Love God
Love Others
Share the Good News

SUMMIT CHURCH

Being Jesus Christ to the World

Theme: What is God Thinking?
Making Sense of Suffering and Grief
"Worst and Last and Best"

We have a great new way for you to get these Meditation Moments each day directly to your phone. Just text "**med moments**" to **970-426-0700** to receive the **daily Meditation Moment** each morning and start your day grounded in faith and peace.

Weekly Memory Verse:

> ***38 And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love*** – Romans 8:38

Meditation Moments for Monday, November 16 – Read **Isaiah 58:2-8 and Isaiah 61:1-3.** Isaiah 58 was most likely written to Israelites who had been in exile in Babylon and now had returned home to Jerusalem. Some were asking why God didn't bless their fasting. People continuing to act unjustly even while fasting suggested that religious rituals were not causing them to think about their treatment of others. The acceptable fast means refraining from taking advantage of others and instead helping others who need health and dignity. We talk often at Summit about how God usually works through people. Jesus quoted chapter 61 in his first sermon in Luke 4:16-21, calling people to join in his mission to make our broken world better.

- In Isaiah 61:3, the prophet promised that God would give those who have been poor, captives and mourners "a crown in place of ashes, oil of joy in place of mourning, a mantle of praise in place of discouragement." Jesus, in the gospel of Luke, claimed that passage as defining his mission. How do those prophetic words guide us in defining our calling as Jesus' followers?

- Through the prophets and Jesus, God has defined the "big picture" shape of the divine mission God calls us to join. Living out God's big mission calls for us to understand and use our individual gifts, strengths and dreams. In what ways have you been able to incorporate your gifts and passions in what you do to help carry out God's mission in the world?

Prayer: Lord, use me in your mission to invite the world to Your Kingdom. Thank you for your guidance through the Holy Spirit in my life. Transform me to be more like Your Son. Amen.

Tuesday, November 17 – Read **Hebrews 11:32 to 12:2.** Hebrews listed many examples of faith. But there was no whitewashing of the world's brokenness. God was with all of them, but while some of the faithful lives had superb outcomes, others met tragic, terrible earthly fates. Frederick Buechner wrote that God's grace means, "Here is the world. Beautiful and terrible things will happen. Don't be afraid. I am with you. Nothing can ever separate us." Hebrews 11:16 reminds us that their ultimate reward was not now, but in "a better country…a heavenly one".

- Hebrews 11:39-40 said we don't always see God's promises come true in this life, at least not fully, but we wait for eternity. Few of us want to hear that. In Romans 8:18-25, the apostle Paul described the value of hope for our life journey to Christians who lived under the thumb of hostile Roman emperors. When have you had to wait longer than you'd hoped for a divine promise to come true? What promises are you still waiting for? What gives you faith and trust as you wait?
- As we live our lives, Hebrews called us to, "fix our eyes on Jesus, faith's pioneer and perfecter," who "endured the cross." What ways have you found of "fixing your eyes on Jesus" during the errands and duties that make up your regular, everyday life? What is one practice you could adopt that you believe would help you to "fix your eyes on Jesus" every day, in every situation?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, when everything goes well, it's easy for me to forget that I need you with me. When things go badly, it's easy for me to think you've abandoned me. Thank you for being with me in both the light and dark days of my life. Amen.*

Wednesday, November 18 – Read **1 Corinthians 15:50-58.** The apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth, who lived in a skeptical Greek society, that we can face even death with total confidence. For Paul, death did not end our service to God. C.S. Lewis, the author of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, wrote that death moved us on to the next chapter of, "the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before." We are invited to look beyond our day-to-day lives to the eternal light and hope of Jesus' resurrection.

- "Flesh and blood," in verse 50, didn't mean God's kingdom isn't for "physical people." When Paul uses the word "flesh," he does not intend for us to just think of the physical world in opposition to spiritual. "Flesh" refers to people or things who share the brokenness and mortality of the world and because of that are

separated from God. Only determined rebels against God as described in Romans 8:7-8 can't reach the kingdom. What helps you focus on sharing in that kingdom, where all pain and death will be gone?

