

ADVENT DEVOTIONALS WEEK 2 (12/6-12/12/20)

This week's devotionals will come from the prescribed lectionary for the week, which includes the following scriptures:

- Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13
- Isaiah 40:1-11
- Mark 1:1-8
- 2 Peter 3:8-15a

We will focus on specific verses within these scriptures each day, not the whole texts, so you may want to read the entirety of these passages sometime this week for the full effect.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2020 "HAVE A LITTLE FAITH PART 1"

By Rev. Joanna Dietz

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." ~ Isaiah 40:1-5 (NRSV)

"The house was awash with lights, the inside brimming with Christmas cheer, but my spirit was not in it." I've seen this pain so many times as a clergyperson. We desire to skip over Advent – the season of waiting – and go straight to the glitz and glamour. But skipping to the end of the season is like skipping to the end of a book. You may know what's going to happen, but you miss all the fun of falling into relationship with the characters and entering into their world. We don't want to worry about the hard parts of longing and waiting for what is to come. And we certainly don't want to reflect on where we have been – especially not this year!

In the middle of a pandemic, we are experiencing this season between Thanksgiving and Christmas in a radically different way. Parties have slowed to nonexistent. Family gatherings are done virtually without the fellowship around table. And for some, the table has an empty place setting for someone who is no longer with us.

Still, the author of Isaiah calls out to us with comfort. An ending will come to suffering, to isolation, to the darkest of nights. Our job is to prepare the way. These lines are so amazing.

"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."

Imagine this! The earth will balance itself out to be made a flat surface – a place of equity for all creation! God calls us to have faith that God is with us in the darkest places. All we need do is have faith, continue to connect with God and our other sources of support. Have faith God is with us in the darkness. And if you are not in that darkness, how can you reach out to someone today who might feel alone, isolated, forgotten?

Prayer: Redefining God, give us space to breathe in the valley of darkness. Lift us up to see together your kingdom come here on earth because we had the faith to continue serving you and one another. Amen.

Thought for the Day: How can we reach out to one another even in the midst of isolation to remind one another that we are not alone?