



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

December 10, 2023
2nd Sunday of Advent

Pastor James Enderle

First Lesson/Sermon Text: [Isaiah 40:1-11](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 85 W

Second Lesson: [2 Peter 3:8-14](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Mark 1:1-8](#)

The King Shall Come: Prepare to Meet Him Comfort and Construction

1. _____ upon _____ in the _____
2. _____ always has an _____
3. _____ follows _____
4. **Bring** _____

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ, our Lord:

If you have traveled, maybe you've been to a place that doesn't have the seasons like we have and they kind of have just one temperature all the time. Here people enjoy the different seasons, but sometimes, instead of the four seasons, people talk about us having two seasons. You've heard of that, that we have winter and construction. You're used to that, right? As soon as the snow starts to melt and there isn't any more ice, what do you see? You see the construction cones and roads closed and detours. As much as construction is frustrating, when you have a nice new road out here on County Road W (remember what that was like a year ago, before the construction?), it wasn't very fun. I think they've redone Morrison Road and a bunch of other roads around here. Before that construction, it was pretty rough. It's not very fun to drive on and it causes lots of problems, but once that construction is done, it's much different.

As God is going to speak to us today in His Word, we see some different connections between **Comfort** (the comfort that God wants to give us) **and Construction** of God coming to us and speaking to us about things that need to be done. We are going to see what that means for the Israelites, during the time of Isaiah, but also for us today, and then once that construction is done, what it means for us as we go out.

We heard a little bit about Isaiah last week. Isaiah is an interesting prophet because there has been some destruction, some of the nation taken away into captivity, but not all of them. So Isaiah is prophesying and he is talking about some things that have happened and about what will happen. As Isaiah writes, he is talking to them about something that is going to happen even though the difficulty hasn't all come yet. They are living in hard times. The Northern Kingdom has been captured and the Southern Kingdom is going to fall soon. So as we look at these words, it is going to be interesting as Isaiah writes to them about all the things that they are facing.

These things are coming, though, because the people had turned away. You can say that the life of the people was in pretty good chaos because they weren't turning to God. They weren't following His ways. They weren't putting Him first. They were following all sorts of other gods, all sorts of different ways where God had told them "Don't do this. Follow My ways and put Me first." It's easy to do that, isn't it?

It's easy to be overwhelmed with the things of this world, especially during this busy season. Is there anything quite as busy as December? Holidays are great, but thing after thing, this holiday party, that holiday party—how many times do you celebrate Christmas in December, maybe a few times? In that chaos, it's easy to get down. It's easy to struggle with what is important. It's easy to get frustrated. So we have a lot of chaos in our life. We have doubts. We have worries. We have wonders of all the things that are happening. Then we have the sins that we have committed and the sorrow that has happened, and we see trouble. There is chaos and suffering and it's because we live in this sinful world, but we know that we are afflicted by death and pain. So what do we do? How do we handle that chaos?

As Isaiah writes to the Israelites, and as he writes to us, he says these words: ***Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.*** What comfort there is! In fact, for them there is this *comfort upon comfort in the chaos*. If you're hearing these words and you know that God is not happy and there is trouble coming, how uplifting, how important it is to hear of the comfort that God is bringing, not just once. It's important to see that God is bringing that comfort and He brings it not just in a small way but notice that it's double! It's more than we could ever deserve. So we see how God brings us that comfort. In the midst of our chaos, we need to hear of His love, His mercy, His forgiveness, and that He is with us.

But remember that we said that this comfort is coming and they still haven't had that destruction. They still have been taken away into captivity. So what important lesson does this teach us? You might be in some suffering right now. You might be in some sorrow or some sadness, something that you feel God is slow in taking away. We heard that in 2 Peter, like "God, when are you going to fix this?" We see in the world today

that loneliness is an epidemic and the sadness and the suicide rates are huge! So God brings us what we need to hear. He brings us comfort and He says to us that the *suffering always has an end*. He will not let us suffer for an endless amount of time. Even the difficulties that we are feeling; maybe a sickness, a disease; maybe for a way that is fixed; maybe it is depression; maybe it's something that will never leave us in this life, but God will heal it in the end. When He takes us to heaven, we know that suffering will end. We know that God has a purpose and God has a plan, but we cry out sometimes and we say "Why?!" or "How?!" "God, what is the plan?" But He gives us this comfort and He tells us our suffering will end. It's not always easy though.