- Paul quoted from Isaiah 25:8 and Hosea 13:14, where the prophet used an ancient form called a "taunt song" to ask, "Where is your sting, Death?" The apostles defied death because they were sure Jesus would ultimately free the world from death and suffering. That's why Paul urged his readers to be "firm, unshakable, excelling in the work of the Lord." How can you trust that whatever work you do for God and others isn't going to be for nothing?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, make and keep me firm and unshakable. Walk with me every day of this life and then go with me on into the next chapters of the great adventure you have in store. Amen.*

Thursday, November 19 – Read **2 Corinthians 4:16 to 5:1.** We learn from 2 Corinthians 11:23-29 that the apostle Paul knew firsthand about "the worst" in our world. Yet he believed, as a pastor in Frederick Buechner's novel *The Final Beast* said, that, "the worst isn't the last thing about the world. It's the next to the last thing. The last thing is the best… You are terribly loved and forgiven. Yes. You are healed. All is well." In Christ, we look beyond even the worst to the "eternal stockpile of glory" Jesus promised.

- Scholar William Barclay wrote in his commentary on 2 Corinthians, "From the physical point of view, life may be a slow but inevitable slipping down the slope that leads to death. But from the spiritual point of view, life is a climbing up the hill that leads to the presence of God." How much daily focus do you give to keeping your physical self well? How much to keeping your relationship with God strong? What changes, if any, can you make to ensure that God is renewing the person you are inside every day?
- In Romans 8:24, Paul wrote, "We were saved in hope. If we see what we hope for, that isn't hope. Who hopes for what they already see?" In today's verses, he talked about our focus on the things we can't see yet which are more enduring than what we can see. What hopes do you hold that remain out of sight right now? What steps do you take to anchor your hope in God's goodness, and to live with patience and trust?

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, much of what you said and did seems odd and out of step to many people. But you weren't shortsighted. You looked beyond the obvious and visible. Give me your eyes to see, however dimly, the glory of eternity. Amen.*

Friday, November 20 – Romans 8:28 and 35-39. The apostle Paul did not believe God caused evil things, but he knew they would happen. "Trouble, or distress, or harassment, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword"—he'd faced all these and listed them here. Yet his list was not a complaint. He tells us in verse 37 that he wrote it to say, "In all these things we win a sweeping victory through the one who loved us." No matter what life throws at us, we can walk with Paul and a long line of believers in God's eternal victory parade.

- Paul asked a compelling question: "Who will separate us from Christ's love?" The Greek wording of the question assumed that the answer was "Nobody and nothing!" What situations are most likely to leave you feeling separated from God's love? What spiritual "anchors" keep you connected to God's love, hope, and peace even when times get difficult?
- Today's reading did NOT say, as people sometimes think, that "all things" are good—they're not. It said God, who is always good, can take even painful and difficult things and bend them to serve a good purpose, if we are willing to put them in God's hands. Can you look back and see times when God has brought good out of hard things you have faced? What are you facing right now that is painful, frustrating or scary?

Prayer: *All-powerful God, whatever comes my way, hold me close in the shelter of your love. Thank you that, through you, I can win a sweeping victory in "all these things." Amen.*

Saturday, November 21 – Read **Revelation 3:20-22 and 21:1-5.** Revelation ended the Bible's big story with a set of glowing, symbol-laden pictures of the glory that awaits God's people. This expanded on Jesus' teaching in Luke 21:25-28 that, for God's people, the end of the world is not about fear but about redemption. Scholar Catherine Cory noted in her commentary on Revelation that, "John isn't being transported to an otherworldly place; rather, he's experiencing a new transformed heaven and earth (see Isaiah 65:17-19)." As you read this vision, don't "get lost in the weeds" of giant jewels and objects more precious than our minds can imagine. The vision used those objects, not as ends in themselves. Revelation 21:3 tells us they are symbols meant to show that the greatest eternal reward is that "God's dwelling is here with humankind… God himself will be with them as their God."

- Rome exiled the visionary John who wrote Revelation, ridiculing and often killing Christians. Yet John confidently wrote about a splendid future for God's people. He used images from Genesis 2 to picture the restored garden of Paradise. John's vision took the promise of eternal life from "just words" into powerful, mind-stretching images. He made it plain that **anyone** who is willing to live in God's kingdom can share in that ultimate, life-transforming hope. Revelation 21:24 and 22:17 tell us, "The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it…Let the one who is thirsty come! Let the one who wishes receive life-giving water as a gift." Have you said yes to that invitation? How can you live every day in the light of that triumphant hope?

Prayer: *Jesus, you said in John 14 that you were going to prepare a place for us, that your Father's house has lots of room. I want to be there when you make everything new. Thank you for promising me that I can be one of your redeemed, living with you eternally. Amen.*