



The Herald of Christmas Foretold

Isaiah 40:1-5 // November 29, 2020

Icebreaker

As you begin the discussion portion of your group, take a few minutes to break the ice and get everyone talking. Either use these questions or come up with your own.

1. How do you prepare for Christmas?
2. How is the 2020 Christmas season helping you take a different approach to how you prepare for Christmas?

Context

There are a couple of places in scripture where God is telling his people to prepare. One of those takes place in Isaiah 40. This happens to be one of the most encouraging scriptures in the Old Testament where God is expressing an encouraging heart for us. This is great because many of us could use some extra encouragement right about now.

Isaiah was an Old Testament prophet who had spent his whole life warning Israel that the nation of Assyria was getting stronger and that they were most likely going to attack. He told Israel that if they kept following God they would be safe, but if they persisted in being unfaithful they would lose their protection. Toward the end of Isaiah's life there is a scene in Isaiah 38 and 39 where the nation of Babylon comes to King Hezekiah and he shows them the entire nation of Israel. Hearing of this, Isaiah then goes before Hezekiah and asks him, "Where were those men from?" Hezekiah says that they are from Babylon and I showed them everything in our kingdom." Isaiah then sees in a vision that Israel and the temple are

going to fall. Through this, Babylon is going to enslave the Israelites and a whole generation will be nationless.

From Isaiah 40 onward Isaiah is addressing a future generation. God is giving Isaiah an encouraging word for a generation whose world has been turned upside down, who have been enslaved, and who have no known nation. Isaiah is saying, "Prepare the way! Because God is rescuing us!"

Passage

Out loud, read Isaiah 40:1-5

1 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.

3 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."

Discuss

1. Why is it important that the Christmas story starts with the coming of John the Baptist?
2. What does John the Baptist mean when he quotes Isaiah 40?

John replied in the word of Isaiah the prophet, I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, "Make straight the way for the Lord."

3. What can we do to prepare for the Lord spiritually?

*Empires come and go... but the word of God endures forever! **What does this mean to you?***

4. How can you practically set aside some time to spend time with God during Advent this year?
5. How can you rejoice in the joy of the Lord this Advent season?
6. What gifts has God given you? How can you use these gifts to serve the Lord this Advent season?
7. How can you turn off the noise of our culture and turn toward the word of God?
8. How can you be a source of joy for other people this Advent season? What are some practical things you can do to be a source of joy for others?
9. How can you point others to the Lord this Advent season?

Next Steps

At the end of your time together, allow yourself five minutes of silent contemplation. Think of it as your permission to do nothing but sit at Jesus' feet. Contemplate the following question:

What can you do to prepare the way for Christ to move into your life this season?

As you close your group time, end with prayer for one another and for those around you.

Family Component:

Be sure to check out our website for activities to do this week with your family.

Reading Plan:

For further reading look for the reading plan [here](#).