



“Comforting Words”

*Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. 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. **Isaiah 40:1-2***

Getting on the Same Page

This Sunday (Dec 3) we begin our Advent series called, “The Christmas Carol.” This series will be all about hope. We will discuss how we as a church should understand hope from a past, present and future perspective.

Many of us carry the burden and fatigue from a wavering hope. We look outward at our world and know how scary and broken it is. All of us experience this brokenness in some way. We look inward and know there is something wrong with our hearts. We are victims, but we are also perpetrators that try to make life work apart from God. And ultimately, it doesn't.

Isaiah picks up this conversation in chapter 40. Israel would go into many years of captivity because of their sin. But now, God asks Isaiah to speak tender words of comfort to His people. At some point in the future, Israel would go into exile for their sin and suffer. But, in time, their suffering would end. Their sin would be fully forgiven. They would be allowed to return to their land. However, even though this would all come to pass, it still didn't completely fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah 40. So God's story moves forward, with his people still longing for a greater peace.

Fast forward many centuries to Jesus. Jesus came the first time to offer us perfect forgiveness and reconciliation with God. He did NOT come the first time to bring us peace on earth. Today, we live between the first and second advents (arrivals) of Jesus. One day, Jesus will come again. He will perfectly

and completely fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah 40, as he will establish true peace in this world. One day, we won't have to struggle with brokenness and sin.

Maybe, just maybe, living in a broken world and struggling with personal sin actually has a silver lining: It can draw us deeper into the heart of Jesus, the only one who can offer us true hope.

Read all of Isaiah 40. What stands out to you?

Getting Started: Pick 1 or 2 of these to get the conversation going

- Discuss a time in your life when someone spoke comforting or hopeful words to you. What was it about these words that gave you so much comfort?
- What brings you the most comfort in your life?

Respond/Discuss

- Describe things in this world that make you anxious, doubt God's love, or steal your hope.
- Respond: It's not only that our world is broken, but that our hearts are broken too.
- *Advent* means 'Arrival.' In Isaiah's day, the people lived before Jesus' first coming. Today, we live between Jesus' first and second coming. What are some similarities and differences between the people who lived before Jesus' first coming and us?
- Reflect on the personal, comforting messages from the sermon and in your bulletin. Which one stands out to you and why?
- Respond: Sometimes, I lose comfort and hope because I don't actually believe my sin has been paid for.
- Respond: Sometimes, I lose comfort and hope because I place TOO MUCH comfort in THIS life.
- Respond: Sometimes, I lose comfort and hope because I doubt whether God really sees me and loves me; sometimes I doubt whether he is really returning.
- Can the brokenness in this world and my heart actually draw me closer to God? Why or why not?
- Respond: The most comforting thing Jesus has done is to die for our sins. The most comforting thing Jesus will do is to return and bring peace to this world.

Apply: Read/Pray the following passages together. Take in who Jesus is and how he can comfort you right now:

- *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God."* **2 Corinthians 1:3-4**

