

## Thoughts on the Readings of September 24, 2023

**The Common Thread** Seek the Lord who abundantly pardons. Sinners may seek no better thing, for he alone is our light and salvation. He pardons with such extravagance that even sinners like us may be confident when the assaults of sin and death come our way. We are assured that in death we will have the gain of seeing the Lord's glorious face. In the meanwhile—during this life—we have Christ, so we ought to live lives worthy of him. Some will do so for more years than others and some better than others; but all will receive the same reward: the salvation of living eternally in the beauty of God's glory. We will dwell in the house of the Lord forever with our eyes fixed on his beauty.

**First Reading - [Isaiah 55:6-9](#)** How many times, as a child, did you look in some dark hiding place for a friend while playing hide and seek, yet never see him? You suspected where he was hiding but it was only after spending enough time in the dark to allow your eyes to adjust that you saw some dim light reflecting off his cheek. After a long time in hiding, the cleverest kid even had to stick out a leg so that you noticed him.

God is not one to be found in the nature of the world around us. We may suspect he is hiding there, but we will never find him—nor are we able to reason our way to God. Yet, because he has revealed himself in his word, God may be “found.” His ways are not our ways and his thoughts are not our thoughts. God is near when one takes the time to seek him in his own revelation of himself.

**Psalm - [Psalm 27:1-9](#)** Though the things of this dark world would distract us, those who gaze on the beauty of the Lord, know his light and salvation. Troubling times come and go but the Lord shelters the believer during those times. Seek God's face as Moses and David did; you will not be disappointed as he makes himself present to you—even while the world does its best to make you anxious.

**Second Reading - [Philippians 1:12-14, 19-30](#)** It may be difficult to consider imprisonment as an advancement of the kingdom, as Paul did. We have a tough enough time thinking everything will be okay if we are not on Church Council next year. Yet, while in jail, the apostle eagerly expected good things from God. Even if

he should die, Paul knew God was in control of matters. He knew that God would get glory whether he lived or died.

With such an example, we too know how to behave in a similar manner. We may be courageous in the face of whatever befalls us. We may stand firm no matter the shaky ground. We can strive for the gospel without fear of opposition. We may suffer for doing so, but this too is for the glory of God and the advancement of his kingdom.

**Gospel - [Matthew 20:1-16](#)** Here is a parable for those in congregations who think, “We have always done it this way; and this way means *my way*.”

Serving the kingdom of God is not something just for the old-timers. He calls in the last hour too. When he calls, the called must be faithful to respond but they are not alone in this responsibility. Those who have served the Lord for years, must be grateful for God’s wise choice when he calls newcomers into the work of his kingdom. Those called this year are as dear to the Lord as those he called years ago.

It is difficult for us to let go and let others. Isaiah has reminded us that God’s ways are above our ways; his thinking is beyond us. So, it is left for us to whine or to trust when God calls someone in these last hours. Eternal life is the wage for those who believe, whether early or late. May we strive together for the gospel.