

Scripture Lesson for Dec. 6, 2020 – Advent 2

Introduction to the Hebrew Lesson: Isaiah 40:1-11

In the second section of Isaiah, we hear the prophet's response to the plea for comfort for God's people. This text forms the powerful lyrics of the Tenor solo in Handel's "Messiah." Listen to words of comfort for us today:

Isaiah 40:1-11 Messages of Comfort: Prepare for God's Arrival

40 ¹⁻² "Comfort, oh comfort my people,"
says your God.

"Speak softly and tenderly to Jerusalem,
but also make it very clear
That she has served her sentence,
that her sin is taken care of—forgiven!
She's been punished enough and more than enough,
and now it's over and done with."

³⁻⁵ Thunder in the desert!
"Prepare for GOD's arrival!
Make the road straight and smooth,
a highway fit for our God.
Fill in the valleys,
level off the hills,
Smooth out the ruts,
clear out the rocks.
Then GOD's bright glory will shine
and everyone will see it.
Yes. Just as GOD has said."

⁶⁻⁸ A voice says, "Shout!"
I said, "What shall I shout?"

"These people are nothing but grass,
their love fragile as wildflowers.
The grass withers, the wildflowers fade,
if GOD so much as puffs on them.
Aren't these people just so much grass?"

True, the grass withers and the wildflowers fade,
but our God's Word stands firm and forever."

⁹⁻¹¹ Climb a high mountain, Zion.

You're the preacher of good news.

Raise your voice. Make it good and loud, Jerusalem.

You're the preacher of good news.

Speak loud and clear. Don't be timid!

Tell the cities of Judah,

"Look! Your God!"

Look at him! God, the Master, comes in power,
ready to go into action.

He is going to pay back his enemies
and reward those who have loved him.

Like a shepherd, he will care for his flock,
gathering the lambs in his arms,

Hugging them as he carries them,
leading the nursing ewes to good pasture.

Introduction: The Gospel Lesson Mark 1:1-8

The opening verses of the gospel of Mark are famous for John the Baptist's proclamation: "Prepare the way of the Lord." Listen to a reading from Mark's gospel for Advent:

Gospel Lesson: Mark 1:1-8 John the Baptizer

1 ¹⁻³ The good news of Jesus Christ—the Message!—begins here, following to the letter the scroll of the prophet Isaiah.

Watch closely: I'm sending my preacher ahead of you;

He'll make the road smooth for you.

Thunder in the desert!

Prepare for God's arrival!

Make the road smooth and straight!

⁴⁻⁶ John the Baptizer appeared in the wild, preaching a baptism of life-change that leads to forgiveness of sins. People thronged to him from Judea and

Jerusalem and, as they confessed their sins, were baptized by him in the Jordan River into a changed life. John wore a camel-hair habit, tied at the waist with a leather belt. He ate locusts and wild field honey.

⁷⁻⁸ As he preached he said, “The real action comes next: The star in this drama, to whom I’m a mere stagehand, will change your life. I’m baptizing you here in the river, turning your old life in for a kingdom life. His baptism—a holy baptism by the Holy Spirit—will change you from the inside out.”