

## Comfort

### Isaiah 40:1-15

#### Three views of Christmas

##### Commercial/Material

- Buying things
- Retail sales
- **Sweet Baby Jesus got 3 gifts, and that's what you're getting also!**
- Gift giving can be as unto the Lord—doing unto others can be like doing unto Christ.

##### Spiritual

- Birth of Christ
- Advent readings
- Church services
- Yet, following Christ cannot be reduced to being merely personal salvation. The whole world is changed by Christ's birth.

##### Social (highly spiritual)

- Birth of Christ is the birth of the Kingdom of God (Heaven).
- Revolutionary vision of better things to come
- **Prepare the way of the Lord**
  - Valleys exalted
  - Mountains brought low
  - Crooked places made straight
  - Rough places made smooth
- **Mark 6:30-44**
  - Story tell v. 30-36
  - v. 37—**You give them something to eat!**
  - Story tell v. 38-44

##### True Christmas story

- We should tell the Christmas story to the world.
- **It is better to BE the Christmas story to the world!**
- **We are the body of Christ.**
- **James 2:14-17**
  - Raise valleys, lower mountains, straighten the crooked & make smooth the rough places...
  - Serve at the food pantry
  - Go on a mission trip with us to help orphans and those caught in the web of human trafficking
  - Help our children or youth ministries
  - Give money to preach the Gospel in India
  - Go to Chicago and pass out food in gang-infested areas
  - Adopt a family for Christmas
  - Develop a nursing home ministry
  - Drive a Wednesday or Sunday morning bus route
  - Become a mentor

### Isaiah 40:28-31

- Wait—to bind together by twisting
- Renew strength

- Anointed, lamp is supplied with fresh oil
- Strength to labor, strength to wrestle, strength to resist, strength to bear
- Sitting and doing nothing will wear you out!
- Wings like eagles
  - Soar strongly and swiftly upward
  - Rise above the fray
  - Set face into the wind and rise above
- Run and not grow weary
- Walk and not faint

## Discussion Guide

Primary Text: Isaiah 40

Advent Confessions:

The Lamb of God comes with pardon, giving hope to all creation. In hope and confidence, then, as Your children, God, we arrive at Advent season to wait with honest longings in our hearts. It is with true hope that we pray:

God of all creation, we wait for the fullness of You, for the intimacy of You. Forgive us, God, for the times we have lived against You, for acting or not acting, in ignorance, and spoiling the abundance You give.

Lord God,

We praise you for sending light into this world.

We confess that we live as though the light had never defeated darkness.

We confess that we ignore the Savior you sent to be among us and to live in us.

We've kept the birth of your Son confined to the Christmas season and do not yearn for his coming each moment in our waiting hearts.

Forgive us for not opening our eyes to Jesus.

Prepare us for His return.

Help us rejoice in the light,

so that your grace can illuminate

the darkened places of our hearts. Amen.

Questions:

- The Jewish people had to deeply understand how to depend on God. How can Advent help Christians learn to live this way?
- What needs to die and make room for Christ this Advent?