

Daily Bible Reading Schedule The Golden Thread

October 9 – Isaiah 40

The first few verses of this chapter may sound familiar to you, because Matthew and Mark point to John the Baptist as the fulfillment of what Isaiah spoke. You may recall that God appointed John the Baptist to prepare the way for Jesus to come by calling to repent of their sins

Matthew 3:1-3 *In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea ² and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." ³ This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'"*

and turn to the savior Jesus.

John 1:35-37 *The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. ³⁶ When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" ³⁷ When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus.*

It was John the Baptist who showed people that they were indeed like the grass and flowers of the field that is here one day and gone the next (Isaiah 40: 6 – 8). It was John the Baptist who assumed the God-given role of pointing people to the Word of God made flesh.

John 1:14-17 *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'" ¹⁶ From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*

As you come to the end of chapter 40 Isaiah does an amazing job of showing us the difference between ourselves and God. Look at verse 22. We are like grasshoppers compared to God. God raises up rulers, those with power here on earth, and then He takes them down again (verses 23 – 24). God is the true eternal ruler and there is no one like Him (verses 25 – 26). God is the eternal God, who never grows weary, and whose wisdom never is exhausted (verse 28). That is why we so desperately need God. God gives strength to the weak, wisdom to the foolish, and hope to the hopeless (verses 29 – 31). When we turn to God we find new strength, new wisdom, and new hope, but that only will happen

when we come to the end of ourselves and our resources and turn to God. That was the message that John the Baptist brought. That was why Jesus came to earth. Only through Christ will we truly find hope, strength and wisdom to live this life.

October 10 – Isaiah 42: 1 – 10

A good portion of the remainder of the Book of Isaiah deals with the subject of the Servant of the Lord. In the next few days we will be looking at Isaiah's description of this servant and what he would do. Look at the description of this servant and his work in verses 1 – 4. It is clear that the servant that is being described by Isaiah is none other than Jesus Christ. Consider how Jesus is the fulfillment of the description of the servant here in Isaiah 42.

This servant will have the Spirit of the Lord on him.

John 1:32-34 *Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. ³³ I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' ³⁴ I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God."*

This servant will be gentle as he deals the poor and needy.

Matthew 12:14-21 *But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus. ¹⁵ Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from that place. Many followed him, and he healed all their sick, ¹⁶ warning them not to tell who he was. ¹⁷ This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: ¹⁸ "Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations. ¹⁹ He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets. ²⁰ A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory. ²¹ In his name the nations will put their hope."*

Stop and think for a moment just how amazing it was that the Son of God would come to earth, and be treated so badly, yet be so gentle in dealing with those whom society had forgotten about. Jesus truly came as a servant, but the amazing thing is that he didn't just come as a servant of God, he also came to serve us. This knowledge should humble us and make us willing to serve not only Jesus, but also one another.

Galatians 5:13-14 *You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in*

love. ¹⁴ *The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."*

October 11 – Isaiah 53: 1 – 2

Isaiah 53 is such an important and profound Old Testament picture of Jesus that we will need to take several days to work through it, so we will just be doing a few verses each day. As you read Isaiah 53, keep in mind that it was written 700 years before Jesus was born, and yet through divine inspiration, Isaiah is able to beautifully capture this portrait of the "Suffering Servant" whom we know as Jesus Christ.

In today's reading Isaiah tells us that God's servant, who is to come, would be like a tender shoot out of dry ground, and there would be nothing about him that would make us want to desire him. Think about that picture for a moment—a little shoot of a plant struggling to survive in dry ground. Isn't that a pretty good picture of Jesus as he came to live among us? Think how fragile Jesus' life was. His mother Mary received little if any medical care during her pregnancy and she and Joseph were alone in the stable as Jesus was born. Mary traveled on a long and difficult journey in the days leading up to Jesus' birth. Because they were out of town strangers and Bethlehem was full, Mary was forced to give birth to Jesus in a stable, and his first crib was a feeding trough—"like a tender shoot out of dry ground."

Luke 2:1-7 *In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ And everyone went to his own town to register. ⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.*

But even after Jesus was born the threats to his life didn't end.

Matthew 2:16-18 *When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. ¹⁷ Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: ¹⁸ "A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more."*

Jesus was born to an unwed peasant girl. That is not the kind of birth that leads to royalty. In fact, Jesus' birth was one reason the Jewish leaders refused to accept him as their king, and instead despised and rejected him.

John 9:28-29 *Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses! ²⁹ We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from."*

All of this is very familiar to us, because we hear the Christmas story over and over again, but as you read Isaiah's description of Jesus, it drives home the point of just how vulnerable God was willing to make Himself in order to come and save us. Imagine God being willing to be placed in the womb of a poor peasant girl and be born into the meanest of circumstances. Imagine God be willing to put himself in a position where humanity, His creation, could despise Him and kill Him. When Jesus came to live among us that exactly what God did!

October 12 – Isaiah 53: 3

Throughout Jesus' life he was despised and rejected by those who were in power.

Mark 2:5-7 *When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." ⁶ Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, ⁷ "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"*

Mark 3:2-6 *Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. ³ Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone." ⁴ Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent. ⁵ He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. ⁶ Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.*

Mark 3:22 *And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebub! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons."*

Mark 6:2-4 *When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. "Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles! ³ Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's*

son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. ⁴ Jesus said to them, "Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor."

