

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

This unit of seven sessions in Isaiah is perfect to use at Christmastime. Consider using the first five sessions during Advent leading up to Christmas and the final two sessions (The Servant Songs) following Christmas. All are appropriate anytime during the year.

Receiving Good News from God
Isaiah 40:1-11

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a series of sessions needs to have access to the "Introduction" article found at the beginning of each series (Bible Teaching #....). The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

Select three persons to begin this session by reading the scripture found at the end of the session. It is already divided for three readers. Copy the reading for each of the three readers. If possible, select and contact the readers during the week so that they can practice the reading – especially if they are not experienced readers. In a small church, a "trade off" is always needed between selecting three good readers or having younger or less experienced readers participate to help everyone feel more included in the group. Decide what is most needed.

The same reading will be done at the conclusion of the “Worship Time” part of the service. You will want to talk to the Worship Time leader to decide if you wish to use the same people both times or use two groups of three.

Bible Study Leader:

Worship Time Leader:

Please read the above comments for the Gathering Time Leader. Then discuss the planning of the reading with the Gathering Time Leader. Doing the three person reading will add much to the sense of the group feeling the power of that scripture and the satisfaction of having studied and applied it. Be sure to make enough copies of the reading for each participant.

Music Sources:

“Grace Alone”, *The Worship Hymnal*, #112. CCLI# 2335524

“The Wonder of It All”, *The Worship Hymnal*, #108. CCLI#15733

“Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus”, *The Worship Hymnal*, #176. CCLI not available.

“Joy Has Dawned”, *The Worship Hymnal*, #186. CCLI# 4408246

“Child in the Manger”, *The Worship Hymnal*, #189. CCLI# 91094

1

Copy this section for the Gathering Time leader.

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)

Receiving Good News from God

Focal Text

Isaiah 40:1-11

Main Idea

A genuine celebration of Christmas calls for receiving and responding to God's good news.

Question to Explore

Is there good news today?

Gathering together:

Choose from the Music Sources listed. If you are using the lesson in anticipation of the Christmas season, choose Christmas songs. There are many appropriate Christmas songs you may use.

First thoughts:

Use the three person scripture reading of Isaiah 40:1-11 as an introduction to today's study. Suggestions for the reading are given at the end of the **Worship Time** guide. Participants need to have the material ahead of time and work to read with great meaning.

Closing the Gathering Time:

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

Receiving Good News from God

Focal Text

Isaiah 40:1-11

Background Text

Isaiah 40:1-11

Main Idea

A genuine celebration of Christmas calls for receiving and responding to God's good news.

Question to Explore

Is there good news today?

Teaching Aim

To lead the class to describe God's good news and respond to it with their lives

Introduction to your personal study:

Take note of the Main Idea, the Question to Explore, and the Teaching Aim listed above. What a wonderful idea! What a perfect question! What an important aim toward which you can lead your group! To recall an old saying in English, “How could one ask for anything more?” This session ought to bring out the fullest enthusiasm in you as you share the riches of this beautiful passage from God’s Word.

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Introduction**” article found at the beginning of this series of Bible Study and Worship sessions (Bible Teaching #.....). The person who downloaded this session should have that material for you, as well.

The scripture which we will examine today belongs to the section written to the Jews in Babylon who will soon be returning to Jerusalem. Cyrus of Persia has become strong enough to overcome the Babylonian Empire in 538 B.C. Jerusalem had fallen in 586 B.C. to the Babylonians so for at least 48 years some of the people of Judah had been in captivity in Babylon. However, for years before the fall of Jerusalem the fate of Judah had been one of fighting off stronger kingdoms.

When the reader turns from Isaiah 39 to Isaiah 40, he covers a time span of over a century and a half. It is almost as if he had closed one book and opened another. For that reason many commentators feel that joint authorship occurred in which chapters 40-66 were written not by the eighth-century Isaiah, but by one or more of his disciples living in the late exilic and early postexilic period. To feel thus is not to diminish the importance of Isaiah's ministry. In fact, it is to elevate it for what teacher, minister or prophet would not wish his disciples to continue true to the teachings he/she had inculcated in them.

