

Advent Study 2

What has happened to or for you in the last week?

How has the year been for you?

Isaiah 40:1-11

1 Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. 2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. 3 A voice cries out: "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 Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall 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 grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. 7 The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. 8 The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever. 9 Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" 10 See, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. 11 He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

When you hear the term 'glory of God' what images or ideas go through your mind?

How is the glory of God revealed to you?

We hear in this passage of the Lord coming 'with might' but in the Christmas story there is Jesus lying in the manger as a baby. What is the might or power of God and how is it revealed in the world and in the life and ministry of Jesus?

Mark 1:1-8

1 The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. 2 As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; 3 the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'" 4 John the baptiser appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. 6 Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7 He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. 8 I have baptised you with water; but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit."

How do you understand your baptism or if you haven't been baptised what do you understand baptism to be about?

How might our baptism pave the way for our discipleship in following Jesus?

Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

1 LORD, you were favourable to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob. 2 You forgave the iniquity of your people; you pardoned all their sin. Selah 8 Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts. 9 Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land. 10 Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other. 11 Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky. 12 The LORD will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase. 13 Righteousness will go before him, and will make a path for his steps.

This is a psalm of hope. What hopes have you for the future and where does God fit in those hopes?

How do you see the power of God in Jesus working in your life?

“The Lord will give what is good?” (v. 12), but for many, goodness in their lives is not found in the increase of the yield of their land. There is a tension between seeing God as a God of power and provision and then dealing with the suffering in many of our lives. **How much do you think the psalms are a reflection of the deep desires of people' hearts or revelation of truth about who God is and what God is like?**

2 Peter 3:8-15a

8 But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. 9 The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed. 11 Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, 12 waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? 13 But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home. 14 Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; 15a and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation. So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him.

How is patience spoken of by the writer of 2 Peter in this passage?

Is suffering something just to be put up with as a part of life whilst we wait for Jesus to return and fix the world up?

How does the Christmas story help us to have peace and hope in the midst of our busy, but hurting world?