

# Daily Walk on the Rock



St. Paul Lutheran Church

“Your Refuge from the Storm”

**Date: December 17, 2023**

**Text: Isaiah 61:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24**

**Theme: Here With Us...To Bring Us Joy**

## **Day 1: Monday—A Light Shining until the Day Dawns**

Read and ponder Matthew 5:17-19; Romans 15:4; 2 Corinthians 1:20; and 2 Peter 1:19-21. What do these passages tell us about prophecy? Are all promises fulfilled in a moment in time? Consider that many prophecies have layers of fulfillment; a prophecy might be fulfilled, in measure, in the generation or era in which the prophet lived and wrote. Greater fulfillment might be evident in Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection, and yet there might be still more. Read Isaiah 61:1-11. What hope is there for the Jews exiled in Babylon? How does Jesus apply part of this Isaiah passage to himself (*Luke 4:16-21*)? What is yet to come? Let 2 Corinthians 4:6, 16-18 form your prayer.

## **Day 2: Tuesday—Nouns and Verbs; Verbs and Nouns**

Do you remember times when, during grammar lessons, you had to pay attention to nouns and verbs? Read Isaiah 60:1-11, paying close attention to the nouns and verbs; consider underlining, with double lines, all verbs that describe God's actions and, with a different stroke, each noun identifying those whom God blesses. What do the verbs teach us about God's heart and character? Did you discover promises that comfort you and give you new hope for your present and for your future? Pray you will really want to share this hope with others. Now do it!

## **Day 3: Wednesday—Oaks of Righteousness...for God's Glory**

The Lord doesn't just improve us; the Lord makes us new; read John 3:3; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 5:17, 21; Hebrews 10:14; and 1 John 3:2-3. Notice what God's people are called in Isaiah 61:3b; and what are these "oaks of righteousness" to display? So, it's the Lord who makes us new, and we are to reflect all glory back to the Lord. Consider God's work in and message to God's people of all generations as you read Exodus 19:3-6; Psalm 115:1; Isaiah 58:11; Jeremiah 17:7-8; and 1 Peter 2:9-10. Thank God for his faithfulness; pray you will display his glory.

## **Day 4: Thursday—"Today this Scripture Is Fulfilled"**

Notice that God's covenant name, LORD (Yahweh/YHWH), is used in Isaiah 61. The sovereign, almighty God of all creation is the Lord who hears the cries of his people's hearts and cares for them intimately and personally. Read Isaiah 61:1-11; Luke 4:16-21; John 1:14; and Hebrews 1:3a. In what ways did Jesus fulfill the

Isaiah passage during his earthly ministry; are there both physical and spiritual dimensions to the fulfillment? Consider that Jesus might see as accomplished (because it is so certain) that which we view as incomplete. Read the rest of the story in Revelation 21:1-7. Worship Jesus who said, "It is finished" (*John 19:30*; Greek: *tetelestai*: *completed, perfected*).

**Day 5: Friday—A Closer Look** The Isaiah 61 passage, part of which Jesus quotes in the Nazareth synagogue, is so rich with promises. Read the text again and notice the words of comfort and hope; carefully consider the nouns. Who are the poor (*61:1*)? Might they be those experiencing physical poverty and the poor in spirit (*Matthew 5:3*)? Consider that captives and prisoners might be those in physical exile or bondage and those who are spiritually blind and enslaved by sin (*John 12:44-46*; *Romans 3:23*; *6:22-23*). And why might Jesus have read only part of the passage (*compare Isaiah 61:1-2 with Luke 4:18-19*; *note the purpose of Jesus' first advent: John 3:16-17; 12:47-50*)? Pray Ephesians 1:18.

## **Day 6: Saturday—God Is at Work in Ways We Cannot Always See**

The Babylonian exile was a dark time in Israel's history, but God promised new hope and everlasting joy (*Isaiah 61*); when Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians, the church was under heavy persecution, yet Paul told the people to "rejoice always" (*5:16*). How is joy possible? The generation that returned from captivity in Babylon did not see fulfillment of all the promises; Paul himself (and countless others) died as martyrs of the faith; today we live in tumultuous times and many are filled with fear. Is our hope and joy in circumstances or in God's faithfulness? Read Isaiah 26:3-4; John 14:27; 16:33; Philippians 4:4-7; and 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 (*memorize 5:24*). Pray.