Chapters 40-55 are treated as a separate division within chapters 40-66 because they reflect a Babylonian setting and deal with events which happened before 538 B.C. whereas chapters 56-66 are set in postexilic Palestine in the period after 538 B.C.

Focusing on the Meaning:

The text for today is found in Isaiah 40: 1-11. It is a familiar text with rich meaning. All of it falls under the concept "Behold Your God".

1 "Comfort, comfort my people says your God.

2 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.

3 A voice of one calling: "In the desert prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God.

4 Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill shall be made low; the rough ground shall become level, and rugged places a plain.

5 And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken".

***6 A voice says, "Cry out"
And I said, "What shall I cry?"***

***7 "All men are like grass,
And all their glory is like the flowers of the field.***

The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever.”

***8You who bring good tidings to Zion,
Go up on a high mountain.***

***9You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem,
Lift up your voice with a shout,
10Lift it up, do not be afraid;
Say to the towns of Judah,
‘Here is your God!’***

***11See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power, and his arm rules for him.
See, his reward is with him,
And his recompense accompanies him.***

***12He tends his flock like a shepherd;
He gathers the lambs in his arms
And carries them close to his heart;
He gently leads those who have young.”***

(1) The forgiveness of God (40:1-2)

In an earlier worship lesson we examined Isaiah’s response to God’s call “Who shall I send and who will go for me?” (Isaiah 6:8). In today’s lesson we see either Isaiah or one of his disciples responding again to God’s command.

“Comfort my people”, says your God. This is a very personal command to the prophets who had spent many years warning the people of the consequences of their sin. Now they are to speak tenderly to Jerusalem and share in her sorrow. This is the only time in Scripture that the prophets are commanded to comfort; ordinarily they are sent not to comfort but to condemn. Elsewhere in these chapters whenever Israel is comforted it is God himself who gives the comfort.” (The Broadman Bible Commentary, Vol. 5, p. 297).

Comfort here is not an easy or cheap grace which glosses over the sins of the past. Judah is comforted with the assurance that her iniquity has been pardoned and that she has received from the Lord’s hand double for all of her sins. She is free to return home.

Speak tenderly here would indicate that the prophet is to speak to the heart of the people. He is to speak comfort. Comfort is a word that causes many mental pictures to come to our mind. We may feel comfort in the sanctuary of our home. It may involve a favourite place, a roaring fire, a certain food or a good bed. But the English word “comfort” is a combination of the Latin words “cum-fortis” or “with strength” which indicates an active and tough phenomenon.

(See <http://www.calvincrc.org/sermons/2004/isaiah40LD1.html> – a sermon “The Last Comfort” by Scott Hoezee.)

Comfort came to the people of the exile because they had been forgiven of the sins which lead them into exile. Isaiah's message is always that God is in control. It was not a human-controlled event which led them into captivity. It is not the power of Cyrus of Persia which will result in their eventual return to their home. God has orchestrated these events.

(2) The Glory of God (40:3-5)

These verses have become so much a part of our understanding of the Messianic prophecies that we may fail to see the meaning which they had for the exiles in their reality.

The desert which separated the Israelites from their home in Judah was 500 miles if one traveled directly across the desert. This was impossible. Most caravans made a long detour following the Euphrates River to the ancient city of Haran before turning southward. This route was at least 700 miles.

The words of the prophet are "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. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

What a comfort these words must have been to those who may have remembered the long sad journey from Jerusalem to Babylonian years before. They were older now and had perhaps become accustomed to life in Babylon. They knew their homes and livelihoods in Jerusalem had been destroyed. Their beloved temple was gone. After all, to what were they going home?

But the prophet promises that the road they will take is actually the way of the Lord – a highway in the desert for God Himself. They will not be making the journey alone. The hilly rough areas and the uneven ground will be passable because they will be traveling with the Lord Himself.

That these words are a prophesy of the coming Messiah we can see from our vantage point in history. We rejoice in them and thrill to the hope they bring. But for the Babylonian exile, they carried an immediate message of encouragement. God is with us now. Immanuel – God with us – is not just a future event.

(3) The Word of God (40: 6-8)

6A voice says, "Cry!"

And I said, "What shall I cry?"

