

# St. Paul: On The Same page

11.24.13 Week #274

**Day One:** Isaiah 2:1-5

*In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the temple of the God of Jacob... They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.*

When Isaiah wrote about God bringing peace to the Middle East (and the world), his nation was on the verge of being destroyed by Babylon (modern day Iraq). Today, as we read his prophecy again, diplomats are laboring to keep the nations of the Middle East from obtaining nuclear weapons, which could very well lead to a terrible catastrophe.

Isaiah says that God will establish peace upon his mountain. But the mountain Isaiah is talking about is now the site of the Dome of the

*"The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed."*

*Romans 13:11*

Rock, and the focal point of all the division and hatred in the Middle East. But God says it will, one day, be the center of the peace which come through Jesus.

Right now that's hard to imagine. But God has done greater things. He has brought peace to warring hearts. After Babylon, he brought peace to Israel through the Persians (modern day Iran which is today Israel's enemy). More than that, he has brought life to millions who were eternally dead. One day he will bring this promised peace to all the world.

**Prayer:** *Father, you promised a Savior, and you kept your promise. Now, Lord, give us patience as we await the coming of the final peace that Jesus has won for us. Amen.*

## Day Two

Second Reading: Romans

13:11-14

*And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed... So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.*

When you wake up and it's still dark, what do you do? I look at the time, and if it's only a few minutes before my alarm will go off, I begin to think about the day, and what I need to do. I lay in bed with my eyes open, planning my day.

Paul tells us that our long night is almost over. It has been a sleepless night – one filled with trouble and worry. But the sun will rise soon. The Lord will come soon.

How should we prepare for Jesus to come again? What should we do with the time that we have? How shall we serve?

That's what the Advent season, which begins next week, is all about! We are in a long time of darkness, but we are waiting expectantly for the arrival of the Bridegroom, Jesus. What shall we do in the

meantime? We have much to accomplish, or at least attempt. Like sleepers who cast aside their covers, who rub the sleep from their eyes and get themselves dressed for the day, we “put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.”

You have plans for your work today. You have plans for what you will do to your home, how you will raise your children, where you will go on your next vacation. You even have plans for your retirement, however far in the future that may seem.

What are your plans for serving your Savior and building his kingdom today? Have you planned your giving – how you will use the financial gifts that God has given you? Have you identified a place to serve within the ministry of the church, where you can use your talents and build up others in faith? Have you chosen a place in the community where you can show the love of Jesus Christ?

Or... did you hit the snooze button one more time?

**Prayer:** *O Lord Jesus, make me ready. I know the day is coming. Take away my fear and fill me with excitement in serving you. Amen.*

## Day Three

Gospel: Matthew 24:36-44

*“But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage ...*

*Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.”*

If you could have known what would happen in the markets in 2008, would you have acted differently? Surely you would have sold off all your stock, and then bought back into the market a few months later when the prices were low. You might even have sold your home before it lost value!

If you could know right now what will happen in the stock market next week, would you act differently today? Of course you would! You'd be able to make wise investments, and you would stay away from things that would soon have no value. You might even sell off something valuable in order to buy a stock that was soon going to increase. You could make a fortune!

We know what we would do if we could predict the stock market. But what about other things? How would you act differently if you knew what the future would bring in your daily life?

The truth is, we DO know what will become of this world, even though we don't know exactly when it will happen. We know that the material things of this world will pass away. How should that change the way we act today? What should you be investing in more?

People are the only sure investment, for they will last forever and ever – either with the Lord, or eternally separated from him. That's why we want to remain in faith ourselves, and why we want to devote ourselves to sharing the never-ending love of Jesus with others. There is no other investment that will gain in value forever.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, give me wisdom to use my days well, knowing what has eternal value and what does not. Amen.*

## Day Four

### A Special Thanksgiving

#### Day Devotion:

#### Psalm 103

*Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
and all that is within me,  
bless his holy name!*

<sup>2</sup>*Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
and forget not all his benefits,*

<sup>3</sup>*who forgives all your iniquity,  
who heals all your diseases,*

<sup>4</sup>*who redeems your life from the pit,  
who crowns you with steadfast  
love and mercy,*

<sup>5</sup>*who satisfies you with good  
so that your youth is renewed  
like the eagle's.*

Please read the entire 103<sup>rd</sup> Psalm to begin your devotion. In fact, if you have enough Bibles, read it as a family verse by verse, or with a leader reading the odd numbered verses and all the family and guests reading the even ones.

The psalm describes God's power and greatness. It tells about the blessings with which he has filled the earth. It admits that we deserve God's judgment instead of his blessing. And it praises God for his mercy. Above all, it describes God's character. What is God like?

He is forgiving. He is a healer. He is righteous and just. He is loving. God is

compassionate. Like a father, he cares for his children. He remembers how weak we are, how fragile and short our lives seem, but because of him we have an inheritance that lasts forever.

In this time when many people are uncertain about the future of their material blessings, what does this psalm have to say to you? What blessing is the greatest of all the things God has given you?

O my soul, forget not all his benefits; He forgives all your iniquity; He heals all your diseases; He redeems your life from the pit; He crowns you with steadfast love and mercy; He satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

**Prayer:** *Father in heaven, you have cared for us faithfully even when we were worried and ungrateful. You have been generous to us even when we were tightfisted with others. You have been eager to forgive, even when we were slow to repent. Father, accept our thanks for endless blessings. This day we especially thank you for...*

*Now bless our meal, our fellowship, our day of Thanksgiving, that in all things we may lift up your name in praise. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

