

Sermon Manuscript

Week 1 – Anticipation: Preparing for the King

Isaiah 40:1–11

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Introduction – The Season of Holy Anticipation

There's a kind of anticipation that fills a home when a baby is about to be born. The nursery gets painted. Tiny clothes are folded. Bags get packed. Calendars get cleared. Everyone is waiting—not with dread, not with fear, but with joyful expectation. Something wonderful is about to happen. Someone precious is about to arrive.

That is the spirit of Advent. Advent is the season when God invites His people to prepare, to watch, to wait—not aimlessly, but expectantly. The message of Advent is not, “Maybe God will show up,” but, “The King *is* coming. Prepare the way.”

Our text today is Isaiah 40—a message spoken to a weary people, waiting for God to rescue them. And through this text, God speaks to us today as we begin this Advent season of holy anticipation. As we look back at Jesus' first coming, while looking forward to His second coming.

1. The Longing for Comfort (Isaiah 40:1–2)

Isaiah speaks to Israel during or anticipating their exile—when life felt like one long night. The people were discouraged. Their sin had caught up with them. Their life was marked by pain, fear, and uncertainty. But then God breaks the silence:

“Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.”

Notice the double word—comfort, comfort. God doesn't whisper it; He repeats it. He doesn't begin with condemnation; He begins with compassion. His first word to His weary people is comfort.

And isn't that exactly what we need?

We live in a world that feels exiled—exiled from peace, from stability, from hope.

We are surrounded by conflict, anxiety, loneliness, and loss.

Advent gives us permission to feel that longing.

Advent invites us to name the ache inside us—not to wallow in it, but to direct it toward God.

“Come, Lord Jesus,” we pray.

“Speak comfort to our hearts.”

“Make things right again.”

Advent begins in longing—because longing turns our hearts toward the One who alone can satisfy them.

2. The Voice in the Wilderness (Isaiah 40:3–5)

Isaiah continues:

“A voice cries: In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord...”

In the ancient world, when a king was coming to visit, workers went ahead to smooth the road, fill the potholes, and clear the debris. The path had to be ready for the king’s arrival.

In Isaiah’s day, this “voice” is a prophetic call.

In the New Testament, this voice takes on flesh—John the Baptist.

Luke 1 tells us of his miraculous birth. Before John ever spoke, God declared what his purpose would be: to prepare the people for the coming of the Lord. John was the one crying out, “Make straight the paths. Repent. Turn your hearts toward God. The King is coming!”

This is also the message of Malachi 3:

God sends His messenger to “prepare the way,” to refine His people, to align their hearts with His coming.

And this is the message of Advent for us.

Get ready.

Make room.

Clear away the things that clutter the heart.

Not through fear or frantic activity, but through repentance—through turning again to the One who comes to save.

Advent readiness is not about doing more; it’s about expecting more.

More of God’s work.

More of His grace.

More of His presence in your life.

3. The Glory of the King Revealed (Isaiah 40:9–11)

Then Isaiah lifts our eyes to the horizon, and we see Him—the King Himself.

“Say to the cities of Judah, ‘Behold your God!’”

What kind of King is coming?

Isaiah tells us two things that almost seem like opposites:

He is powerful.

“His arm rules for Him.”

He comes with authority, with strength, with the ability to accomplish everything He has promised.

He is gentle.

“He will gather the lambs in His arms... and gently lead those that are with young.”

He is a shepherd who knows your weakness, your fears, your wounds—and He carries you close to His heart.

Psalms 24 declares, “Lift up your heads... that the King of glory may come in!”

This is the King we welcome during Advent—
the King whose glory is not just majesty but mercy,
not only strength but tenderness,
not just power but peace.

This King truly comes.

He comes in the manger of Bethlehem.

He comes in the Word and Sacraments.

He will come again in glory to make all things new.

Application – Living in Advent Anticipation

So how do we live this out?

Advent begins in **holy longing**.