## **Day 7: Sunday—Rejoice!**

We sing "Joy to the World" but are we experiencing the joy that Scripture promises is our heritage as God's people? Are we covered with the "oil of gladness" and "garments of praise" (*Isaiah 61:3*; *see also Psalm 23:5-6*; *Hebrews 13:15*)? Is the Lord's love for us our dearest treasure (*Psalm 63:3*; *Romans 8:31-39*; *Philippians 3:8*)? Read Isaiah 61:10 aloud several times. Now sing, "Joy to the World" and/or "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee." We are rich and we are blessed, and all of God's promises are true (*1 Kings 8:56*; *2 Corinthians 1:20*; *1 Thessalonians 5:24*). Read 1 Corinthians 2:9. Now worship our Lord and Savior and be a light for him in our dark world.

# LifeGroup Study

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## Belong

Christmas is right around the corner. Do you find yourself praying for more time and money to get out there and shop? You are not alone; so many devoted Christians get pulled into the mainstream materialism of the season. Today's discussion comes at this challenging time when we are struggling to put fuel in our cars and food on our tables, with many of our loved ones looking to us to put presents under the tree. It comes to bring us back to the real meaning of Christmas and to focus ourselves, friends, and families on the real gift of this amazing holiday season, a gift that we cannot purchase at a store—the gift of joy received from God. Share this gift and you have shared the most precious gift of all, a gift that really meets the definition of "priceless." In this season, we have the opportunity to turn to God and away from a commercial holiday season where giving overrides the real meaning of Christmas and takes us away from this season full of hope, love, and eternal joy. We have the invitation to believe in the redemptive power of God's love through the Good News of Jesus Christ, the gift of joy, the greatest gift we could ever receive.

### Pray...

Jesus, join us as we reposition our thinking around your season of Christmas. Guide us as we discuss new ways to celebrate you in this season. Let us understand how we can show your love to others without falling into the traps, set all around us, baited by materialism. Let us grow together today as we read your Word, drawing out our deep thoughts for meaningful discussions. Let the beautiful words of Isaiah and Paul dwell within us, transforming our thinking and enabling us to share your Good News with those we dearly love and others we have yet to know. In your name we pray. Amen.

## Believe

Isaiah, God's prophet of some 60 years, speaks to the coming of the Messiah. We join the Book of Isaiah with the sharing of the Lord's Favor, words that Jesus applies to himself some 750 years later!

**Read Isaiah 61:1-11.** In this passage, Isaiah predicts the atonement of our sins through the redemptive power of the Messiah. Open to Luke 4:16-21 to see Isaiah's words, spoken by Jesus, teaching of the joy God gives to those who believe.

- *What do you need to do to become a minister sharing the Good News of the redemptive power of Jesus?*
- *How can we take this, the timeless message of Christ and the cel-*

*bration of his birth, wrap it up, and give it to others to share God's amazing love?*

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24. Paul writes this letter to the people of Thessalonica, as they endured persecution, to encourage new believers as they walk in the footsteps of Jesus. Paul focuses on the coming of Jesus and the ensuing restoration for those who believe in Jesus Christ.

• *Paul speaks of eternal joy and thanksgiving even in times of persecution. Talk about the difference between happiness and the joy within us as we share the love of Jesus Christ.*

• *What does Paul direct the people of Thessalonica do (timeless messages for us) to grow their relationship with Jesus, building a strong platform of joy in their lives to ensure they can overcome even the most challenging of times?*

• *What will you do to share the joy of Jesus with others, refocusing them on the real meaning behind this wondrous season, helping them understand difficult times come to all people, and that faith in Jesus will pull them through?*

## Become

As you leave here today and return to the hustle and bustle of the holiday season consider the gifts that you could give to help others see the real beauty and meaning behind Christmas. Look for gifts with meaning that help bring others closer to God; make a donation in the name of a family member; start a family tradition rich in giving of the heart by spending time together putting your hands to good use helping others; or read Jesus' story and his amazing good works under the Christmas tree. There are endless opportunities to share the joy of Christmas that we cannot purchase in a department store. The opportunities to grow closer to God, as we celebrate Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection are endless!

As you close in prayer, consider the gifts you can share with others to bring them with you on your walk with Jesus. If you do not pray daily, commit to strengthening your relationship with Jesus through daily prayer asking the Holy Spirit to shine through you as you do good works to share the love of God with others. Equip yourself with the gift of joy provided by a loving God!

### Pray...

Jesus, remain with us as we leave here today to share your Word and our discussions and thoughts with others in our lives. Let us become the people you desire us to be. Help us to know you better and to share the immense love you have for us with others. We are weak and need your strength to overcome these difficult days with trouble overseas and growing economic concerns at home. We ask you to bless us with the Holy Spirit, allowing our inner strength and love to shine on others in this wonderful time of Christmas. Let us be the change needed to move ourselves and others away from the material happiness of the season to the internal everlasting joy of Christmas. Jesus, it is in your name we pray. Amen.