



HERE WITH US...TO GIVE US A NEW START!

ADVENT TWO

Day—“Here Is Your God!”

Read Isaiah 40:9. What is the good news, the glad tidings, which must be announced? Does your heart quicken when you hear the shout, “Here is your God!”? Do you remember the angel’s message to Joseph saying about Jesus: “They will call him Immanuel (*which means ‘God with us’*)”? As you read Isaiah 40:1-11 and Mark 1:1-8, take careful notice of everything the texts teach us about God. Did you see glimpses of God’s glory, power, and compassion? How will you respond to the announcement, “Here is your God!”? In prayer, prepare your heart.

Day 2—Words for the Ages

We must read Scripture in its historical context, but we must also ask what it says to us, today. In Isaiah 39, the prophet tells King Hezekiah that judgment and exile will come. Yet in Chapter 40, we see promises that, after judgment, there is comfort, hope, and good news for God’s people. But the promises are not all fulfilled in a moment. In 2 Chronicles 36:22-23, we learn that a remnant will return from exile, but in Isaiah 40:1-11, the prophet speaks words that echo far beyond the return. Mark speaks of Jesus’ coming, and we do see his glory (*Isaiah 40:5; John 1:14; 17:1-5; Hebrews 1:3*), but there is more to come. Read Titus 2:11-14 and pray.

Day 3—“Prepare the Way of the Lord!”

At this time of the year, we are often busy preparing for Christmas, but are we preparing our hearts for Jesus? In ancient days, if a king was coming, roads would be readied for his travel; Isaiah (40:3-5a) uses this image as he looks ahead to the revealing of God’s glory. Read Mark 1:1-8 (*parallel texts: Matthew 3; Luke 3; and John 1*). John the Baptist was divinely called to prepare the way for Jesus, but just what did the preparation entail? Why did he call people to repentance (*which is turning from sin to God*)? Is your heart a road which has been made ready for Jesus? Read Psalm 51:1-12,17; Luke 5:32; Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:10; and 1 John 1:8-9. Pray.

Day 4—“Comfort, Comfort My People”

We live in uncertain times; many are fearful; heartaches and hardships abound, so God’s words spoken through Isaiah are balm to flagging spirits. Centuries ago, God’s people in exile needed to hear words of comfort and hope, and so do we. Read Isaiah 40:1- 11 again; bask in the tender words, “Comfort my people,” relish the promises; hear the admonition, “do not be afraid.” Take a moment and pray you will see yourself cradled in God’s love (40:11). Consider that God’s words offer us tender comfort but also call us to offer it to others (*see 2 Corinthians 1:3-7*). Read Isaiah 40:9; thank the Lord for his comfort; ask him to whom you are to offer comfort.

Day 5—“The Word of Our God”

In Isaiah 40:1-11, we hear God speaking through the prophet Isaiah. In Mark 1:1-8, we see fulfillment of part of Isaiah’s prophecy. Do you trust God’s promises and believe God’s Word is true? If so, does your life reflect your trust in God’s faithfulness? Prayerfully read Psalm 18:30-31; 119:18; Isaiah 40:5-8; 55:8-11; Matthew 5:17-19; John 17:17; 2 Corinthians 1:20; 2 Timothy 3:16; and 2 Peter 1:19-21. Consider

memorizing one or more of these Scriptures. Spend time thanking the Lord for the Scriptures. Share what God is doing in your life with others.

Day 6—The Promise!

We've spoken of the promise of comfort, of the way being prepared for the Lord's glory to be revealed, of the enduring truth of God's Word, and of glad tidings, but there is yet more. What is the promise given in Mark 1:8? What does being baptized with the Holy Spirit mean? How did John's baptism prepare the people for the greater baptism which Jesus offers (*see Luke 5:32; 18:9-14; Romans 3:23; and 1 John 1:8*)? Why is it important that we realize our need for forgiveness and a Savior? Now read Ezekiel 36:25-27; John 1:12-13; 3:5-8; 7:37-39; Romans 8:14-17; and 2 Corinthians 5:17. Praise God for the gift of grace, and use Psalm 95:6-7 to guide your prayer.

Day 7—Beginnings

Rejoice in knowing you are sealed by the Spirit (*Ephesians 1:13-14*). Reflect on the messages of hope and promise in Isaiah 40:1-11 and Mark 1:1-8; hear the prophet proclaim, "Here is your God!" Ask the Spirit to help you hear God's words for you in these texts. Consider that neither ancient Israel nor we are defined by our pasts but rather by God's future for us. Prepare your heart to celebrate Christmas in light of Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension. Live with eager expectation that Jesus will come again. Sing/pray Watts' lyrics: "O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come; be Thou our guide while life shall last, and our eternal home."