

Readings for February 2019

Sunday 3rd February

Ezekiel 43:27 - 44:1-4

From then on, the priests will use this altar to offer sacrifices to please me and sacrifices to ask my blessing. Then I will be pleased with the people of Israel. I, the LORD God, have spoken.

The man took me back to the outer courtyard, near the east gate of the temple area. I saw that the doors to this gate were closed. The LORD said:

I, the LORD God of Israel, came through this gate, so it must remain closed forever! No one must ever use it. The ruler of Israel may come here to eat a sacrificial meal that has been offered to me, but he must use only the entrance room of this gate.

Then the man took me through the north gate to the front of the temple. I saw that the brightness of the LORD's glory had filled the temple, and I immediately bowed with my face to the ground.

1 Corinthians 13

What if I could speak
all languages
of humans
and of angels?
If I did not love others,
I would be nothing more
than a noisy gong
or a clanging cymbal.

What if I could prophesy
and understand all secrets
and all knowledge?
And what if I had faith
that moved mountains?
I would be nothing,
unless I loved others.
What if I gave away all
that I owned
and let myself
be burned alive?
I would gain nothing,
unless I loved others.
Love is kind and patient,
never jealous, boastful,
proud, or rude.
Love isn't selfish
or quick tempered.
It doesn't keep a record
of wrongs that others do.
Love rejoices in the truth,
but not in evil.
Love is always supportive,
loyal, hopeful,
and trusting.
Love never fails!

Everyone who prophesies
will stop,
and unknown languages
will no longer
be spoken.
All that we know
will be forgotten.
We don't know everything,
and our prophecies
are not complete.
But what is perfect
will someday appear,

and what isn't perfect
will then disappear.

When we were children,
we thought and reasoned
as children do.

But when we grew up,
we quit our childish ways.

Now all we can see of God
is like a cloudy picture
in a mirror.

Later we will see him
face to face.

We don't know everything,
but then we will,
just as God completely
understands us.

For now there are faith,
hope, and love.

But of these three,
the greatest is love.

Luke 2:22-40

The time came for Mary and Joseph to do what the Law of Moses says a mother is supposed to do after her baby is born.

They took Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem and presented him to the Lord, just as the Law of the Lord says, "Each first-born baby boy belongs to the Lord." The Law of the Lord also says that parents have to offer a sacrifice, giving at least a pair of doves or two young pigeons. So that is what Mary and Joseph did.

At this time a man named Simeon was living in Jerusalem. Simeon was a good man. He loved God and was waiting for God to save the people of Israel. God's Spirit came to him and told him that he would not die until he had seen Christ the Lord.

When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple to do what the Law of Moses says should be done for a new baby, the Spirit told Simeon to go into the temple. Simeon took the baby Jesus in his arms and praised God,

“Lord, I am your servant,
and now I can die in peace,
because you have kept
your promise to me.
With my own eyes I have seen
what you have done
to save your people,
and foreign nations
will also see this.
Your mighty power is a light
for all nations,
and it will bring honour
to your people Israel.”

Jesus' parents were surprised at what Simeon had said. Then he blessed them and told Mary, “This child of yours will cause many people in Israel to fall and others to stand. The child will be like a warning sign. Many people will reject him, and you, Mary, will suffer as though you had been stabbed by a dagger. But all this will show what people are really thinking.”

The prophet Anna was also there in the temple. She was the daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher, and she was very old. In her youth she had been married for seven years, but her husband died. And now she was eighty-four years old. Night and day she served God in the temple by praying and often going without eating.

At that time Anna came in and praised God. She spoke about the child Jesus to everyone who hoped for Jerusalem to be set free.

After Joseph and Mary had done everything that the Law of the Lord commands, they returned home to Nazareth in Galilee. The child Jesus grew. He became strong and wise, and God blessed him.

Sunday 10th February 2019

Isaiah 6:1-8 Contemporary English Version (CEV)

In the year that King Uzziah died, I had a vision of the LORD. He was on his throne high above, and his robe filled the temple. Flaming creatures with six wings each were flying over him. They covered their faces with two of their wings and their bodies with two more. They used the other two wings for flying, as they shouted,

“Holy, holy, holy,
LORD All-Powerful!
The earth is filled
with your glory.”

