

**Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family****Title: Comfort, Comfort My People...****Lesson: Isaiah 40:1-11**

**40** *Comfort, comfort my people,  
says your God.*

**2** *Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,  
and proclaim to her  
that her hard service has been completed,  
that her sin has been paid for,  
that she has received from the LORD's hand  
double for all her sins.*

**3** *A voice of one calling:  
"In the wilderness prepare  
the way for the LORD<sup>[a]</sup>;  
make straight in the desert  
a highway for our God.<sup>[b]</sup>*

**4** *Every valley shall be raised up,  
every mountain and hill made low;  
the rough ground shall become level,  
the rugged places a plain.*

**5** *And the glory of the LORD will be revealed,  
and all people will see it together.  
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."*

**6** *A voice says, "Cry out."  
And I said, "What shall I cry?"  
"All people are like grass,  
and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field.*

**7** *The grass withers and the flowers fall,  
because the breath of the LORD blows on them.  
Surely the people are grass.*

**8** *The grass withers and the flowers fall,  
but the word of our God endures forever."*

**9** *You who bring good news to Zion,  
go up on a high mountain.  
You who bring good news to Jerusalem,<sup>[c]</sup>  
lift up your voice with a shout,  
lift it up, do not be afraid;  
say to the towns of Judah,  
"Here is your God!"*

*<sup>10</sup> See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power,  
and he rules with a mighty arm.*

*See, his reward is with him,  
and his recompense accompanies him.*

*<sup>11</sup> He tends his flock like a shepherd:  
He gathers the lambs in his arms  
and carries them close to his heart;  
he gently leads those that have young.*

Four years ago, my wife and I heard about a sale on baby car seats at a nearby mall one Sunday evening. After dinner, we rushed there, but as the mall was about to close, my only thought was that we needed to get there quickly. At a specific intersection, the traffic light turned yellow, and realizing it was too late to stop, I thought about quickly going through.

Unfortunately, there was a car waiting to turn left from the opposite lane when the light turned yellow. They tried to make the left turn right as the light changed from green to yellow. It was nighttime, and it seemed like they didn't see us at all. We ended up bumping into each other. While accidents are never good, looking back, the fortunate thing is that it wasn't on a freeway, and I had slowed down as much as possible before the collision.

When the cars crashed, everything felt really wrong. I got super scared and anxious. Inside the car, I couldn't hold back my tears because my wife, who was pregnant, was with me. A bunch of questions popped into my head all at once, like "Is the baby okay?", "Is my wife okay?", "Is the car okay?", "Is the other person okay?", and "What should I do about this accident?"

First thing, I checked on my wife and called 911. Then, I went outside to see how my car and the other one were doing. After getting the other driver's info, my wife and I rode in an ambulance to the hospital. I needed help, but I didn't know who to call. After thinking a lot, I told some friends from the church where I interned as a pastor. I didn't ask them to come to the hospital, but two of them came quickly.

They stayed with us until all the tests were done. Thankfully, after the tests, we learned that both my wife and the baby were okay. Just having them there for us during this tough time was really comforting.

A few months later, just a month before the baby was due, I was serving as an intern pastor at a church with a great team – four interns, including me, one

associate pastor, and one senior pastor. Even though my wife and I didn't ask, they wanted to organize a baby shower for us.

They learned about Korean culture and, along with the church members, arranged a baby shower, considering what we might need and like. They sent us many messages of blessing and congratulations. What I remember most is that they took the time to celebrate and bless us.

**(Slide 1)** Today, I want to talk about "comfort." What does comfort mean to you? Different people see and feel comfort in different ways. For some, it might be kind words or letters, for others, it could be a gift, and for some, it might be food. If you asked me about comfort, I'd say this: Comfort is being together, comfort is about presence.

In this sense, I believe our decision to brightly light the candles of our hearts instead of lighting the 2nd candle of Advent today, in support and comfort of our Palestinian Christian friends, was a good decision. They needed our comfort. They needed the comfort of knowing that we stand with them. Our solidarity will be a great source of comfort for them. Our presence will be a great strength for them. I want to express my gratitude to all of you who positively considered the invitation to stand with Palestinian Christians this Advent and Christmas, and I believe our presence will be helpful to them.

**(Slide 2)** Isaiah 40 begins like this: "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God." (1) God is comforting His people through the prophet Isaiah.

The people of Israel really needed God's comfort because they were in a tough situation – destroyed by Babylon, losing everything, and taken as captives. Life as captives was super hard, with forced labor and miserable days. Even in these tough times, the people of Israel kept seeking God. And God didn't abandon them; He heard their cries and spoke through the prophet Isaiah: "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God."

Friends, God's comfort is not like regular comfort. It not only brings peace but also takes away all the bitterness inside us. And God's comfort is real and concrete. It shows that God is stepping in to change difficult situations.

**(Slide 3)** Verse 2 says: "Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins."

Verse 2 shows that God actively helps the Israelites in response to their prayers. It means God will be with them to finish their tough times. In simple words, God will turn their life from being captives to a life of freedom by being with them.

Verse 11 says, "He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young."

God's comfort is compared to a good shepherd. A good shepherd gives up his life for the sheep, looks everywhere to find one lost lamb, holds the lamb close once found, and brings it back. That's how God takes care of us, like a good shepherd.

**(Slide 4)** The Advent message is that God, like a good shepherd, comes to save us. This is similar to the idea of Immanuel, where God is "with us."

God makes a way in the wilderness and desert to comfort us.

In the wilderness of our lives, God also makes a path to bring us comfort.

The message of God's comfort always carries the assurance that God is with us.

Therefore, welcoming Jesus as our Savior is the most significant event in our lives because it connects us to God's comfort.

God says to us: "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God." This message of comfort is for all of us. God comforts the troubled and remembers those in despair. God remembering us and providing comfort is the foundation of all hope. When your life is tough, when you are in confusion, when you don't know what to do, remember that God is with you.

Jesus loves me, this I know,  
for the Bible tells me so.  
Little ones to him belong;  
they are weak, but he is strong.  
Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!  
Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.

Amen.