

PREPARING AT HOME

December 4-10, 2017

Focus reading: Isaiah 40:1–11 (<http://bible.oremus.org/?qI=377157758>).

Other lectionary readings: Psalm 85:1–2, 8–13; 2 Peter 3:8–15a; Mark 1:1–8

Theme: God's Way of Love Lasts Forever

Numerically the fortieth chapter of Isaiah comes after the thirty-ninth chapter; yet, they are actually 160 years apart and written in tones that are worlds apart! Most scholars agree that they were written by different people in completely different situations. Prior to chapter forty we read words of warning and judgment. If God's people do not change their ways, they will suffer judgment. Those words became reality when the Hebrew people were defeated by the Assyrian army and taken as exiles to Babylon. In chapter forty, however, the exile is over and the people are being allowed to go home; but their beloved homeland is in ruins. Rather than speak words of judgment or a well-deserved "I told you so," this chapter bears the voice of a compassionate God who offers consolation to a devastated people. Now is not the time to chastise but to console those who have been brought to their lowest point. It is also time to encourage the people to look toward the salvation that is at hand. This is a time for reconciliation, redemption, and hope, as demonstrated by the image of a massive construction project. Out of the rocky rubble God's people will build roads that lead home. All is not lost. God's love is unending! In the midst of visible destruction, God is doing a new thing. A new social order is at hand! As undeserving as they may be, God will protect them and care for them. They have suffered more than enough! It is time to move on in a restored relationship with a God who is both a tender and compassionate parent and an all-powerful ruler. God calls the people to prepare for this new order that God is bringing about!

MESSAGES OF HOPE AND COMFORT

Who do you know who needs messages of hope and comfort today? How can you share that message with them? Invite your child to make cards or to come up with their own ideas about how they might share God's comfort and hope with those who need to receive those gifts today.

ADVENT PREPARATIONS

During Advent, we wait and we prepare. If you are using an Advent wreath to help you do that, continue by lighting the second candle. Donating clothing and winter coats to those in need or contributing to the toy drive are other ways that your family can prepare for the new order and proclaim God's compassionate and hope to the world!

PRAYER

Tender and loving God,
So many times we disappoint you;
yet you forgive us and love us and encourage us to go on.
May we spread your message of hope to others
and prepare for the new things you are about to do!
Amen.

Prospect Presbyterian Church, Maplewood, NJ, www.prospectchurch.org

Rita Boyer, rita@prospectchurch.org