

Isaiah 40:1-11

The Common English Bible

¹ Comfort, comfort my people! says your God. ² Speak compassionately to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her compulsory service has ended, that her penalty has been paid, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins! ³ A voice is crying out: "Clear the LORD's way in the desert! Make a level highway in the wilderness for our God! ⁴ Every valley will be raised up, and every mountain and hill will be flattened. Uneven ground will become level, and rough terrain a valley plain. ⁵ The LORD's glory will appear, and all humanity will see it together; the LORD's mouth has commanded it." ⁶ A voice was saying: "Call out!" And another said, "What should I call out?" All flesh is grass; all its loyalty is like the flowers of the field. ⁷ The grass dries up and the flower withers when the LORD's breath blows on it. Surely the people are grass. ⁸ The grass dries up; the flower withers, but our God's word will exist forever. ⁹ Go up on a high mountain, messenger Zion! Raise your voice and shout, messenger Jerusalem! Raise it; don't be afraid; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" ¹⁰ Here is the LORD God, coming with strength, with a triumphant arm, bringing his reward with him and his payment before him. ¹¹ Like a shepherd, God will tend the flock; he will gather lambs in his arms and lift them onto his lap. He will gently guide the nursing ewes.

Leader: The word of God for the people of God.

People: Thanks be to God.

Psalms 85:1-2, 8-13

The Common English Bible

¹ LORD, you've been kind to your land; you've changed Jacob's circumstances for the better.

²You've forgiven your people's wrongdoing; you've covered all their sins.

⁸ Let me hear what the LORD God says, because he speaks peace to his people and to his faithful ones. Don't let them return to foolish ways.

⁹God's salvation is very close to those who honor him so that his glory can live in our land.

¹⁰ Faithful love and truth have met; righteousness and peace have kissed.

¹¹Truth springs up from the ground; righteousness gazes down from heaven.

¹² Yes, the LORD gives what is good, and our land yields its produce.

¹³Righteousness walks before God, making a road for his steps.

Mark 1:1-8

The Common English Bible

¹The beginning of the good news about Jesus Christ, God's Son, ²happened just as it was written about in the prophecy of Isaiah:

Look, I am sending my messenger before you. He will prepare your way, ³a voice shouting in the wilderness: "Prepare the way for the Lord; make his paths straight."

⁴John the Baptist was in the wilderness calling for people to be baptized to show that they were changing their hearts and lives and wanted God to forgive their sins. ⁵Everyone in Judea and all the people of Jerusalem went out to the Jordan River and were being baptized by John as they confessed their sins. ⁶John wore clothes made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷He announced, "One stronger than I am is coming after me. I'm not even worthy to bend over and loosen the strap of his sandals. ⁸I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."