As they shouted, the doorposts of the temple shook, and the temple was filled with smoke. Then I cried out, “I’m doomed! Everything I say is sinful, and so are the words of everyone around me. Yet I have seen the King, the LORD All-Powerful.”

One of the flaming creatures flew over to me with a burning coal that it had taken from the altar with a pair of metal tongs. It touched my lips with the hot coal and said, “This has touched your lips. Your sins are forgiven, and you are no longer guilty.”

After this, I heard the LORD ask, “Is there anyone I can send? Will someone go for us?”

“I’ll go,” I answered. “Send me!”

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

My friends, I want you to remember the message that I preached and that you believed and trusted. You will be saved by this message, if you hold firmly to it. But if you don’t, your faith was all for nothing.

I told you the most important part of the message exactly as it was told to me. That part is:

Christ died for our sins,
as the Scriptures say.

He was buried,
and three days later
he was raised to life,
as the Scriptures say.

Christ appeared to Peter,
then to the twelve.

After this, he appeared
to more than five hundred
other followers.

Most of them are still alive,
but some have died.

He also appeared to James,
and then to all
of the apostles.

Finally, he appeared to me, even though I am like someone who was born at the wrong time.

I am the least important of all the apostles. In fact, I caused so much trouble for God's church that I don't even deserve to be called an apostle. But God was kind! He made me what I am, and his wonderful kindness wasn't wasted. I worked much harder than any of the other apostles, although it was really God's kindness at work and not me. But it doesn't matter if I preached or if they preached. All of you believed the message just the same.

Luke 5:1-11

Jesus was standing on the shore of Lake Gennesaret, teaching the people as they crowded around him to hear God's message. Near the shore he saw two boats left there by some fishermen who had gone to wash their nets. Jesus got into the boat that belonged to Simon and asked him to row it out a little way from the shore. Then Jesus sat down in the boat to teach the crowd.

When Jesus had finished speaking, he told Simon, "Row the boat out into the deep water and let your nets down to catch some fish."

"Master," Simon answered, "we have worked hard all night long and have not caught a thing. But if you tell me to, I will let the nets down." They did it and caught so many fish that their nets began ripping apart. Then they signalled for their partners in the other boat to come and help them. The men came, and together they filled the two boats so full that they both began to sink.

When Simon Peter saw this happen, he knelt down in front of Jesus and said, "Lord, don't come near me! I am a sinner." Peter and everyone with him were completely surprised at all the fish they had caught. His partners James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were surprised too.

Jesus told Simon, "Don't be afraid! From now on you will bring in people instead of fish." The men pulled their boats up on the shore. Then they left everything and went with Jesus.

Sunday 17th February 2019

Jeremiah 17:5-10

I, the LORD, have put a curse
on those who turn from me
and trust in human strength.
They will dry up like a bush
in salty desert soil,
where nothing can grow.

But I will bless those
who trust me.
They will be like trees

growing beside a stream—
trees with roots that reach
down to the water,
and with leaves
that are always green.
They bear fruit every year
and are never worried
by a lack of rain.

You people of Judah
are so deceitful
that you even fool yourselves,
and you can't change.
But I know your deeds
and your thoughts,
and I will make sure
you get what you deserve.

1 Corinthians 15:12-20

If we preach that Christ was raised from death, how can some of you say that the dead will not be raised to life? If they won't be raised to life, Christ himself wasn't raised to life. And if Christ wasn't raised to life, our message is worthless, and so is your faith. If the dead won't be raised to life, we have told lies about God by saying that he raised Christ to life, when he really did not.

So if the dead won't be raised to life, Christ wasn't raised to life. Unless Christ was raised to life, your faith is useless, and you are still living in your sins. And those people who died after putting their faith in him are completely lost. If our hope in Christ is good only for this life, we are worse off than anyone else.

But Christ has been raised to life! And he makes us certain that others will also be raised to life.

Luke 6:17-26

Jesus and his apostles went down from the mountain and came to some flat, level ground. Many other disciples were there to meet him. Large crowds of people from all over Judea, Jerusalem, and the coastal cities of Tyre and Sidon were there too. These people had come to listen to Jesus and to be healed of their diseases. All who were troubled by evil spirits were also healed. Everyone was trying to touch Jesus, because power was going out from him and healing them all.

Jesus looked at his disciples and said:

God will bless you people
who are poor.

