

Theme: **A vision of peace is shown through the Light**

Text: Isaiah 40: 1 – 11

Season: 2nd Sunday in Advent

Date: December 10, 2017

Place: Shepherd of the Rockies LCMS, Bailey, CO

Grace and peace to you as you let the peace of God shine in your life, from God, our Father, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

“Comfort, Comfort ye My people,” speak ye peace, thus saith our God; “Comfort those who sit in darkness, morning beneath their sorrows load. Speak ye to Jerusalem of the peace that waits for them; Tell her that her sins I cover and her warfare now is over.” Those are the words of the song that we just sang. They are very appropriate for today, the second Sunday in Advent as we light the candle of Peace.

Have you found peace in this world? It can be very hard to find the peace of God that is beyond the world’s understanding, but it has come and is coming, that’s what this Sunday in Advent is all about. When you look at the world that we live in it doesn’t sound very peaceful, does it? There are murders, wars, lawsuits and all sorts of turmoil in our world and when all of these things are in our own life at the same time that we are asked to get ready for one of the biggest party and family time of the year, that makes it hard to find peace.

If you think that it is hard to find peace in our world, stop and think about the world that the prophet Isaiah was living in. The people of Jerusalem had just faced the Assyrians trying to capture and enslave them, but God saved them through King Hezekiah’s pray to Him and God sent the Assyrians back home and promised that they would be conquered by the Babylonians. If that wasn’t enough turmoil in their life, the prophet Isaiah through God also foretold them that the Babylonians would come to Jerusalem and they would destroy it and take all the people into captivity because they had forgotten God and His Word. Just after having the prophet Isaiah tell this bad news to the people of Israel God now tells Isaiah, **“Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. [2] Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.”** (Is 40:1-2)

Where do you find comfort, when everything in your life is going up in smoke and flames? That’s what many of the people in California are dealing with and that’s what happened to the people of Israel at the end of the prophet Isaiah’s life. How do you find comfort in the midst of bad things happening in your life? Comfort comes not in the things of this world but in the promises of God and how He is working in your life. Martin Luther said this about receiving comfort: “God will not

forsake His people. For they are God's people not according to the flesh but rather as people who are of a crushed and humble conscience and of a troubled heart and who call upon God in the day of trouble. God's people are those who need comfort because they have been wounded and terrified by the Law and they are an empty vessel capable of receiving comfort. Only those who are afflicted have comfort and are capable of it, because comfort means nothing unless there is a malady."

God speaks tenderly to us because we know that God is our Jerusalem, that is the foundation of our peace. We have seen the warfare in this world and know that we are lost because of our sins, so we cry to Him for help. God pardons our iniquities by the life, death and resurrection of His Only Son, Jesus Christ. As we cry for help God not only takes care of our problems but He also gives us more blessings than we can handle. Yes, Peace comes from the Lord as we look to Him and receive not what we deserve but the love, peace and hope that only God can give to us.

The comfort God gives to us comes through a calm tender voice assuring us that He is here with us all the way. God knew that the people of God would at times get to their wits end and He calmly assures us that He is here with us all the way, all times. God walks with us in the midst of our problems giving us the ability to find peace in the midst of turmoil, to find love in the midst of hatred, to find joy in the midst of sadness. That's what the prophet Isaiah was sent to tell us at this time of the year as we busily get ready for all that is planned in our lives.

A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. [4] Every 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. [5] And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken." (Is. 40:3-4)

Have you ever thought of your life as being a construction zone? Well that is what God is calling each of us to get prepared for, as He comes into our lives now to prepare us for the future. We live in the wilderness of this world. Now you have to admit that there are a lot of wild animals all around us and I'm not talking about lions, tigers and bears. I'm talking about the people in this world who have let the evil of this world take over their lives instead of the love, peace and joy that God can give to them. That's why God needs to build a HIGHWAY in our life.

Have you ever wondered where the word 'Highway' came from? To truly understand what God is telling us today you have to understand what the meaning the word 'Highway' was back then. In the time of Isaiah, the word 'Highway' meant a way to a higher spiritual place. The only highways

back in those times were the roads that were specially made for important people to get to their palace or their temple.

God is coming and it's time to start the construction for the highway to heaven in your life. Who will be the Construction Forman and worker for your life? God will be the one running the bulldozer to lift up you in those times when you are in those valleys. Those mountain and hill tops that you find in your life, well they will be bulldozed and blasted down so that life on the highway to heaven will only have a few curves but on the whole, it will be like going along I 70 over the mountains instead of on a 4-wheel drive road. Oh, you're not going to be doing all this construction work in your life. God will be doing it through His Word and Sacraments, to get you ready for when he comes again. That's what John the Baptist was sent to do, to get us ready for the prince of Peace to come, when Jesus Christ the first time. As John the Baptist, told the people repent and be baptized every one of you in preparation for the coming of the Lord. Well Repentance is the start of comfort and peace, for as you admit your sins and let the Lord God go to work through the Holy Spirit to do the construction work in your life, he prepares you for the coming of the Lord.

A voice says, "Cry!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field. [7] The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the Lord blows on it; surely the people are grass. [8] The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever." (Is. 40:6 – 8)

The word cry is an interesting word in this part of the message from God to us. Cry can mean an emotional sadness or an emotional joy that needs to be shared. There is both sadness and joy when a loved one is taken from this world who is a child of God. The sadness is found in the loss of physical companionship with them in this world. The great joy is found when you are reunited with them when Christ comes again to take us all to be with Him in the heavenly home that He has prepared for us. What a joyous celebration it will be when we are united for eternity with all those we have loved with God. But that means that we need to be prepared for the coming of the Lord now and there are so many who are not ready for the Coming of the Lord and that is worth crying to the Lord about and letting Him work through us to do some crying about it to others.

"Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!" [10] Behold, the Lord God comes with might, and His arm rules for Him; behold, His reward is with Him, and His recompense before Him. [11] He will tend His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs in His arms; He will carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those that are with young." (Isaiah 40:9-11)

Now these are words of comfort about the peace that God is going to give to us when He come again. They are also words of encouragement to motivate us to go to the work on spreading that Good News of all that God has done for us as He came down as a tiny baby some 2000 years ago to pardon all our sins and gives us peace and good will to all man. We stand at the top of the mountain of God and cry out with joy for all that God has done for us so that others will be prepared for the coming of the Lord. Yes, we lift up our voices with strength for we have found the foundation of the peace that's beyond the world's understanding. It comes from the God who Created us, redeemed us and is sanctifying us through His Word and Sacraments. Yes, we have peace and a need to share it with others.

Johann Olearius in his study of the Book of Isaiah got it right as he wrote the words to the Hymn that we just sang. *"Comfort, Comfort ye My people," speak ye peace, thus saith our God; "Comfort those who sit in darkness, morning beneath their sorrows load. Speak ye to Jerusalem of the peace that waits for them; Tell her that her sins I cover and her warfare now is over" "Yea, her sins our God will pardon, blotting out each dark misdeed; All that well deserved His anger He no more will see or heed. She hath suffered many a day, now her griefs have passed away; God will change her pining sadness into ever springing gladness" (Hymn 347 vs. 1 & 2)*

Yes, God has come to give us comfort, as He sent His Only Son into this world to free us from the war we are fighting against sin, death and the power of the devil, to give us a peace that is beyond this world's understanding. God is also coming to bring us to that perfect peace that He wants to give to us for all eternity. So, we need to let Him get us ready and prepare the hearts and lives of others for His coming again. That's the peace we have been given, the peace we are hoping for and the peace we want to share with others. So be at peace with God as you share the Good News with others. Amen.