

**Make Room-2**  
**“Make Room For Others”**  
**Isaiah 40:3-5 (NIV)**

Hey Newsong!

I want to take a second and welcome our first time guests and those who are worshiping with us online!

We're in week two of our Advent series called "Make Room." We learned last week that the word Advent means "coming."

By the way counting today we all have 15 days until Christmas Day...Now your reaction to that depends on what you're anticipating, what you're hoping for...

I was reminded of the wonder and excitement leading up to Christmas this week, as Pastor Cyndie and I got a chance to see our grandchildren for a couple of days...

My daughter and her husband are doing elf on a shelf with them...And it's so cute because every morning...Sarai (who's 4) and Legend (who's 2) get up and immediately go looking for this tiny elf who's hanging out somewhere in the house.

When they find him, (his name is Keagan) he has a new note for them...telling them about his day and how many days are left until Christmas...

The look of excitement and hope and wonder on their faces is so precious, as they anticipate getting their Christmas gifts!

The Advent season reminds us of the wonder surrounding the greatest gift that has ever been given...The gift of Jesus. The wonder of the incarnation...God comes to us...Immanuel...God with us!

The hope and anticipation of God rescuing us, freeing us, saving us...

I said last week that when Jesus came into the world hope came into the world...So last week we said that we have to make room for Jesus because no matter what we're facing, or what we're going through, He's still Immanuel...He's still God with us!

Now I want to let you know that I didn't finish my elf on a shelf story with my grandkids...After Daddy read the note...Sarai began to rat out her brother...telling all the things he did the day before which means that she should get more presents...

As funny as this was to watch, and see how my daughter and her husband were able to redirect Sarai...

Watching all of this play out reminded me that we have a tendency to make everything about us...

I'm making room for Jesus...

I'm going to experience peace, joy, and love...but what about those around us?

On this second Sunday in Advent we're going to see how Advent reminds us to make room for others...

In our text this morning the Prophet Isaiah is encouraging Israel that although they had been experiencing God's judgment...and they were in a dark place... although they were surrounded by war and famine...a time of comfort was coming...

Now this means two things...

**God's people needed to be comforted...**

Sometimes when you're going through it...you just need a comforting word...a hopeful word...They needed comfort

But it also means that...

**God had comfort to give them!**

God is full of compassion and comfort...in fact, The Apostle Paul says it like this...

***3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, -2 Corinthians 1:3 (NIV)***

Isaiah speaks a comforting word from God...I know you're going through it right now...but a time is when these battles you're facing will be over...a time is coming when the sin you struggle with will be dealt with, and you will receive the grace and mercy of God!

Because He is the God of all comfort...

In the midst of this wilderness experience that God's people were in Isaiah says...

***3 A voice of one calling: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the LORD[a]; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.[b]4 Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain.***

Even though God's people were in exile, God is comforting them with hope...You're not going to be in this place forever...

Isaiah, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is using a word picture of a highway to make his point...

a road needs to be built...a straight path has to be made...to prepare the way for the Lord...so that they can get home...

Now if there's one thing we know about living here in NY it's that getting anywhere is not easy...

We have Five boroughs...around 300 square miles consisting of about 52 highways and parkways with over 2,000 bridges...and 665 miles of subway

With roughly 8.4 million people trying to get to work...get to school...get to the game...get to church...taking the bus, taking the train, taking a cab, riding your bike...it doesn't matter...everything always seems to be under construction, overcrowded and delayed...

So what do we have to do to prepare the way?  
We've got to get things ready the night before...  
We've got to leave at least an hour early to be on time...And it usually takes at least an hour for us to get home during the week...

Preparation becomes extremely important...

Now to Isaiah's original hearers, God was saying you need to prepare not just for a physical journey back home...

But they had to prepare their hearts spiritually... They had to turn from their sin and idolatry...and turn back to God

In other words...Hey listen up the Lord is coming so you've got to make room for Him...you've got to get rid of the clutter in your hearts...because God's going to fix it...

***5 And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all people will see it together.***

***For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”-Isaiah 40:3-5 (NIV)***

Notice that God is going to reveal His glory and prepare their hearts not just to Israel, but to all people!



Now if you've been reading the Bible for a while you know that this prophecy finds its fulfillment in the New Testament, in the person and ministry of John the Baptist...