John 10:31-33 Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, ³² but Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?" ³³ "We are not stoning you for any of these," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God."

There are a lot more passages like these that we could look at, but you get the idea. Just as Isaiah prophesized, the Messiah that the Jews had long been looking for, would be rejected by his own people, and despised by the religious authorities of the day. Imagine what it must have felt like to be Jesus—to spend your whole life doing good for others, to be God, the creator of all things, and have your creation reject you.

But in this verse, Isaiah also speaks of the Messiah as having to suffer. Jesus, the Son of God, spent his adult life in circumstances that we would describe as suffering. In fact, from his birth to his final death on the cross, Jesus endured one hardship after another.

Matthew 8:20 Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

Why did Jesus have to endure such suffering? It was so that he could experience life, just as we experience life. No one can say that it was easy for Jesus to live the life he lived. But by living with us, and in the case of most of us, living in circumstances far more difficult than us, Jesus perfected his willing obedience to the Father.

Hebrews 5:7-9 During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. ⁸ Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered ⁹ and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him

The point is, in the most trying of circumstances, Jesus lived the life that we should have lived, so that he could die the death we deserved to die.

October 13 – Isaiah 53: 4 – 5

In today's reading Isaiah gives us a vivid picture of the ultimate suffering that Jesus would face in order to redeem us from the

curse of the law and our sin—the suffering of the cross. Look at the picture Isaiah paints for us in verse 5, “He was pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities.”

John 19:17-18 *Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha).¹⁸ Here they crucified him, and with him two others-- one on each side and Jesus in the middle.*

Why did Jesus have to be pierced for our iniquities?

Romans 8:3-4 *For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man,⁴ in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.*

Under the law it was impossible for us to have the righteousness that God requires for us to have, because none of us can keep the law perfectly. Therefore, the law was powerless to save us, but because we can't keep the law, the law did have the power to condemn us. At the cross, as Jesus dealt with our sin, he also dealt with the power the law has to condemn us. When Jesus' hands and feet were pierced for our sin, Paul tells us that the law was to.

Colossians 2:13-15 *When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins,¹⁴ having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.¹⁵ And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*

But what does Isaiah mean in verse 5, when he speaks of Jesus being crushed for our iniquities? It is simply this: on the cross the full weight of God's wrath was poured out on Jesus because he took our sins with him to the cross. It was the weight of God's wrath that crushed Jesus as he allowed himself to helplessly hang on the cross while God's wrath was poured out on him. That was the punishment that brought us peace; that is how his wounds have healed us.

Ephesians 2:14-19 *For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,¹⁵ by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace,¹⁶ and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.¹⁷ He came and*

preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. ¹⁹ Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household,

October 14 – Isaiah 53: 6

The reason Jesus, the Son of God, had to come and live in our world and then die on the cross is because "all we like sheep have gone astray." We have wandered away from God.

Romans 3:10-23 As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; ¹¹ there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. ¹² All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." ¹³ "Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit." "The poison of vipers is on their lips." ¹⁴ "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness." ¹⁵ "Their feet are swift to shed blood; ¹⁶ ruin and misery mark their ways, ¹⁷ and the way of peace they do not know." ¹⁸ "There is no fear of God before their eyes." ¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.... There is no difference, ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

But God did not leave us lost, he sent Jesus to find us.

Luke 19:10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

Jesus became like a sacrificial lamb and took our sins upon himself as he went to the cross.

Leviticus 4:32-33 "If he brings a lamb as his sin offering, he is to bring a female without defect. ³³ He is to lay his hand on its head and slaughter it for a sin offering at the place where the burnt offering is slaughtered.

When an Israelite brought a lamb to be the sacrifice for their sins, God instructed them to place their hand on the lamb's head. This was done to signify that the sins of that person were placed onto the lamb. In the same way as we trust Christ as our sacrificial lamb, by faith we are placing our sins upon him.

2 Corinthians 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

October 15 – Isaiah 53: 7

One of the most amazing things about Jesus is that as Jesus was being unfairly persecuted and condemned, Jesus never once cried out and complained.

Matthew 27:11-14 *Meanwhile Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" "Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. ¹² When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. ¹³ Then Pilate asked him, "Don't you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?" ¹⁴ But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge-- to the great amazement of the governor.*

Think how hard it is for us to not try to defend ourselves when we are being unfairly treated or criticized. It is not easy for us to sit back and say nothing, even though often times there is some basis for the criticism. Jesus had every right to complain. He had done nothing but good for other people and yet these men were intent on fabricating a reason for him to die a cruel death. But as a lamb before her shearers is silent, Jesus didn't say a word.

This is even more amazing when you consider that Jesus didn't have to take this abuse from the hands of men. He wasn't powerless, he had the power of heaven at his disposal, and he could have called upon it at any time.

Matthew 26:53-54 *Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴ But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?"*

The men who persecuted Jesus thought they were in control of him. They thought they were the powerful ones, and Jesus was the weakling, but boy were they wrong!

John 19:10-11 *"Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?" ¹¹ Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above.*

Why did Jesus allow himself to be abused like this, especially if he had the power to stop it? Because it was the only way we could be redeemed.

1 Peter 1:18-20 *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. ²⁰ He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.*