

Sunday, December 10, 2023

Isaiah 40:1–11

“Re-imagining peace.” A bold, even audacious assignment. How dare I speak peace when the world seems on fire? How do I share the peace that passes all understanding when my own mind and heart spin with worries and cares?

Re-imagining peace. “Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak softly and tenderly to Jerusalem.” I’ve read this verse hundreds of times, but today it hit me that Isaiah isn’t beseeching God to comfort God’s people, but God is saying to Isaiah—provide comfort, speak softly and tenderly to my people. When the frazzled salesclerk, too long on her feet and too short on patience snaps at you because you’re holding up the line, speak tenderly. When your colleague makes one ask too many and hits your last nerve, speak softly, respond with tenderness. Perhaps re-imagining peace this Advent is stopping for a moment to breathe. Close your eyes, listen to your heartbeat, speak tenderly to your own soul. You are enough. You are beloved. You are God’s chosen child.

Re-imagining peace. This Advent season I am guided by the tiny pinprick of light that shows me enough of the path ahead to take the next right step. I’m leaning into the comfort of not knowing, but trusting. I cannot see all the journey ahead and perhaps that is the best gift, for I am not ready or able to take all of it in at once, the pain and the glory of it. I can’t fix all the brokenness around me. I may not even be able to fix the brokenness of my own heart, but I can speak tenderly to myself and to my siblings. All of us beloved children seeking peace in the midst of the storm.

I offer a prayer from Frederick Buechner, whose words have long found the soft part of my heart and helped me see a bit more of that precious light.

*“Lord Jesus Christ, help us not to fall in love with the night that covers us, but through the darkness to watch for you as well as to work for you; to dream and hunger in the dark for the light of you. Help us to know that the madness of God is saner than men and that nothing that God has wrought in this world was ever possible.”*



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