He talks then about what the Messenger will do. We know that this is prophesied and fulfilled in John the Baptist, but notice what he says. ***A voice of one calling: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain."*** That is that "construction," that leveling, that windy road becoming straight. What is he talking about? He is talking about our hearts that need repentance, that needs to see that we fall short, that we turn away, that we struggle with God's Law and His ways and that we're NOT God and we can't save ourselves. So we need our God.

Why is this important? He says why when he says ***"All people are like grass, and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the Lord blows on them. Surely the people are grass."*** When we aren't repenting and we don't understand our failings, we trust in ourselves. We say "I can do it!" But what does he say? We are grass. We see the fields, the harvest, and things come and go, but what thing blows away and is here and gone is there but the flowers in the fields. That's what we are and how strong we are on our own, without God, so we need repentance (that construction) to bring us comfort. *Comfort follows that construction* because we need to learn to not trust in ourselves, to not make it all about ourselves. If we are sorrowful or we are struggling with sadness, where do we turn? The world says "Just trust in yourself more. Believe in yourself." But what do I see inside? My failings, my struggles, and I'm just like a flower or grass that withers away, so I need to turn to something great, something stronger. I need to turn to our God; our God who reigns and will be with us and who comes and brings us comfort. It says: ***See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power, and he rules with a mighty arm."*** That's who we turn to. I can confess my sins and know daily I fall short but I can turn to my Lord, who forgives me and loves me and brings me comfort, not just a little comfort but double it says. We have received double from the Lord's hand.

When Christ suffered, He didn't suffer for just a few of your sins, He didn't suffer for just a few people, He suffered for the sins of the world, and that includes YOU. There is no sin too good, too great, or too big that God didn't die for. There is no doubt in your

heart that God knows He is greater than and that He can be with you and strengthen you. So we don't have to fear. We can have joy and peace and comfort.

What can that lead us to do, as we trust in Jesus throughout this chaos and difficulty in the world? Notice what it says. After it talks about how the grass withers and the flowers fade, what stands forever? **"...the word of our God endures forever."** We have something that is amazing and all the other things fall short. But God and His Word stand forever. It doesn't change and His love for you, that comfort doesn't change. So what do we do? **"You who bring good news to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good news to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid..."** So what can you do? *Bring good news*: share that joy and that comfort and peace that you have.

Those words that we talk about so often, peace and comfort, do you think there are people in the world that are searching for that peace and comfort? Isn't that really what everyone is searching for and where do they look for it—in money, in sex, in all the wrong places. But you have it! You have true peace and comfort, even when times are unknown and when things are chaotic. We can go out into the world and share that good news that even when things have been difficult, even when things happen the way we don't want it, even when there is suffering and difficulty, we can have a joy and a peace that lasts forever because our God loves us and has forgiven all of our sins. But it's hard to show that sometimes.

Do you speak with joy? Do you show joy? I'll be the first to say, sometimes it's hard. With the chaos, with the difficulty, life changes all the time, and this struggle and this different thing; it's easy to talk about the negatives. It's easy to be focused on the difficulties. But what a joy it is for us to speak with joy and peace and love about what God is doing in our lives. Even when things are hard, even when things aren't going our way, can we have joy? Can we have a true comfort of knowing that God is with us and has loved us and forgiven us and will keep us to the end? Can we have that come out in our words, in our actions, in all sorts of conversations and point people, not to how horrible life is but to all the good things that God has done for you? It's not just unbelievers that need to hear that. It's your fellow Christians that also need to hear of God's love and His forgiveness and how He is with you and how He is with them.

Comfort—it's not just something you have. It's something you can give. In your dangers, in your suffering, you have comfort, so you can comfort others. What a joy it is that God brings us His Word. He brings us to repentance to prepare for a King that is coming. Not only a King but a Shepherd who loves and guides and cares for you, to give you true peace and comfort. Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [\(Philippians 4:7\)](#) Amen.