

2nd Sunday of Advent: Order of worship on December 10, 2023

(CCLI: License Number #3156883) (Welcoming Elder: Kevin Johnston)

We Gather

- Welcome and Announcements
- Lighting up the Advent candle (BOP 119, Hope is a star Vs. 2)
- Call to worship
- Praise song – BOP 113 Comfort, comfort you my people
- Prayer for worship and Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance
- Praise song – BOP 749 Be still, my soul
- Prayer with children

We Listen

- Prayer for illumination
- First reading: Mark 1:1-8
- Second reading: Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13 (Refrain 1)
- Third reading: Isaiah 40:1-11
- Sermon: "Here is your God!"
- Prayer for the people

We Respond

- Offering, Doxology (BOP 830 Praise God from whom all blessings vs. 1) & Dedication
- Song for the Journey – BOP 687 Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine

We Serve

- Benediction

Lighting up the Advent Candle Hope Is A Star (BOP#119)

Vs. 2: Peace is a ribbon that circles the earth, giving a promise of safety and worth.

When God is a child there's joy in our song. The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong, and none shall be afraid.

Responsive Call to Worship

(Please see the insert)

Praise song – BOP 113 Comfort, comfort you my people

Prayer For Adoration and Confession

God of purpose and promise, you love the breadth and depth of your creation and care for us like shepherds tend their sheep. You set pathways for us to follow, clearing the way in the wilderness of the world.

And yet we break your heart by wandering off, pursuing our own purposes.

Still, you keep calling us back. You call us by name in our baptisms. You set us in the world to serve you, each one with a purpose you imagine for us. And so we come to worship you, O God, knowing that in you, we will find our true purpose, and the path you set will lead to peace and well-being in your deep love, revealed for us in Christ Jesus.

God of mercy, We confess that we resist change, even when your Word compels us to reconsider our actions or opinions. We are set in our ways, and prefer to consider the changes others should make. Forgive us. By the power of your Holy Spirit, give us new eyes for seeing, new ears for hearing so that we follow Jesus more faithfully day by day.

This time we come to you in prayer that you taught us how to pray: (The Lord's Prayer:)

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. **Give us** today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. **Save us** from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. **For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.**

Words of Assurance

Friends, trust that peace and forgiveness are God's gift to you this day through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Receive the renewing power of the Holy Spirit and be at peace with God, be at peace with yourselves and be at peace with each other.

May the Peace of the Lord be with you. Let us take few moments to greet each other and share our peace.

Praise Song: BOP 749 Be still, my soul

Prayer with Children

Prayer for Illumination:

God of grace, still our busy minds as we listen for your Word speaking through the Scripture. By your Spirit, create a space within us to receive your wisdom, your mercy, and your invitation to live for you. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

- First reading: Mark 1:1-8
- Second reading: Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13 (Refrain 1)
- Third reading: Isaiah 40:1-11

"This is the word of the Lord / Thanks be to God."

SERMON: Here is your God!

Today's sermon title is **"Here is your God!"**

The theme of second Sunday of Advent is Peace. Now, when we walk around the mall or visit any coffee shops, or turn on radio, we hear carols. Carols are basically popular hymns. Oh come let us adore him. Joy to the world. It came upon the midnight clear. O holy night. Silent night. The first Noel.

What is the theme? Why do people sing carols?

Whether they realize or not, these are the songs remembering and praising God for sending his one and only son Jesus Christ to us. We sing the birth of Jesus Christ.

Why? This is a long time tradition to bring people together celebrating the birth of Jesus. As faith fades out, the tradition remained, but the core message gradually lost its meaning. So, now,

singing carol is like a decoration of this season to make it uplifting and celebratory. It's honouring this season itself.

People want peace and joy. It's like a band aid. Life is not easy. There are hurts, struggles, difficulties, hatred, especially these days wars. But, singing empty carols, people long for comfort.

The historical background of today's Isaiah passage is not too peaceful for the people of Israel. They were ruled by Babylonians. Their god was Marduk. He's a god of sky and he was both good and evil. So, under their reign, people of Israel was not able to rejoice their own faith.

V1, "Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God."

Up to this point, prophet Isaiah told about judgement and anger of God toward his own people. But, from this chapter, Isaiah changed his theme.

V2, "Speak tenderly to Jerusalem – referring to the people of Israel as well as their own faith – 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."

Now, it's time for Israel to be free, to be comforted. Why? Because the Lord has punished her twice over for all her sins. Like the sentence of a criminal is over, the punishment of Israelites was finished.

When we read our today's passage, we find that this is **a conversation between a person and an unknown voice**. We know now that it's between prophet Isaiah and God. But, it could be interpreted in different ways such as me and God.

V6, "A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "what shall I cry?"

Why can't we **be I** in this verse?

God's voice could call out to us to be his voice to God's own people.

