

## Readings for August 2019

### Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> August

#### Hosea 11:1-11

When Israel was a child,  
I loved him,  
and I called  
    my son out of Egypt.  
But as the saying goes,  
"The more they were called,  
    the more they rebelled."  
They never stopped offering  
incense and sacrifices  
    to the idols of Baal.

I took Israel by the arm  
    and taught them to walk.  
But they would not admit  
that I was the one  
    who had healed them.  
I led them with kindness  
and with love,  
    not with ropes.  
I held them close to me;  
    I bent down to feed them.

But they trusted Egypt  
instead of returning to me;  
    now Assyria will rule them.  
War will visit their cities,  
    and their plans will fail.  
My people are determined  
    to reject me for a god  
they think is stronger,  
    but he can't help.

Israel, I can't let you go.  
I can't give you up.  
How could I possibly destroy you  
as I did the towns of Admah  
and Zeboiim?  
I just can't do it.  
My feelings for you  
are much too strong.  
Israel, I won't lose my temper  
and destroy you again.  
I am the Holy God—  
not merely some human,  
and I won't stay angry.

I, the LORD, will roar like a lion,  
and my children will return,  
trembling  
from the west.  
They will come back,  
fluttering like birds from Egypt  
or like doves from Assyria.  
Then I will bring them  
back to their homes.  
I, the LORD, have spoken!

### **Colossians 3:1-11**

You have been raised to life with Christ. Now set your heart on what is in heaven, where Christ rules at God's right side. Think about what is up there, not about what is here on earth. You died, which means that your life is hidden with Christ, who sits beside God. Christ gives meaning to your life, and when he appears, you will also appear with him in glory.

Don't be controlled by your body. Kill every desire for the wrong kind of sex. Don't be immoral or indecent or have evil thoughts. Don't be greedy, which is the same as worshipping idols. God is angry with people who disobey him by doing these things. And that is exactly what you did, when you lived among people who behaved in this way. But now you must stop doing such things. You must quit being angry, hateful, and evil. You must no longer say insulting or cruel things about others. And stop lying to each other. You have given up your old way of life with its habits.

Each of you is now a new person. You are becoming more and more like your Creator, and you will understand him better. It doesn't matter if you are a Greek or a Jew, or if you are circumcised or not. You may even be a barbarian or a Scythian, and you may be a slave or a free person. Yet Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us.

### **Luke 12:13-21**

A man in a crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, tell my brother to give me my share of what our father left us when he died."

Jesus answered, "Who gave me the right to settle arguments between you and your brother?"

Then he said to the crowd, "Don't be greedy! Owning a lot of things won't make your life safe."

So Jesus told them this story:

A rich man's farm produced a big crop, and he said to himself, "What can I do? I don't have a place large enough to store everything."

Later, he said, "Now I know what I'll do. I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones, where I can store all my grain and other goods. Then I'll say to myself, 'You have stored up enough good things to last for years to come. Live it up! Eat, drink, and enjoy yourself.'"

But God said to him, "You fool! Tonight you will die. Then who will get what you have stored up?"

"This is what happens to people who store up everything for themselves, but are poor in the sight of God."

## **Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> August**

### **Isaiah 1:1 ,10-20**

I am Isaiah, the son of Amoz.

And this is the message that I was given about Judah and Jerusalem when Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah were the kings of Judah:

You are no better

than the leaders and people  
of Sodom and Gomorrah!

So listen to the LORD God:

“Your sacrifices

mean nothing to me.

I am sick of your offerings

of rams and choice cattle;

I don't like the blood

of bulls or lambs or goats.

“Who asked you to bring all this  
when you come to worship me?

Stay out of my temple!

Your sacrifices are worthless,  
and incense is disgusting.

I can't stand the evil you do

on your New Moon Festivals

or on your Sabbaths

and other times of worship.

I hate your New Moon Festivals

and all others as well.

They are a heavy burden

I am tired of carrying.

“No matter how much you pray,

I won't listen.

You are too violent.

Wash yourselves clean!

I am disgusted

with your filthy deeds.

Stop doing wrong  
and learn to live right.  
See that justice is done.  
Defend widows and orphans  
and help those in need.”