All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field.

7 The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it;

Surely the people are grass.

***8The grass withers, the flower fades;
But the word of our God will stand for ever.”***

The people in exile had know despair. They had realized the brevity of their own lives and had undoubtedly suffered the loss of many loved ones. Would it be different in Jerusalem? Is there anything that endures?

The prophet replies,

“The word of our God will stand for ever.”

It is true that man is unreliable and frail, but God is not. The permanence of the word of the Lord is to be the prophet's hope and the hope of the people. God will do as he says he will do. Many years later, we are comforted with this same truth. We work hard to make the world a better place yet wars continue, natural disasters and human error wipe out thousands of lives. We must believe that God is in control if we are to have any peace in our daily lives.

(4) The strength and gentleness of God (40:9-11)

***9You who bring good tidings to Zion,
Go up on a high mountain.
You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem,
Lift up your voice with a shout,
Lift it up, do not be afraid;
Say to the towns of Judah,
“Here is your God!”***

***10See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power,
And his arm rules for him.
See, his reward is with him,
And his recompense accompanies him.***

***11He tends his flock like a shepherd:
He gathers the lambs in his arms
And carries them close to his heart;
He gently leads those that have young.***

These verses are the trumpet call to victory for the returning exiles. On a high mountain they are to lift their voices and proclaim, ***“Behold your God”***. In the dark days of the exile, the people must have wondered how God's chosen people could have ended up enslaved. How was the promise to Abraham to be fulfilled? Hebrew history was built on the promise of Yahweh to protect the Hebrews and use them for his purposes in human history. Their defeat and the loss of land promised to them by Yahweh seemed

to imply that their faith in this promise was misplaced. But the Jews in Babylon understood the disaster in terms of their own impurity. They had betrayed Yahweh and allowed the Mosaic laws to become corrupt. The hope became that the Israelites would be gathered together again, their society and religion purified and the unified Davidic kingdom be re-established. Verses 9-11 of chapter 40 speak to this hope. The Lord God comes with his might.

However, the might of the Lord is not the only picture given. ***“He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arms, he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.”*** This image returns us to verses 1-2 where the prophet hears God saying, ***“Comfort, comfort my people. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem.”***

These are words of comfort indeed for people of the exile and for people who struggle in today’s world. Like a shepherd gently leads his flock and carries in his arms the lambs who are weak, God will gently lead and care for his people. Whatever the future holds in Jerusalem, it will be a blessed future with the shepherd in charge. This was good news for a people who had been in exile for many years.

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

You are to help your students understand that the forgiveness of God, the glory of God, the Word of God, and the strength and tenderness of God which was demonstrated to the returning exiles is available to us today.

For Personal Reflection:

What have I learned from this study?

What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?

What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

Receiving Good News from God

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.

Focal Text

Isaiah 40:1-11

Background Text

Isaiah 40:1-11

Main Idea

A genuine celebration of Christmas calls for receiving and responding to God's good news.

Question to Explore

Is there good news today?

Teaching Aim

To lead the class to describe God's good news and respond to it with their lives.

Connect with Life:

Begin by sharing this commentary from the writer with the group:

The writer of our session tells this story about herself: Like most people the family of the writer has had particular times of struggle and pain. One of those occurred in the year 2000 when we left our home in Canada to spend a year in the United States doing the work assigned to us by our organization. In May of 2000, my sister died of a stroke at age 48 leaving behind a 15 year old daughter. Later in the year we were staying with my elderly parents when my 90 year old father died peacefully. We had a number of speaking engagements in the next few months but our primary concern was helping my

mother adjust to these two great losses. In April of 2001 my mother's only sibling died after suffering several years with Alzheimer's disease. We helped my mother transition very reluctantly to live with my brother. This meant closing the family home in the small town that had been for all of us "home away from home". Other difficult issues needed to be resolved and by the end of spring I longed to be home in Canada. Though winter is long in Canada, summer is lovely. The intense green of the meadows and fields; the beauty of the majestic mountains, the wonder of wildlife all made me long for home. When we were able to make the trip back to Alberta in July, I gloried in the beauty around me. Buffeted by the events of a very hard year, my soul healed in the comfort of home – my house, my friends, my mountains. God had sustained us through a difficult year; now he was giving us the peace of being at home.