His kingdom belongs to you!

God will bless
you hungry people.

You will have plenty
to eat!

God will bless you people
who are crying.

You will laugh!

God will bless you when others hate you and won't have anything to do with you. God will bless you when people insult you and say cruel things about you, all because you are a follower of the Son of Man. Long ago your own people did these same things to the prophets. So when this happens to you, be happy and jump for joy! You will have a great reward in heaven.

But you rich people
are in for trouble.

You have already had
an easy life!

You well-fed people
are in for trouble.

You will go hungry!

You people
who are laughing now
are in for trouble.

You are going to cry
and weep!

You are in for trouble when everyone says good things about you. That is what your own people said about those prophets who told lies.

Sunday 24th February 209

Genesis 2:4-9,15-25

That's how God created the heavens and the earth.

When the LORD God made the heavens and the earth, no grass or plants were growing anywhere. God had not yet sent any rain, and there was no one to work the land. But streams came up from the ground and watered the earth.

The LORD God took a handful of soil and made a man. God breathed life into the man, and the man started breathing. The LORD made a garden in a place called Eden, which was in the east, and he put the man there.

The LORD God placed all kinds of beautiful trees and fruit trees in the garden. Two other trees were in the middle of the garden. One of the trees gave life—the other gave the power to know the difference between right and wrong.

The LORD God put the man in the Garden of Eden to take care of it and to look after it. But the LORD told him, "You may eat fruit from any tree in the garden, except the one that has the power to let you know the difference between right and wrong. If you eat any fruit from that tree, you will die before the day is over!"

The LORD God said, "It isn't good for the man to live alone. I need to make a suitable partner for him." So the LORD took some soil and made animals and birds. He brought them to the man to see what names he

would give each of them. Then the man named the tame animals and the birds and the wild animals. That's how they got their names.

None of these was the right kind of partner for the man. So the LORD God made him fall into a deep sleep, and he took out one of the man's ribs. Then after closing the man's side, the LORD made a woman out of the rib.

The LORD God brought her to the man, and the man exclaimed,

"Here is someone like me!
She is part of my body,
my own flesh and bones.
She came from me, a man.
So I will name her Woman!"

That's why a man will leave his own father and mother. He marries a woman, and the two of them become like one person.

Although the man and his wife were both naked, they were not ashamed.

Revelation 4

After this, I looked and saw a door that opened into heaven. Then the voice that had spoken to me at first and that sounded like a trumpet said, "Come up here! I will show you what must happen next." Right then the Spirit took control of me, and there in heaven I saw a throne and someone sitting on it. The one who was sitting there sparkled like precious stones of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow that looked like an emerald surrounded the throne.

Twenty-four other thrones were in a circle around that throne. And on each of these thrones there was an elder dressed in white clothes and wearing a gold crown. Flashes of lightning and roars of thunder came out from the throne in the center of the circle. Seven torches, which are the seven spirits of God, were burning in front of the throne. Also in front of the throne was something that looked like a glass sea, clear as crystal.

Around the throne in the center were four living creatures covered front and back with eyes. The first creature was like a lion, the second one was

like a bull, the third one had the face of a human, and the fourth was like a flying eagle. Each of the four living creatures had six wings, and their bodies were covered with eyes. Day and night they never stopped singing,

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord,
the all-powerful God,
who was and is
and is coming!”

The living creatures kept praising, honouring, and thanking the one who sits on the throne and who lives forever and ever. At the same time the twenty-four elders knelt down before the one sitting on the throne. And as they worshiped the one who lives forever, they placed their crowns in front of the throne and said,

“Our Lord and God,
you are worthy
to receive glory,
honour, and power.
You created all things,
and by your decision they are
and were created.”

Luke 8:22-25

One day, Jesus and his disciples got into a boat, and he said, “Let’s cross the lake.” They started out, and while they were sailing across, he went to sleep.

Suddenly a windstorm struck the lake, and the boat started sinking. They were in danger. So they went to Jesus and woke him up, “Master, Master! We are about to drown!”

Jesus got up and ordered the wind and waves to stop. They obeyed, and everything was calm. Then Jesus asked the disciples, “Don’t you have any faith?”

But they were frightened and amazed. They said to each other, “Who is this? He can give orders to the wind and the waves, and they obey him!”