I, the LORD, invite you  
to come and talk it over.  
Your sins are scarlet red,  
but they will be whiter  
than snow or wool.  
If you willingly obey me,  
the best crops in the land  
will be yours.  
But if you turn against me,  
your enemies will kill you.  
I, the LORD, have spoken.

### **Hebrews 11:1-3 ,8-16**

Faith makes us sure of what we hope for and gives us proof of what we cannot see. It was their faith that made our ancestors pleasing to God.

Because of our faith, we know that the world was made at God’s command. We also know that what can be seen was made out of what cannot be seen.

Abraham had faith and obeyed God. He was told to go to the land that God had said would be his, and he left for a country he had never seen. Because Abraham had faith, he lived as a stranger in the promised land. He lived there in a tent, and so did Isaac and Jacob, who were later given the same promise. Abraham did this, because he was waiting for the eternal city that God had planned and built.

Even when Sarah was too old to have children, she had faith that God would do what he had promised, and she had a son. Her husband Abraham was almost dead, but he became the ancestor of many people.

In fact, there are as many of them as there are stars in the sky or grains of sand along the beach.

Every one of those people died. But they still had faith, even though they had not received what they had been promised. They were glad just to see these things from far away, and they agreed that they were only strangers and foreigners on this earth. When people talk this way, it is clear that they are looking for a place to call their own. If they had been talking about the land where they had once lived, they could have gone back at any time. But they were looking forward to a better home in heaven. That's why God wasn't ashamed for them to call him their God. He even built a city for them.

### **Luke 12:32-40**

My little group of disciples, don't be afraid! Your Father wants to give you the kingdom. Sell what you have and give the money to the poor. Make yourselves moneybags that never wear out. Make sure your treasure is safe in heaven, where thieves cannot steal it and moths cannot destroy it. Your heart will always be where your treasure is.

Be ready and keep your lamps burning just like those servants who wait up for their master to return from a wedding feast. As soon as he comes and knocks, they open the door for him. Servants are fortunate if their master finds them awake and ready when he comes! I promise you that he will get ready and have his servants sit down so he can serve them. Those servants are really fortunate if their master finds them ready, even though he comes late at night or early in the morning. You would surely not let a thief break into your home, if you knew when the thief was coming. So always be ready! You don't know when the Son of Man will come.

## **Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> August**

### **Isaiah 5:1-7**

*The LORD said:*

I will sing a song  
about my friend's vineyard  
that was on the side  
of a fertile hill.

My friend dug the ground,  
removed the stones,  
and planted the best vines.

He built a watchtower  
and dug a pit in rocky ground  
for pressing the grapes.

He hoped they would be sweet,  
but bitter grapes  
were all it produced.

Listen, people of Jerusalem  
and of Judah!

You be the judge of me  
and my vineyard.

What more could I have done  
for my vineyard?

I hoped for sweet grapes,  
but bitter grapes  
were all that grew.

Now I will let you know  
what I am going to do.

I will cut down the hedge  
and tear down the wall.

My vineyard will be trampled  
and left in ruins.

It will turn into a desert,  
neither pruned nor hoed;

it will be covered  
with thorns and briars.  
I will command the clouds  
not to send rain.

I am the LORD All-Powerful!  
Israel is the vineyard,  
and Judah is the garden  
I tended with care.  
I had hoped for honesty  
and for justice,  
but dishonesty  
and cries for mercy  
were all I found.

## **Hebrews 11:29-40 -12:2**

Because of their faith, the people walked through the Red Sea on dry land. But when the Egyptians tried to do it, they were drowned.

God's people had faith, and when they had walked around the city of Jericho for seven days, its walls fell down.

Rahab had been a prostitute, but she had faith and welcomed the spies. So she wasn't killed with the people who disobeyed.

What else can I say? There isn't enough time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets. Their faith helped them conquer kingdoms, and because they did right, God made promises to them. They closed the jaws of lions and put out raging fires and escaped from the swords of their enemies. Although they were weak, they were given the strength and power to chase foreign armies away.

Some women received their loved ones back from death. Many of these people were tortured, but they refused to be released. They were sure that they would get a better reward when the dead are raised to life. Others were made fun of and beaten with whips, and some were chained in jail. Still others were stoned to death or sawed in two or killed with swords. Some had nothing but sheep skins or goat skins to wear.



