in knowing the end of the story?
Friday, December 9, 2022  (Aaron Buchanan)

Before Breakfast: Read Ruth 4:13-17
Reading these few verses at the end of the book of Ruth is similar to hearing the final score of a game you recorded before you watch it. Boaz becomes the Guardian-Redeemer for Ruth (and Naomi). He marries Ruth, has a child with her, and gives new life to both Ruth and Naomi when it appeared their lives were over. But the beauty behind this story is that we have our own Guardian-Redeemer in Christ, and we too, know the end of the story. So whether your current circumstances are where you’d like them to be or not, we know life to full is ours if we have a relationship with Jesus.

Consider: Have you truly given your life into the hands of Jesus? Have you allowed him to be your king, your friend, and your salvation?

Before Bed: Read 2 Peter 3:11-18
There’s great beauty in reading verses like this that speak to the second coming of Christ during the Advent season. In this Christmas season, we’re reliving the Advent of the coming Messiah through the birth of Christ. But more so, we’re celebrating what has already happened, that is, the promise of God's Messiah coming true. Which allows us to put our faith in Christ’s words that he will return again. It’s hard to imagine what this final day of the Lord will be like, but I like how Sam Gamgee from the Lord of the Rings puts it.

“Just after the climax of the trilogy, The Lord of the Rings, Sam Gamgee discovers that his friend Gandalf was not dead (as he thought) but alive. He cries, “I thought you were dead! But then I thought I was dead myself! Is everything sad going to come untrue?” The answer of Christianity to that question is—yes. Everything sad is going to come untrue and it will somehow be greater for having once been broken and lost.” (The Reason For God by Tim Keller)

Consider: As we celebrate the birth of Christ this Christmas season and hold in our hearts the promise of his return, spend a little time reflecting on what that really means for you.
Before Breakfast: Read 1 Samuel 2:1-18

Many years ago my husband and I were trying to get pregnant with our first child, it just wasn’t happening. All of our friends that got married around the same time as us were announcing that they were expecting. I remember feeling like trying to get pregnant was consuming our lives and feeling rejected month after month was heartbreaking. I wrote a letter to God asking Him if it was his will to allow us to become pregnant. If it was not his will I asked Him to take the longing away from us and fill it with something that glorifies Him. Needless to say, God was faithful. When we were just about to give up, we found out we were pregnant with our first child.

Hannah longed for a child too, she promised God that if he gave her a child she would give it back to Him. In this scripture we see Hannah praising God right after she left her child at the tabernacle. On one of the hardest days of her life as she sacrificed the thing she loved the most she was rejoicing in the Lord.

Consider: What is something that you have asked God for? When have you rejoiced in your suffering?


When we think of the birth of Jesus it’s hard to leave out the birth of John, Zachariah and Elizabeth’s son. Mary went to stay with Elizabeth while she was pregnant with Jesus. Zachariah and Elizabeth were very old and didn’t believe they would become parents. Zachariah prophesies about John saying that he will go before the Lord and prepare away for Him. In today’s scriptures we see the prophecy fulfilled. John’s message is good news because he prepares a way for Jesus. He announces the coming of God’s salvation, that he will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. In this passage, John talks about wanting people to repent and turn away from their sins and turn toward God.

Consider: What is something that you need to repent? How can you lay it down at Jesus’ feet and confidently leave it there?
Before Breakfast: Read Isaiah 35:1-10
Many daily reading plans follow a similar rhythm. As they work through a calendar week often one day (typically Saturday or Sunday) is somewhat set apart. Some plans even refer to this unique day as “Grace Day.” We will be taking a similar approach. Sunday (the day of our gatherings) is to be a day of rest and reflection. I would highly recommend that you work your way back through the readings and considerations from throughout this past week. Rest in these truths and personal observations and allow the powerful hand of God to do the tender work of a shepherd in your heart. Breathe in His presence and allow Him to build your anticipation of heaven.

Before Bed: Matthew 11:25-30
We will use this passage each Sunday evening. I would encourage you to devote this season to memorizing it. Use it as a prayer. Perhaps even say it aloud before falling asleep.