We look honestly at our weary world—and at our weary hearts—and cry out, “Come, Lord Jesus!”
But holy longing isn’t despair. It’s longing **with hope**. It’s letting the ache push us toward Christ.

What does holy longing look like?

- **A person praying with honesty.**

A parent lies awake at night, worried about their child’s future. Instead of stuffing down their anxiety or pretending everything is fine, they whisper, “Lord, come. Bring peace into our home. Work in my child’s heart.”

- **A believer grieving at Christmas.**

Someone sets out a stocking for a family member who died this year. The empty place hurts—but instead of shutting down, they pray, “Come, Lord Jesus. Heal my grief. Give me hope in the resurrection.”

- **Someone looking at the news without losing heart.**

Another school shooting, another war, another injustice. They feel the ache but instead of growing numb, they turn the news off and say, “Lord, let Your kingdom come. Use me to be a peacemaker.”

- **Confessing sin instead of pretending we have it together.**

A husband admits, “I’ve been short-tempered. Lord, change me.”

A teen says, “I’ve wandered. Bring me back.”

The longing becomes a doorway for grace.

Holy longing means:

“I refuse to be numb. My heart aches for redemption — and that longing drives me to Christ.”

Advent moves us to **readiness**.

Readiness not born of fear, but of hope.

Readiness rooted in the promise that God keeps His word.

Readiness isn't frantic activity. It isn't buying more decorations or doing more programs.

Readiness is clearing space — spiritually, relationally, practically — for Jesus to work.

What does readiness look like?

- **Turning off the noise.**

Someone swaps five minutes of scrolling for five minutes of Scripture or quiet prayer.

Not because they “should,” but because they want to make room for the King.

- **Reconciling a relationship.**

A person sends the hard text during Advent:

“Can we talk? I don't want this distance between us.”

Preparing the way for the Lord often means preparing the way for forgiveness.

- **Slowing down.**

A family chooses one fewer holiday event so they can eat dinner together and light the Advent wreath.

They aren't “doing less”—they are preparing more deeply.

- **Helping someone in need.**

A member of the congregation visits a shut-in, shovels a neighbor's driveway, or buys groceries for a struggling family.

Jesus said, “As you did it to the least of these... you did it to Me.”

- **Repentance that leads to change.**

Someone looks at their spending, habits, or priorities and says,

“Lord, straighten the crooked places in my life. Make my heart ready for You.”

Readiness is the quiet spiritual posture that says,

“If You come right now, You will find me listening and welcoming You.”

And Advent fills us with **joyful expectation**.

The King is coming — not as a small possibility, but as a divine certainty.

Joyful expectation means we live as if the promises of God are already unfolding.

What does joyful expectation look like?

- **A child running to the window during the first snowfall.**

Not because the snow is spectacular, but because they know the season has truly begun.

Advent expectation is like that — delight in every sign of God's presence.

- **A believer celebrating small graces.**

A prayer answered.

A relationship restored.

A moment of peace in a stressful week.

They say, “Look! God is working. His kingdom is drawing near.”

- **A family practicing hope-filled traditions.**

Lighting candles, reading Scripture, singing hymns — not as empty ritual, but as reminders:

“The King came once. He comes to us now. And He will come again.”

- **Someone facing uncertainty without fear.**

A person awaiting test results or navigating financial stress says,

“Christ has not forgotten me. He will shepherd me.”

Joyful expectation doesn’t pretend it’s easy — it chooses hope because Christ is faithful.

- **Living generously because you trust God’s promises.**

Giving freely, serving others, opening your home — not because you have extra margin, but because you trust the One who provides.

Joyful expectation says,

“I’m not just waiting for Christ — I’m expecting Him.”

Like families counting down to the arrival of a child, we count the days of Advent in holy anticipation— because this King truly comes, and His arrival changes everything.

He comes to comfort.

He comes to forgive.

He comes to restore.

He comes to reign.

He comes for you.

Conclusion

As we enter this Advent season, may God awaken in us that holy longing, shape in us that joyful readiness, and fill us with hope as we prepare for the King who is coming.

In the name of Jesus. Amen.