They were poor, mistreated, and tortured. The world did not deserve these good people, who had to wander in deserts and on mountains and had to live in caves and holes in the ground.

All of them pleased God because of their faith! But still they died without being given what had been promised. This was because God had something better in store for us. And he did not want them to reach the goal of their faith without us.

Such a large crowd of witnesses is all around us! So we must get rid of everything that slows us down, especially the sin that just won't let go. And we must be determined to run the race that is ahead of us. We must keep our eyes on Jesus, who leads us and makes our faith complete. He endured the shame of being nailed to a cross, because he knew that later on he would be glad he did. Now he is seated at the right side of God's throne!

### **Luke 12:49-56**

I came to set fire to the earth, and I wish it were already on fire! I am going to be put to a hard test. And I will have to suffer a lot of pain until it is over. Do you think that I came to bring peace to earth? No indeed! I came to make people choose sides. A family of five will be divided, with two of them against the other three. Fathers and sons will turn against one another, and mothers and daughters will do the same. Mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law will also turn against each other.

Jesus said to all the people:

As soon as you see a cloud coming up in the west, you say, "It's going to rain," and it does. When the south wind blows, you say, "It's going to get hot," and it does. Are you trying to fool someone? You can predict the weather by looking at the earth and sky, but you don't really know what's going on right now.

## **Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> August**

### **Jeremiah 1:4-10**

The LORD said:

“Jeremiah, I am your Creator,  
and before you were born,  
I chose you to speak for me  
to the nations.”

I replied, “I’m not a good speaker, LORD, and I’m too young.”

“Don’t say you’re too young,” the LORD answered. “If I tell you to go and speak to someone, then go! And when I tell you what to say, don’t leave out a word! I promise to be with you and keep you safe, so don’t be afraid.”

The LORD reached out his hand, then he touched my mouth and said, “I am giving you the words to say, and I am sending you with authority to speak to the nations for me. You will tell them of doom and destruction, and of rising and rebuilding again.”

### **Hebrews 12:18-29**

You have not come to a place like Mount Sinai that can be seen and touched. There is no flaming fire or dark cloud or storm or trumpet sound. The people of Israel heard a voice speak. But they begged it to stop, because they could not obey its commands. They were even told to kill any animal that touched the mountain. The sight was so frightening that Moses said he shook with fear.

You have now come to Mount Zion and to the heavenly Jerusalem. This is the city of the living God, where thousands and thousands of angels have come to celebrate. Here you will find all of God’s dearest children, whose names are written in heaven. And you will find God himself, who judges everyone. Here also are the spirits of those good people who have been made perfect. And Jesus is here! He is the one who makes God’s new

agreement with us, and his sprinkled blood says much better things than the blood of Abel.

Make sure that you obey the one who speaks to you. The people did not escape, when they refused to obey the one who spoke to them at Mount Sinai. Do you think you can possibly escape, if you refuse to obey the one who speaks to you from heaven? When God spoke the first time, his voice shook only the earth. This time he has promised to shake the earth once again, and heaven too.

The words "once again" mean that these created things will someday be shaken and removed. Then what cannot be shaken will last. We should be grateful that we were given a kingdom that cannot be shaken. And in this kingdom we please God by worshiping him and by showing him great honour and respect. Our God is like a destructive fire!

### **Luke 13:10-17**

One Sabbath, Jesus was teaching in a Jewish meeting place, and a woman was there who had been crippled by an evil spirit for eighteen years. She was completely bent over and could not straighten up. When Jesus saw the woman, he called her over and said, "You are now well." He placed his hands on her, and right away she stood up straight and praised God.

The man in charge of the meeting place was angry because Jesus had healed someone on the Sabbath. So he said to the people, "Each week has six days when we can work. Come and be healed on one of those days, but not on the Sabbath."

The Lord replied, "Are you trying to fool someone? Won't any one of you untie your ox or donkey and lead it out to drink on a Sabbath? This woman belongs to the family of Abraham, but Satan has kept her bound for eighteen years. Isn't it right to set her free on the Sabbath?" Jesus' words made his enemies ashamed. But everyone else in the crowd was happy about the wonderful things he was doing.