

## **STUDY GUIDE FOR THE WEEK OF: OCTOBER 19, 2008**

### **A FULL LIFE IN THE EMPTIEST PLACES**

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**OCTOBER 19, 2008 AT THE 545**

#### **“A Full Life in the Emptiest Places”**

#### **Isaiah 58, 9-14, The Message**

##### **A Full Life in the Emptiest of Places**

**9-12**"If you get rid of unfair practices, quit blaming victims, quit gossiping about other people's sins, If you are generous with the hungry and start giving yourselves to the down-and-out, Your lives will begin to glow in the darkness, your shadowed lives will be bathed in sunlight. I will always show you where to go. I'll give you a full life in the emptiest of places— firm muscles, strong bones. You'll be like a well-watered garden, a gurgling spring that never runs dry. You'll use the old rubble of past lives to build anew, rebuild the foundations from out of your past. You'll be known as those who can fix anything, restore old ruins, rebuild and renovate, make the community livable again.

**13-14**"If you watch your step on the Sabbath, and don't use my holy day for personal advantage, If you treat the Sabbath as a day of joy, God's holy day as a celebration, If you honor it by refusing 'business as usual,' making money, running here and there— Then you'll be free to enjoy God! Oh, I'll make you ride high and soar above it all. I'll make you feast on the inheritance of your ancestor Jacob." Yes! God says so!

#### **Study notes**

This study comes on the Sunday of Love Chico, in which we partner with other churches demonstrate our love concretely for our city. In addition, elections are looming where we decide what kind of leaders—and what kind of values—will characterize our society. So we ask the question, “What does it mean for us and our leaders to reflect God’s values in our city and our nation?” One of the most astounding elements of the Bible is the Old Testament prophets’ cries for social righteousness—that is, to create a society that reflects the God’s priorities. In this passage, the prophet Isaiah describes three key concerns for God

- That our communities would be just economically
- That the hungry would be fed
- That God’s people would honor the Sabbath

God promises that we will flourish when we do these things, that God will give us “a full life in the emptiest of places.” It’s an amazing challenge and promise.

#### **Questions**

1. What is your experience with hunger? With unfair business practices? Why do you think God cares about these things?
2. In verse 13, Isaiah prophesies about “trampling on the Sabbath,” which for the Jews meant violating God’s command to take a break in order to remember God’s goodness and salvation. What does that mean for us today as Christians? How can we take seriously God’s call to rest and worship?

3. How does this verse speak to the kind of national, state, and local leaders we ought to elect? What does it mean for our church leaders?
4. God promises that, if we live justly, we will have “a full life in the emptiest places”? How do you understand that promise?
5. What does God want us to do, as a church or individually, in responding to this passage? What does he want us to change or to continue doing?