

COMFORT FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

Read: Isaiah 40:1-11

Thursday, December 7, 2017

“Comfort, comfort my people! Says your God. Speak compassionately to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her compulsory service has ended, her penalty has been paid...” Isaiah 40:1-2a (CEB)

Oh the struggle!! I wrestle with myself to resist wonderful comfort foods. During holiday times, it's even worse. (I'm pretty sure God doesn't intend this as a consequence of my celebration of our Lord's birth!)

In the book of Isaiah, the first 39 chapters are written as a warning of the coming judgement and destruction, and a call for repentance to an exiled nation. Now, in Chapter 40, this is “counterbalanced by promises of deliverance, forgiveness, and renewal.” (*Wesley CEB Study Bible, p. 901*) While today's passage talks of hope for Israel, oh how much it speaks to us of the hope and comfort of our Savior Jesus Christ!

Verses 3-5 tell us that “The Lord's glory will appear” to straighten paths and level the way forward for Israel. Likewise, his glory gave us Jesus Christ to smooth out the rough places and lift us up out of the valleys. Verses 6-8 reveal that “our God's word will exist forever.” We celebrate Jesus' manifestation in the human form during this season, but we know that he is Alpha and Omega, from the beginning to the end: eternal. And verses 9-11 tell us to proclaim from the “high mountain” that the Lord our God is coming triumphant and with strength, “bringing his reward with him.” As the angels proclaimed to the Shepherds, so must we proclaim to the world the triumph and reward of Jesus' glorious birth!

Oh what comforting words we hear in this passage from Isaiah as we come to realize that this sweet, sinless baby was born to bring us deliverance, forgiveness, and renewal. Christ was born to pay our penalty and gather us as a shepherd into his arms and onto his lap!! This is TRUE comfort: not comfort food – COMFORTER JESUS!!

Prayer: Compassionate Father, we are comforted by your words that endure forever, just as the love, renewal, and hope of your eternal son, Jesus Christ, comforts us. We rejoice in the birth of our redeemer. He paid the penalty for our sins; therefore, we go forth and proclaim his forgiveness and comfort to the world. Amen.

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