

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT  
DECEMBER 6, 2020

Isaiah 40.1-11

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.  
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.

A voice cries out:

"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.  
Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,  
and all people shall see it together,  
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

A voice says, "Cry out!"

And I said, "What shall I cry?"  
All people are like grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field.  
the grass withers, the flower fades,  
when the breath of the LORD blows upon it;  
The grass withers, the flower fades;  
but the word of our God will stand forever.  
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!"  
See, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him;  
his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.  
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.

*While we are waiting, come; while we are waiting, come.*

*Jesus, our Lord, Emmanuel, while we are waiting come.*

v 1, "While We Are Waiting, Come", (Hymn # 92. Glory To God Hymnal)

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Hungry...you gave me food  
Isaiah 40.1-11

Hunger is an indication that our body is out of balance, that we are uneven in our nourishment. The feeling of hunger is one of the most awesome aspects of the amazing vessel that is our body. The symptoms of hunger build from stages of growling stomachs to weakness to eventually perhaps a headache as our blood sugar level declines. Once again, the prophet known to us as Isaiah speaks about God's presence and presents, this week speaking for God rather than speaking for the people with God. This familiar poem begins with a word that is more than simply an expression, it is a manifestation: comfort. And food is one of the aspects of life, of living, in which we often find comfort.

The words that have come to us from a collection of prophets called Isaiah (there are at least three different "voices" within the collection of Isaiah, and the time frame spans centuries) this day, this week, speak of God desiring to comfort the people of Israel. The prophet preaches to the people sharing how God will comfort the people in extraordinary and ordinary ways, the latter including feeding, gathering, protecting, and leading them as a shepherd does with the sheep. This common image of the relationship of God with the people of Israel, that God is a shepherd, and the people are sheep, is most fondly and poetically portrayed in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm. The prophet desires that God comfort the people like a shepherd comforts the sheep. Jesus, in sharing the story in Matthew 25.31-46, equally defines being comforted as a giver and as a receiver of God's love.

The prophet wants the people to understand that God has commuted their sentence, that their penalty for unfaithfulness has been paid. The exile will be past tense. The future has the promise of the revelation of God's glory and the people of God are to participate in the process of revelation. They are to do so by preparing the way of and for the LORD. The road into the wilderness (out of exile, returning to Jerusalem) is to be one that is straight and level. Like with what we've experienced in our lifetimes with the building of the interstate highway system, unnecessary curves are eliminated the hills are reduced and the low spots are filled in.

In the give and take between the prophet and the people, a voice exhorts listeners to "Cry out!" "What shall I cry?" is the response and in assessing the resources, the prophet states how humans are fragile and perhaps feeble, illustrated by some of the most poetic words in all of scripture: "all people are like grass...the grass withers, the flower fades...". This reality is countered by an even greater truth: "the word of our God will stand forever." God will tend to the people: gathering, carrying, leading, and feeding them.

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Hungry...you gave me food

If we live with an abundance of food, hunger is most often a temporary experience. If we do not, it can be devastating. The statistics on hunger—just within the United States—are both humbling and mind-boggling. How can we understand what it means to truly hunger?  
Food insecurity defined:

lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy lifestyle

“Food Desert”

Urban area: more than one mile to a supermarket

Rural area: more than 10 miles to a supermarket

[www.feedingamerica.org](http://www.feedingamerica.org)

2019: 34 million people in poverty in the US, family of 4 living on less than \$25,000

2020: anticipated that as many as 50 million persons will face food insecurity

Children more likely than adults to face food insecurity

[www.ampleharvest.org](http://www.ampleharvest.org) (Hunger in America)

approximately 1 in 6 Americans experience food insecurity

2017 Depart of Agriculture statistic:

We throw away a pound of food/person/day, or 100 billion pounds per year

[www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org) (Bread For The World)

Ending hunger by 2030 adopted in 2015 by 193 countries, including the US

Every year 100 million people in the world join the middle class

Five challenges:

Nutrition: link nutritious food with health

Livelihoods: fair opportunities to make a living

Gender: empower women and girls

Fragility: cultivate peace and justice

Climate Change: resilience for an uncertain future

821 million people world-wide struggle with hunger every day, poverty a main cause

[www.concernusa.org](http://www.concernusa.org)

The world produces enough food to feed all 7.5 billion people

Yet 1 in 9 people go hungry each day

The level of hunger in the world has decreased by 27% since 2000

Midland and Midland County

Feeding America website: # of persons living with food insecurity (2016): 9210 (county)

Midlandcountyefpn.org: Midland County Emergency Food Pantry Network

What's useful: kid-friendly meals (Mac&Cheese), PB&J, cereal, pasta/pasta sauce, canned meat, canned fruit, granola bars, tuna, flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda

What is the Spirit inviting us to consider when it comes to opportunities regarding food?