

**- Saint John's Pulpit (Dec 6, Second Sunday of Advent)
- "O St. John's, Herald of Good Tidings!" Isaiah 40:1-9**

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.

²Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her

that she has served her term,

that her penalty is paid,

that she has received from the LORD's hand
double for all her sins.

³A voice cries out:

"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

⁴Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.

⁵Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

⁶A voice says, "Cry out!"
And I said, "What shall I cry?"

All people are grass,
their constancy is like the flower of the field.

⁷The grass withers, the flower fades,
when the breath of the LORD blows upon it;
surely the people are grass.

⁸The grass withers, the flower fades;
but the word of our God will stand forever.

⁹Get you up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good tidings;
lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,
lift it up, do not fear;
say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!"

Advent: We need comfort!

For those who meet the first Sunday of December in this pandemic, the Bible text today begins with a message of comfort from God:

*Comfort, O comfort my people,
says your God.
²Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her
that she has served her term,
that her penalty is paid,
that she has received from the LORD's hand
double for all her sins. Isaiah 40:1-2 NRSV*

I believe that this is what we really want to hear now, don't you? Isaiah 40-55 are regarded as a message for the exiles in Babylonian captivity. These chapters present comfort, hope, and recovery given from God. Of course I don't think that we are like the exiles in Babylonian captivity although we have been limited due to the virus, but I believe that we can find comfort, hope and recovery by reading this text today. Why? They are from the Son of God, Jesus through this season of Advent.

Please look at the verse 9:

*Get you up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good tidings;
lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,
lift it up, do not fear;
say to the cities of Judah,
"Here is your God!" Isaiah 40:9 NRSV*

This verse encourages the Israelites to be heralds of good tidings and lift up their voice. Simply speaking, we need to be a messenger of the Good News!

So, it is understandable that one of characteristics from the Advent is to become a messenger. The Wise Men boldly proclaimed a birth of the Messiah in front of the King Herod. The shepherds shared the Good News of the Messiah with people in their town. Here is a question. What messages do we need to bring to the world?

Advent Message: Prepare the Way of the Lord

The first message we need to bring to the world is this. Prepare the Way of the Lord! Please look at the verses 3 and 4 carefully and focus on some words about places.

A voice cries out:

*"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

*4Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain. Isaiah 40:3-4 NRSV*

Wilderness, desert, valley, mountain (& hill), uneven ground, and rough places... Don't you think that all these words show the place we live now precisely? The reason why Jesus came to this world is to prepare the way of Salvation for us. To do this, he became the way himself.

6Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6 NRSV

I hope and pray that the Good News of the coming of Jesus will bring a true healing and recovery to all Americans who are in emotional wilderness, financial desert, and uneven ground politically.

Advent Message: The Word of Our God Will Stand Forever!

The second message we bring to the world is eternity. What lessons have we received through this pandemic? Very simply, we learned that we are powerless, we are limited, and we are very weak. At the same time, we had to realize that nothing can guarantee the next day which puts in the verse 6:

A voice says, "Cry out!"

And I said, "What shall I cry?"

All people are grass,

their constancy is like the flower of the field. Isaiah 40:6 NRSV

From this verse, we see a serious understanding of mortality for human being. Presumably, their experience as exiles in Babylonian captivity made them wake up eternity. For example, when Korean people were under the

military regime in 1960-1980, churches experienced their explosive growth! Whenever we see that we are limited, we need to look for eternity.

For us who meet Advent in the pandemic, the very message we want to hear is this – “The word of God will stand forever!”

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. John 1:1-3a NRSV

Hope that we make good use of this Advent to look for eternity through Christ.

Advent Message: Your God Is Coming!

Finally, the text today gives us one good idea to make our Advent wonderful. It is to be heralds of Good tidings! Instead of proclaiming the good news in front of a big crowd, we are asked to go and shout the good news in our own places.

*O Zion, messenger of good news,
shout from the mountaintops!
Shout it louder, O Jerusalem.
Shout, and do not be afraid.
Tell the towns of Judah,
"Your God is coming!" Isaiah 40:9 NLT*

Certainly, this pandemic limits our gatherings, but each of us can share the Good News with our neighbors. Please know that you are God’s church! You are His messenger! Please let people know that Jesus is coming! Encourage them to enjoy this Advent full of hope, joy, peace, and love! Pray for the world to turn to the Lord, the greatest promise for Eternity. Our God is coming!