It's not just prophets or ministers who speak the word of God. When we read the Bible, it's between me and God. God intends to build a personal relationship with each and every one of us here.

So, back to comforting of God from this difficult background of the Israelites. Prophet Isaiah's message, so far, was focused on their past. Their mistakes, their wrongdoings, their wickedness, and their selfishness. They left God because they enjoyed other things more than God.

Remember the carols these days? Some of us would praise God when we hear carols in our surroundings. But, to many people today, carol songs are just for their feelings and just for this season. **Empty carols. Empty hymns**. It's the same as the situation of the people of God.

To the empty people of his own, God proclaims COMFORT.

V6-8, "All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand for ever"

We are like grass, so weak, so small, so powerless. But, God is different. Know that the word of God stands forever. Know that our God is strong.

V9, 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!"

God is saying, "Before you introduce me, prepare yourself. Prepare people to listen to my words. Go up, so that people can listen to you well."

Here, there are few other speakers. **You, the writer, Zion, and Jerusalem.**

Mountain Zion is the place where David was installed as King. It signifies the place where God lives. And Jerusalem, in the same way, it is the symbol of God's presence.

So, this could be understood as God's people. And the listener, **cities of Judah** could be God's people too.

So, church, prepare your hearts to proclaim God's coming. Church, prepare your hearts to listen to the message of God's coming. Here is the main message.

Here is your God.

In this passage, there is a direction. From past to future. From distress to comfort.

Who created this direction? Who can change the situation?

What is at the end of this direction?

God. Comfort. Peace. Fulfillment. Meaningful life.

This chaotic world is not our end. Do not seek for the empty peace.

This season of Christmas is all about God coming to the world for us.

It is the time to remember the birth of baby Jesus who came to save us.

All the carols we hear everywhere we go is about Jesus.

The peace we seek cannot be obtained through our own deeds.

You see, we are like what? According to the Bible, we are like grass and flowers that fade away easily. Where do we want to put our foundation?

Especially these days, we remember that the land of Jerusalem, the most unpeaceful place now.

God proclaimed peace there, but now ironically, there is a war. There has been war for the entire history, actually. God says today, Here is your God.

What lasts forever? Money? House? Fame? Family? Science?

Nothing. Only the word of God.

We try to fill our hearts with all the things but the word of God.

Let us remember what truly matters for our life.

There is only one thing. "Here is your God!"

Who else? What else?

Have the word of God in you and find the true meaning of the advent, this time of waiting for the birth of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

This is the message of the Lord for us today.

Prayer for the people:

Jesus, you are name of all names. You are wonderful Saviour. Glorious Lord. You are the Prince of Peace. You are faithful. You are generous. You are with us. You are compassionate. You are an awesome God. Thank you for being our Lord and thank you for being the Master of our lives. Thank you for calling us here in your presence to worship and praise you.

As we wait to celebrate your birth, we want to remember the Advent themes. Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. Through all these themes, help us gradually come to you closer and closer.

Today, we remember your peace. We ask what the true peace is. We tried many things. But, the only true peace can be found in you alone. Family is great, but it's not the source of our peace. Our possessions are great too, but they fade away like grass and flowers. Lord of all, teach us your wisdom to know our true identity. We are grass and flowers.

We pray for Gaza strip. That is the original place for the good news. The birth place of the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ. This should be the most peaceful and loving season, but it's opposite. There's war and hatred and fear. Come upon them. Shine your light. "Comfort, comfort O my people," you cry out. Let us become your hands and feet making differences in your name. Give us wisdom to discern and courage to follow you.

We pray for the family of our church members. There are something to celebrate together and something to pray together. Pour out your Holy Spirit upon each family, and draw them close to you. As they spend time together, let them help stand firm on their lives and let them help come back to your feet laying down all their burdens and help them be free in you.

We respect everyone's opinion, but we want to let them know the good news. Your love is already poured upon all people. Help all people know and accept your love.

Through this worship, we pray that you touch each person and speak your love, so we are able to live with you, with the confidence, and with your love.

We are yours. God, be our Master and Lord. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

Invitation to the offering: This Sunday in Advent celebrates God's gift of peace. When we look around the world, we see so many places where peace is missing, in neighborhoods and nations. But because we know the gift of God's peace, we can trust that our gifts will help restore true peace to souls and situations by the power of the Holy Spirit. Let us praise God and honour him with the Doxology (BOP #830.)

Doxology 830 & Offering prayer:

God of promise, God of peace, we offer our gifts in Jesus' name, for we know peace through his forgiveness and faithfulness. Bless our gifts and our lives. Help us share the peace with others, so we spread your peace and love to the whole world. Use us. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

Song for the Journey BOP 687 Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world. God is with us. That's our confidence. That's our peace. That is one thing makes us not empty. Here is your God. Have the promise of God in your life and live with him.

Benediction: May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, And the Love of God, And the intimate fellowship of the Holy Spirit, Be with us all, now and always. Amen.