The Israelites must have felt those sensations multiplied many times. They had lived so long in Babylon that it had become home even with its foreign gods and alien ways. Now the prayer they must have prayed many times was to be answered – they were going home to Jerusalem. But they were going home to a Jerusalem that was devastated – to a life they had all but forgotten. Only God's comfort could sustain them. Only God's guiding could lead them safely home.

Guide the Study:

Review information about the exile in Babylon. Discuss Isaiah's prophecy for their exile. Remember that not all people had turned away from God. Daniel and his friends were some who stayed true to God and served him even in Babylon (Daniel 6:6-23).

Share this: The Jews were apparently allowed to live together and even to worship together. Their life in exile could have been more arduous.

Urge a discussion: Why they would have wanted to return to Jerusalem.

Use a whiteboard or large sheet of paper to outline the lesson for the day.

- (1) The forgiveness of God (40:1-2)
- (2) The glory of God (40:3-5)
- (3) The Word of God (40:6-8)
- (4) The strength and gentleness of God (40:9-11)

(Outline used in *The Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol. 5, pp. 297-299)

Read this: The lesson topic is "Receiving Good News from God". It is important that we emphasize throughout our study the good news they are receiving. They are to return home. They will be accompanied on that journey by God himself. The word of God is

eternal; the promise of God made to Abraham and to his descendants still is valid. God will lead them through every circumstance.

Ask for ideas about the meaning of the word “comfort”. In verse 1-2 what is God telling the prophet to do for the people? (cum fortis – with strength)

Urge ideas on this question: How are comfort and forgiveness related in this passage?

Encourage dialog in the group with this question: What are concrete ways in which you experience the glory of God?

Now ask: How do you think the returning exiles were to experience his glory?

Seek an answer: How does the prophet describe the human experience?

Add: How different is today’s human experience from that of the people in exile?

Request an answer: Why do we cling to the assurance that the Word of God endures?

Ask people to share particular passages from the Word of God which enable them to continue when life is very difficult.

Continue: How do strength and gentleness go together to give us an understanding of the nature of God?

Emphasize again the good news contained in this passage.

Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

Youth!!! Take Ten

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

Receiving Good News from God **Isaiah 40:1-11**

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

Use a computer to research the distance from Babylon to Jerusalem. What route would the exiles have taken to return home? Estimate how long it would have taken to move families and some belongings largely on foot.

Where was Babylon located? What modern day city is located in that area?

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***Receiving Good News from God***
Isaiah 40:1-11**Beginning the Service:**

Consider singing "Grace Alone" or another hymn about God's grace to us through the gift of his Son, Jesus.

Offering:**Praying for the World:**

Give thanks for the opportunities the Father is providing workers in the Arabian Gulf to meet and befriend university students and staff. Ask Him to guide them as they relate to these new friends, revealing the best ways to share with them the most important things!

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

Prepare the Way of the Lord
Mark 1: 1-8

1 The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

2 It is written in Isaiah the prophet: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way" (See Malachi 3:1)

**3 “a voice calling of one calling in the desert,
‘Prepare the way for the Lord,
Make straight paths for him.’”**

4 And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

5 The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

6 John wore clothing made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.

7 And this was his message: “After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie.

8 I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

Introduction:

Our topic for study today has been “Receiving Good News from God.” In our Bible study time we focused on the good news that Isaiah had for the people of Judah who were in exile in Babylon.

After many long years – at least 48 for some, but as much as 70 for others, the time for their return home was coming. The powerful Babylonian Empire with the riches and beauty of the city of Babylon was to be overcome by Cyrus of Persia. These areas are modern day Iraq and Iran and tensions between the countries still exist. As a result of the overtaking of Babylon, Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to their homeland; they were, of course, still under the rule of Cyrus, but they were at least allowed to return home.

The words of Isaiah in Chapter 40:1-11 are a promise from God himself that He will comfort them, guide them and protect them on their return and in the days and years to come.

