

A) Sermon Slides

Slide 1: Title
Hope for Comfort
Isaiah 40:1-11

Slide 2:
Isaiah 40:1-1 (ESV)
Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her
that her warfare is ended,
that her iniquity is pardoned,
that she has received from the LORD's hand
double for all her sins.

A voice cries:
"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.
And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all flesh shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

Slide 3:
A voice says, "Cry!"
And I said, "What shall I cry?"
All flesh is grass,
and all its beauty is like the flower of the field.
The grass withers, the flower fades
when the breath of the LORD blows on it;
surely the people are grass.
The grass withers, the flower fades,
but the word of our God will stand forever.
Go on up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good news;
lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of good news;
lift it up, fear not;
say to the cities of Judah,
"Behold your God!"
Behold, the Lord GOD comes with might,
and his arm rules for him;
behold, his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him.
He will tend his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms;
he will carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead those that are with young.

Slide 4:

"Adventus" = Coming

We are caught between "once upon a time" and "happily ever after."

Slide 5:

I. Subjugating Majesty

II. Permanent Glory

III. Embarrassing Grace

Slide 6:

Majesty

The temptation and the lie of autonomy

Slide 7:

When bad things happen is it because:

1) I really can't control my own life?

2) Because I tried to control my own life?

Slide 8:

IMAGE (manger)

Slide 9:

"We have become so accustomed to the idea of divine love and of God's coming at Christmas that we no longer feel the shiver of fear that God's coming should arouse in us. We are indifferent to the message, taking only the pleasant and agreeable out of it and forgetting the serious aspect, that the God of the world draws near to the people of our little earth and lays claim to us. The coming of God is truly not only glad tidings, but first of all frightening news for everyone who has a conscience."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Slide 10:

Glory

"Our 'constancy' is like the flower of the field."

"constancy" = he-sed

Slide 11:

"I decided that i would treat them as if they were beloved elderly aunties, the kind who did embarrassing things at the beach, like roll their stockings into tube around their ankles, but whom I was proud of because they were so great in every real and important way."

Ann Lamont

Slide 12:

"They made a fatal mistake. They look at each other with these amused looks - the kind I must have given flabby older women in swimsuits 30 years ago. And it gave me exactly two thoughts. One was not even a thought exactly, I just looked directly back at the four of them and heard the phantom clock playing in the background of their lives, "tick, tock...tick, tock." The other was the realization that i knew their secret: that they didn't think they were okay. They were already in the hyper self-consciousness of the American teenage girl, and this meant they were doomed. The smallest one probably thought she was too short, the tallest one too tall. The most beautiful one had no chest, the buxom one had thin, wispy hair. I felt deep compassion for them."

Ann Lamont

Slide 13:

Grace

"She has received from the Lord 'double' for all her sins."

Job 11:6 (NIV)

...and disclose to you the secrets of wisdom,
for true wisdom has "two sides."

Know this: God has even forgotten some of your sin.

"double" = two sides...one obvious, one hidden

Slide 14:

Illustration (Angels with Dirty Faces)

B) Group Discussion

1. Read Isaiah 40:1-11. Does this text bring comfort to you? Why or why not? What questions do you have of this text?
2. Maybe spend a few minutes sharing the joy and pain that the Christmas season brings into our lives as preparation for Advent.
3. Comfort comes through discomfort. It's on the other side of hardship. Can you explain this? Give examples in your own life?
 1. (Would chapter 40 be comforting to a people who were "on top of the world?")
4. Majesty! Power! A God who controls everything. He rules and reigns!
 1. Why would you and I not find this desirable, and what would have to happen to make it so?
 2. Is personal autonomy realistic? Is it desirable for a Christian?
5. Glory! Permanence! Weight! A God who is what He is forever. Actual value.
 1. Why would you and I not find this desirable? What happens to us in the midst of this kind of glory? (Isaiah 40:6-8) So what must happen for us to desire that experience with Him and about ourselves?
6. Grace! We are free! We get off without paying our own debt!
 1. Why would you and I not find this desirable? What would need to happen to us in order for us to truly accept it?
7. God says that His judgment has "two-sides" in verse 2. The judgment is "kephel" meaning "double-overed" meaning an obvious side, and something hidden beneath.
 1. We know now what the hidden side was (Jesus birth and death). Why was this soooooo very important that this was "hidden" from plain sight?
 1. (Hint: Don't think humans, think of the spiritual realm)
8. Prayer and praise