

Devotion for Advent 4

Isaiah 40:1-8

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received double for all her sins.

A voice cries: In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

**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.**

And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together,
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

**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.**

The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the Lord blows on it; surely the people are grass.

The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen*

Isaiah 42:1-25

The Lord’s Servant

How did Jesus show Himself to be this special servant?
What would this special servant do for Israel and the world?
How did Israel as God’s servant, become blind and deaf?

Luke 1:57-80

John’s birth and job description

Why did God name the child rather than Zechariah?
How was John a sign of the Lord’s favour?
What would John do to prepare the way for the Lord’ coming?

“A Voice”

His given name from before birth was ‘John.’ He was a child of promise. The angel Gabriel appeared to Zechariah as he offered incense in the temple and told him, “*your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.*” Zechariah found the angel’s words too hard to believe. He asked for a sign to assure him that these things were true. The angel said, “*You will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words.*” Zechariah’s tongue was loosed on the eighth day of the child’s birth at his circumcision when he wrote on a tablet, “*His name is John.*”

His name was John, he was the son of Zechariah. He was called the baptizer, but when questioned by the religious leaders from Jerusalem, he simply called himself, “*A Voice.*” The angel who announced his birth was much more expansive, he both gave Zechariah the name ‘John’ and said, “*He will be great before the Lord.*” During his public ministry he was called “The Baptizer” and was so well known that people came from all over Judea and Galilee to hear him preach and to receive his baptism. Jesus gave him the highest praise, saying that no prophet greater than John had arisen. But John simply referred to himself as “*A Voice.*”

Like Jesus, John attracted a group of disciples. Jesus’ first disciples were from John’s disciples. When larger crowds began to gather around Jesus, John’s remaining disciples were upset, they felt jealous for him as his popularity waned. John wasn’t envious of Jesus, nor did he begrudge His popularity. John was “*a voice.*” He said, “*He must become greater and I must become lesser.*” John was great in the kingdom of God, not because of who he was, where he came from or because people were attracted to him. He was great, because he was a voice who proclaimed the coming of the Lord Jesus. Even after the attention of the crowd had turned from him, he remained

great, because he was a voice who proclaimed Jesus as the Christ and directed people to him. We know very little about John and what his life was like in the decades before he appeared in the wilderness. But we know what is most important; that he is the voice who identified Jesus as the Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

There is nothing greater in the kingdom of God than being a voice that proclaims Jesus as the Christ, the Lamb who takes away our sin. There is no greater word than the word of the Lord. When the echo of our words have faded into silence, the word of the Lord will continue to sound through the years. When our words fail and fall to the ground ineffective, the word of the Lord continues to accomplish what God desires and to achieve the purpose for which He sends it: To uplift the spirits of the downcast, to heal the broken-hearted, through the peace of forgiveness proclaimed in the name of Jesus. John had a name, but most importantly He was given a voice to proclaim the greatest name, the only name given under heaven by which we are saved, the name of Jesus. God bless us to listen to voices that speak His name. God bless us to raise our voices to speak Jesus' Name.

Joy to the World

1. Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her king; Let every heart prepare him room,
And heaven and nature sing, And heaven and nature sing, And heaven and heaven and nature sing.
2. Joy to the earth, the Saviour reigns! Let all their songs employ, While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains,
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.
3. No more let sin and sorrow grow, Nor thorns infest the ground; He comes to make his blessings flow,
Far as the curse is found, Far as the curse is found, far as, far as the curse is found.
4. He rules the world with truth and grace, And makes the nations prove, The glories of his righteousness,
And wonders of his love, And wonders of his love, And wonders, wonders of his love.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the many voices that have shared the good news of your love and salvation, by speaking to us of Jesus and His love. May your word always make our hearts its home. May our ears never tire of hearing voices proclaim the good news of Jesus' birth and telling the purpose for which He was born into the world. Open our lips that we may tell others the story of Christmas and your love for the world, in the giving of Jesus to be the Saviour of all people. In His Name. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, Forever and ever. Amen

The Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

Benediction Psalm 22:26

***"The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek Him shall praise the Lord!
May your hearts live forever!"***

Bible Knowledge Quiz

What prophet foretold the place of Jesus' birth?

John the Baptist served in the spirit and power of what prophet?

What prophet foretold the details of Jesus' suffering and death?

Answers to last weeks quiz

Not specified, but perhaps on the right hand of the altar. Luke 1:19

"Fear not." Luke 2:10

Jesus for Saviour. Immanuel for God is with us. Matthew 1:21-23