Now many years have passed and the Jews continue their wait for a Messiah. Luke writes, of course, after Jesus’ birth and death and he gives us a glimpse into the hope and hunger of the Jewish people. John, who was an earthly cousin to Jesus, was also chosen by God to announce the presence and ministry of Jesus. He did so by echoing the message of Isaiah to repent. Once more in their long history, the people have forgotten that worship of God was intensely personal and responsibility to God was an individual matter. Formalized rituals carried out by the priests were substituted for the inner repentance and seeking for God that had always made the Jewish faith unique from any other.

John the Baptizer calls for a return to that faith and his message is heard gladly. ***“The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him.”*** Some went because he was the most interesting entertainment available; others went because they had heard about him and wanted to be in on the latest happenings; some went because they longed to be free of the heavy load of sin they carried. How like today’s society. We can see every one of those people represented in the churches and reality shows of today’s culture.

John’s appearance was strange. He wore clothing made of camel’s hair and his diet was locusts and wild honey. But his message was riveting. ***“After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”***

John’s reference to the untying of sandals may have referred to the custom of washing the feet of a guest who had traveled dusty roads to arrive at the home of his host. John is saying that if Jesus came to his house, he would not be worthy even to do this menial task for him – in fact, he would not be worthy to even unbuckle his sandals.

This was a hard message for the proud people of Jerusalem and the Judean countryside. However poor they may have been they were still God’s chosen people. How could someone be above them to the extent that they would be unworthy to untie his sandals? What kind of a person was this?

This is a hard message for us as well. Jesus may be our loving Saviour, our good friend, our brother, our Shepherd, but when it comes down to it, is he better than we are? Really, really better? Can we even begin to understand that He is Lord of the Universe as well as my best friend?

A sweet three year old in the life of the author can melt one’s heart with the words, “Grandmommy, you’re my best friend”. What does he understand by that? He likes for Grandmommy to come and play and he especially likes it on the days that Grandmommy comes to play with just him. His brothers and sister are away at school and mommy is teaching a class and Grandmommy and Jared just play. Jared doesn’t understand that Grandmommy has a special place in his life held by no one else and that she would do most anything in her power to keep him safe and secure. He is just glad that Grandmommy is his best friend.

We are sometimes that way about our relationship to Jesus. We do want him for our best friend. We like to walk with him and talk with him. We especially like for him to listen to what we say about our needs and wants. We sometimes listen to what he says to us. But we have little understanding of what John was saying to the people of Judea and Jerusalem. “This man, my own cousin, is so different from me; he is so uniquely God that I am unworthy to untie his sandals. The salvation that He brings goes beyond your words of repentance and my words of forgiveness. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and your life will never be the same.”

No wonder Isaiah had said, many years before,

***“Prepare the way for the Lord,
Make straight paths for him.”***

Like Isaiah and John, this is our advent cry. This is the way we prepare for Christmas.

***“Prepare the way for the Lord,
Make straight paths for him.”***

Call to Commitment:

Is there a straight path in your heart for Jesus this Christmas? Or have you already let concerns about gifts to buy, friends to invite, food to prepare, and programs to be involved with litter the path to your heart?

***“Prepare the way for the Lord,
Make straight paths for him.”***

May it be so, Lord Jesus.

Concluding the Service:

Have the readers of the passage from Isaiah 40: 1-11 which introduced the study today repeat the reading as a closing meditation.

Prepare three copies for the Gathering Time:

Behold Your God

First reader:

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.

Second reader:

A voice of one calling in the desert: "Prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God."

Third reader:

Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill shall be made low; the rough ground shall become level, and rugged places a plain.

And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken".

First reader:

A voice says, "Cry out"
And I said, "What shall I cry?"

Third reader:

"All men are like grass,
And all their glory is like the flowers of the field.
The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever."

Second reader:

You who bring good tidings to Zion,
Go up on a high mountain.

Third reader:

You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem,
Lift up your voice with a shout,
Lift it up, do not be afraid;
Say to the towns of Judah,
“Here is your God!”

First reader:

See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power, and his arm rules for him.
See, his reward is with him,
And his recompense accompanies him.

All readers:

He tends his flock like a shepherd;
He gathers the lambs in his arms
And carries them close to his heart;
He gently leads those who have young.