The Angel Gabriel appeared to John's father Zechariah and said, Hey Zach...you and your wife have been praying all of these years for a baby...well it's about to happen...and God wants you to name him John...

***17 And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”-Luke 1:17 (NIV)***

Of course this miracle takes place...Zechariah's wife Elizabeth gets pregnant in her old age...and at John's circumcision, Zechariah prophesies about his son

**76 And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, 77 to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, 78 because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven 79 to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.”-Luke 1:76-79 (NIV)**

Luke continues with his testimony in chapter 3

**3 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene— 2 during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness.**

**3 He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 4 As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: “A voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. 5 Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. 6 And all people will see God’s salvation.’”-Luke 3:1-6 (NIV)**

So we know because of God’s Word that Jesus is the coming King and John the Baptist’s ministry was to prepare the way...

That God was going to make good on His promise to bring comfort and joy not just to His people but to all people, and they had to make room...they had to prepare the way...

So here we are in the Year of our Lord 2023...  
It's been 2,023 years since the birth of  
Jesus...and we know that He could come back  
at any moment...

As I said last week, Advent isn't just about us  
looking back and remembering Jesus' first  
coming...

It's about us looking forward to His second  
coming with wonder, hope and joy! We the  
church should be preparing the way while we're  
watching for His return!

You know what Jesus is doing for us right now?  
He's making room for us...

***14 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You  
believe in God[a]; believe also in me. 2 My  
Father's house has many rooms; if that were  
not so, would I have told you that I am going  
there to prepare a place for you?"***

***3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. -John 14:2-3 (NIV)***

So if Jesus is making room for us...We should be following His example and making room for others...But how do we do that?

By being His church...Being His hands and His feet...Being a light in the darkness...

When asked which commandment was the greatest...

***37 Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”-Matthew 22:37-40 (NIV)***

Advent reminds me that God doesn't just love me...He loves my neighbor...He loves those around us...

Jesus made room for everyone...the poor, the sick, the forgotten, the religious, the prideful, the outcast, He even made room for His haters...

So how do we imitate Jesus and make room for others this Christmas season?

**Be a friend to people who are FAR from God**

Jesus was accused of a lot of things, but one of the things that got Him into trouble was that He was accused of being a friend of sinners...

See the religious people of Jesus' day were stuck in this mindset that said, you can join us but you've got to do this, this, this, this this, this, this, this, this...and then you can join us...

So while the religious leaders were looking down on those far from God...Jesus was reaching out to them...

He loved them, He had compassion on them, He served them, He healed them, He freed them, He forgave them...He was a friend to them...

Religion says change and you can join us...  
The message of Jesus is join Me and you'll change!

The Church isn't supposed to be an exclusive club...where only certain people are welcome...

The Church is supposed to be inclusive...It should be a place where it's okay to not be okay, but it's not okay to stay that way...

There's nobody in this room who is perfect...

There's nobody in this room who has it altogether...We are all broken in some way and Jesus is putting us back together one step at a time!

We're not perfect, but we are forgiven...  
We're not where we want to be, but by God's grace we're not where we used to be!

Jesus is transforming us!  
Come on, who's got a testimony?  
Jesus has saved me...  
Jesus healed me...  
Jesus delivered me...  
Jesus picked me up, turned me around, placed my feet on solid ground!

We are weird to the world...and that's okay...when you follow Jesus, you're supposed to look and act different from the world...

But light is attractive in the dark...



Light is helpful when you can't see...

## **Tom "I want what you've got"**

As Christians we're called to live in the world and yet not be of the world...but that doesn't mean that we shouldn't reach out to those who are far away from God!

Think about all of the people in your life who do not know Jesus! How could you be a friend to them?

### **Start by being nice**

Shovel their driveway...

Offer to car pool...

Give them the good parking spot...

Pick them up something from the store...

Invite them to watch the game...

Give them a Christmas Card...

Invite them to our Christmas Eve service...

Invite them to our New Years Eve service...

Think about what you would like someone else to do for you, and do that!

### **Have an everyday conversation**

And don't you do all of the talking! Take time to listen to them, listen to their doubts, their fears, their worries...

### **Make room in your schedule**

I know we're all busy...

But take time to go out for coffee...

