



THE WORD FOR TODAY

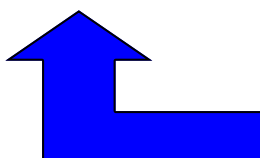
Isaiah 40, verses 1-5 and 9-11

“Comfort, comfort my people”

Isaiah was a prophet, a man who was close to God and spoke God’s word to the people. He lived about 700 years before Jesus was born. His book is a long book in the Bible and the first 39 chapters deal with the constant threats and attacks of the Assyrians and forecast worse to come, when Babylon would carry the Israelites off into exile.

From chapter 40, however, he is prophesying better things ahead. Isaiah’s words point to God saving his people from exile, but they also look forward to when God’s Messiah, his Chosen One, his Son Jesus, will come to save not just Israel but the world, through his life, death, rising again, and his eventual return. It’s therefore a good reading for the Season of Advent in the weeks before Christmas. It reminds us just what the arrival of that baby in Bethlehem means to us.

Follow these words of Isaiah, beginning on the north wall of this little building and then continuing anti-clockwise round the church building. Please say the prayers too if you would like to, and perhaps pause on the benches if the weather is good. We are using the New International Version of the Bible, which you can find on the internet under Bible Gateway.



Turn immediately left to find the first verse of the Bible passage on the bench

***“Comfort, comfort my people,
says your God.”***

1



A sense of belonging is very important to us as human beings, isn't it? Reading these words it is wonderful to know that God sees us as his people. It is our God who is saying these words.

He is still the almighty powerful God, creator of all that we know, but, when we are struggling with life's problems, he knows and he cares.

Whether we are ill, or lonely, or worried sick about paying our bills, or feeling quite hopeless, he knows, and he will find a way to bring us comfort.

***Loving Father, keep me close to you where I belong.
When times are hard, make me aware of your presence and care.
Hold me in your loving arms.***

(No. 2 is on the bench facing us at the corner of the church building)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

“Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.”

2



There is light at the end of the tunnel. There will be an end to trials and difficulties. There is a promise of forgiveness, more generous than we could imagine.

It is quite staggering to think that God would be prepared to sacrifice his only Son Jesus to pay for our sins, to lift that burden from us. We don’t deserve such grace and yet all we have to do is trust in him and this wonderful gift is ours. How can we be worthy of it?

***Lord, thank you for your tenderness.
Thank you for the hope you give us.
Thank you for your grace in forgiving us, in wiping the slate clean,
in freeing us from the burden of guilt,
through Jesus’ death on the cross.***

(Turn left round the side of the church to find No. 3)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

“A voice of one calling: ‘In the desert prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God.

***Every valley shall be raised up,
every mountain and hill made low;
the rough ground shall become level,
the rugged places a plain.”***

3

There was an ancient custom that representatives went ahead of a king to prepare the way for him. All countries do something similar now—clearing the streets if there is going to be a special parade. It must have taken a long time to get the Royal Mile in Edinburgh ready for the procession taking the late Queen to her lying-in-state.

Jesus, our Lord and our King, is coming into this world at Christmas. How are we preparing our hearts and minds to receive him? Are we clearing out some of the rubbish, making some space, perhaps having a change of direction?



***Lord, help me to take time in the busy weeks before Christmas
to prepare my heart and mind to welcome Jesus
as my King, my Saviour, my Lord.***

(No. 4 is further along this side of the church)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

***“And the glory of the Lord will be revealed,
and all mankind together will see it.
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”***

4



God was willing to come to earth as a baby in very humble circumstances, but make no mistake, all of God's glory is in that tiny scrap of humanity. As Christians we believe that we will eventually see his coming again in full glory, but that doesn't dim the glory of the baby in the stable. He will grow to teach, heal and raise from the dead, he will die and rise again, all for the sake of all mankind. He is God, with all the glory that comes with that but in the form of a human being whom we can get to know—a human being who is willing to be our friend in this life and in the next.

***Lord, open my eyes this Christmas to see your glory.
Open my ears to hear the great truth of Christmas.
Open my heart to receive the baby who is my Saviour.***

(Walk along the back of the church and turn left to find No. 5)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

“You who bring good tidings to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, ‘Here is your God!’”

5



You’ve probably heard the Spiritual “Go, tell it on the mountain”, and lots of the Christmas carols we sing talk about “good tidings”. This is all because Jesus is good news, and worth shouting about! This baby is our God come to earth to save us—it’s a personal gift like no other. It tells us that God loves us and will never forsake us—don’t keep that precious knowledge to yourself!

***Lord, my Lord, thank you for the gift of Jesus.
Let me not be afraid to tell others of the gift that is for them too.
Help me to pass on the good news.***

(No. 6 is at the other side of the church tower)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

***“See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power,
and his arm rules for him.
See, his reward is with him,
and his recompense accompanies him.”***

6



We see God’s power all around us in creation—in its beauty and detail as well as in its noise and drama. Power beyond our imagining. We believe the whole world will know it one day when Jesus returns, but right now we need that power to help us to restore our world to what God always wanted it to be—a peaceful, wholesome place for his people to live. We are wrong if we think we have to wait—God comes to his people at Christmas and there is hope. We must pray for his power to work in the world, and for guidance for ourselves.

***Lord, we need your power in our world to bring peace,
to reconcile seemingly immovable forces.***

***We need your power as we seek to save this beautiful planet from extinction.
Lord, come with power, and enable us to help with your work.***

(Turn left to find No. 7 at the front of the church)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

***“He tends his flock like a shepherd:
he gathers the lambs in his arms
and carries them close to his heart;
he gently leads those that have young.”***

7

This powerful God is also gentle and caring. When we need carrying, he carries us. When we need gentle guidance he provides it. When we cry out for help, he hears and seeks us out. When we are lost he comes looking for us.

We need never think that God doesn't care for each one of us. Jesus came to show us what his love was like—an everlasting sacrificial love. What a comfort!



***Lord, we are like sheep—we need looking after.
Help us to know that you are always there for us.
Help us to trust in you for all we need.***

(There is hand sanitiser in the Offering House by the gate if you would like to use it.)



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