



SUMMER READING PLAN

DAY 21 MATTHEW 9:1-8

21

What would you do if a man in Moosic claimed to be Christ returned? Would you even give him a second thought? How long before the authorities would try to get him professional help? It was the same in ancient times. Sure, the Israelites expected a Messiah. But not Jesus from Nazareth! Eventually the most skeptical became curious as reports of healing rolled in. Where crowds gathered, Jesus taught. They marveled at His words and mighty works. The sick were healed, the paralyzed danced, the tortured were transformed. Yet, Jesus came to do far more. He came to heal the ultimate sickness—the widespread disease of sin. Jesus offered forgiveness free of charge. The religious leaders cried, “Blasphemy!” So Jesus proved His authority by healing a paralyzed man. Jesus’ compassion revealed His mission: “I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.”

DAY 22 JOHN 3:1-21

22

If God sat down across from you right now, what do you think He would say? Would He remind you of your failures? Would He keep His distance? Would His eyes be filled with disappointment? Maybe you wouldn’t expect much emotion at all, just a pronouncement of judgment. John 3:16 may be the most familiar verse in the Bible. But it’s hardly understood. If we grasped its meaning, we wouldn’t run from God; we would run to Him. Verse seventeen could not make it any clearer. God sent Jesus to free us from the prison we deserve, not put us into one. God loved the worthless, washed up, and beat up so much that gave His precious Son as a sacrifice to save our souls from destruction. God sits down with a smile and offers you eternal life. Was that what you were expecting from a conversation with God?

DAY 23 LUKE 15:1-32

23

Long before Pixar, Jesus was a master storyteller. His masterpiece is known as “The Prodigal Son.” Literary scholars have marveled at it, the broken have reveled in it, and the self-righteous have balked at it. With unparalleled brevity, Jesus paints a penetrating picture of the two ways people have been running from God for centuries. The younger brother rejects the father by breaking the rules. Eventually, he is broken and returns home with plans to beg for a job. Instead the father goes out and receives the younger brother with joy. The elder brother rejects the father by keeping the rules. They both wanted the father’s stuff but not the father. But the father goes out to both of them and invites them back in. God sees through our attempts to use Him to get what we want. His heart is broken by us. But it is also broken for us. Will you come home?

DAY **MATTHEW 26:47-56**

24

Benedict Arnold. Marcus Brutus. And the worst traitor of them all, Judas Iscariot. The night is infamous, the Garden of Gethsemane is cloaked in darkness. The disciples are drowsing while Jesus is praying. Suddenly, the sound of footsteps breaks through the night as a mob approaches. Judas leads them right to Jesus. Torchlight dances across bared weapons and anxious faces. In a scene charged with profound drama, Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss. Jesus could command twelve legions of angels to destroy His foes. Instead, He commands His eleven disciples to stand down. Despite the agony that awaits, Jesus goes voluntarily. Despite the coming beating, whipping, and nailing—even though the cross will be costly—He goes willingly. Why? Because there is the no other way to win your redemption.

DAY **MARK 15:1-15**

25

Unfair: not based on or behaving according to the principles of equality and justice. It's not fair that nice guys finish last. That you didn't get the promotion. That they cheated on you. And you're right. All those things are glaring signs of injustice. Like the ultimate injustice in today's reading. Jesus stood before the people He came to save. Pilate finds no fault in Him and is willing to release Him. Pilate has a custom of gaining political favor during the festival by releasing a prisoner of the people's choosing. They call for the release of Barabbas instead of Jesus. Who is Barabbas? A notorious insurrectionist and murderer. Pilate is puzzled. So are we. Who would want to free a condemned murderer over an innocent and compassionate healer? It's unfair. Jesus chose to take our punishment. Now He offers you forgiveness. It's unfair. It's grace.

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