Take time to go out to lunch...

And make sure it's your treat!

Find common ground and start there...

Obviously you shouldn't do anything that would compromise your walk with God...but it's not a sin to be a friend of sinners!

You don't have to have a three-point sermon ready for them...just be yourself and let the Holy Spirit lead and guide your conversations!

All of us have at least one physical neighbor. If you're already friends with the neighbor next to you...hello go to the next one...

The point is every single one of us should have at least one person in our life who is far away from God, and you consider each other to be a friend!

And pray for them...

Let them know that you're praying for them...

It starts with us being a friend...but eventually you will get a chance to speak into that person's life so the next thing we do to make room for others is...

**Speak the truth in LOVE**

Jesus was a friend of sinners, but when the time was right He told them the truth...

When He was hanging out at Matthews house with all of Matthew's friends who were far from God He said

***31 ...“It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. 32 I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”-Luke 5:31-32 (NIV)***

A friend is someone who is willing to help in a time of need...But a friend is also someone who will warn in a time of danger...Jesus was saying hey you guys are sick in your sin, but I've got the cure...He called them to repent

In Ephesians 4 Paul tells us to speak the truth in love, and the context of that scripture is when we see others who are living their life contrary to God's Word we lovingly say something to them...

Otherwise are you really a friend?

To quote Andy Mineo's song "friends"

*"If you knew I was bugging and you stayed quiet... You said I was right when I ain't right Well that's not what friends do"*

This is why we need each other in the church... This is why we need accountability... this is why I have accountability...

We allow others to speak into our life... because we care about each other, we want the best for each other... that's what friends do!

And that's what we need to do to our friends that are far away from God...

This past week in our Bible reading plan we were in the book of Jude and he puts it like this...

**22-23 Go easy on those who hesitate in the faith. Go after those who take the wrong way. Be tender with sinners, but not soft on sin. The sin itself stinks to high heaven. Jude-22-23 (MSG)**

Be tender with sinners, but not soft on sin...  
I like that...that's what it means to speak the truth in love...

Let's not fool ourselves...  
Anything that goes against God's Word is sin...  
And sin separates us from God...

So a good friend tells us when we're going the wrong way...

## **Planes, Trains, And Automobiles**

Advent reminds us to make room for others

We can do that by being a friend to those who are far away from God...

We can do that by being willing to speak the truth in love...

We make room for others by...

Sharing the **GOOD NEWS**

Before the birth of Jesus...Back in Isaiah's day  
The good news was that God was coming...They had to make room for His arrival...

Now today the good news is Jesus has come...

***16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.***

***17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.-John 3:16-17 (NIV)***

Again, see the inclusiveness of the Gospel?  
God so loved the world that He gave His one  
and only Son...

Jesus is the savior of the world...  
God made room for us by sending His Son to  
us...

Jesus lived a sinless life, one that you and I  
could never live...and then He took our place  
on the cross and died for our sin...He paid the  
price for us...

Then on the third day He rose again...defeating  
sin, defeating death, defeating hell, and now we  
can experience God's grace and mercy...

Now we can experience God's forgiveness...

That's the good news...That's the gospel...and  
notice what Jesus says...He says it's available  
to "whoever believes"



So we can make room for others by sharing the good news about Jesus...not in an annoying way...but in a loving way...in a Spirit-led way... Like a true friend would... With love, with compassion, with humility...

You can share that it's okay to not be okay that Jesus will meet them right where they are...He is the risen King of the universe...

He's full of mercy and love... And just like in Isaiah's day, He's offering a comforting word... "Come Home"

So as we close this morning, I want you to ask the Holy Spirit who in your life you can make room for...

Now I want you to commit to praying for that person...

Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a way to bless them...Ask Him to lead and guide your conversation...to help you listen more and talk less...Ask Him to help you love them like Jesus loves them...

I want to talk to you for a moment if you're here or you're watching online and you know that you're far away from God...

The free gift of salvation is still being offered to you...there's still room at the cross for you...God doesn't want you to perish...that word perish means "to face the wrath of God"

You see one day, Jesus will return and that's going to be an amazing day for all who have placed their trust in Jesus, but it's going to be a horrible day for those who have rejected Him...

Make room in your heart for Him right now!

**Altar Time**

