

CELTIC ADVENT: WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR?

November 23, 2025

Dain Smith, Discipleship Minister



Isaiah 40:3-5; 9-11

3 A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. 4 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. 5 Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken." ...

9 Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" 10 See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. 11 He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in

his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

REFLECT & DISCUSS

1. Read the passage(s) slowly. Then take a deep breath and read it again. What word, phrase, or image stands out to you?
2. In this passage Isaiah depicts the wilderness becoming a highway, and mountains being flattened and valleys being raised up. This imagery results in "the glory of the Lord" being "revealed." This suggests that there are mountains and valleys that can hinder people from seeing God and knowing God. Has there ever been a moment in your life where it felt like you were separated from God, and there were mountains that prohibited you from seeing God or understanding God's work in the world? Or, has there been a time in your life where you were in a valley of despair? How did you get through it?
3. In this passage there is a dramatic change of reality: mountains being flattened, valleys being raised, rough places being made smooth. This terraforming (or

South Elkhorn Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

4343 Harrodsburg Road, Lexington KY 40513

859-223-1433 southelkhorncc.org

earth changing) action of God can be a bit idealistic, but it can also reveal that sometimes real tangible things need to change in the world for people to recognize who God is and what God's kingdom is about. What are the barriers we face in our modern world that prohibit us from recognizing the goodness of God, and what do we need to change for more people to see and experience God's love?

4. In Isaiah 40:10 it describes God's reign as coming "with might" and God's right arm "rules." These are typical kingly symbols. Then in verse 11 it describes God as feeding people, gathering people, carrying people, and leading the people. Which of these actions most resonates with you and why? What does it reveal to you about God's kingdom?
5. In modern Christian discourse, the "good news" is often simplified into, "Jesus died for your sins so that when you die you can go to heaven." Twice in Isaiah 40:9 it tells people to be heralds of good news, and to say "here is your God." In Isaiah, the good news is actually understanding who God is, not some formula about eternal destination. Thus, what about your understanding of God do you think is good news, and how would you describe God to

someone in a way that is good news?

6. Isaiah 40:3 is quoted in all 4 Gospels (Matt 3:3; Mark 1:2-4; Luke 3:4-6; John 1:23), and the term often translated "gospel" or "good news" also appears in 40:9. That being said, this passage is important for understanding the ministry of Jesus. What similarities do you notice between this passage and with what you know about Jesus's ministry?
7. This passage depicts God as a shepherd caring for lambs and guiding sheep. This image is also applied to Jesus in the Gospels. Do you find the image of Jesus and God being shepherds comforting?