

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10th, 2017

REV. TERESA CHARLTON

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

"PEACE IN OUR HEARTS"

Based on Isaiah 40:1-11

Today the prophet Isaiah says to all who will listen, "Our God, your God, says to you, 'Take comfort. Take care. Be gentle with yourself. Speak tenderly to one another. Know that the past is just where it needs to stay, in the past.'"

But that's just part of the problem, now isn't it? Christmas is one of those few times of the year where the past does not stay in the past. It is a time of remembering: gatherings from years gone by, traditions maintained from year to year, warm, fuzzy, nostalgic memories of giggles around the tree, or nestled by the fire with a glass of eggnog. But all that warm reminiscing brings with it, a reminder that

the past is not the present. For some, the warmth of good memories is enough to satisfy this season's demands. For others, the present is filled with holiday cheer, yes, but has some pieces missing, or some people missing, or some traditions missing, from that

**COMFORT, COMFORT
MY PEOPLE, SAYS YOUR
GOD. SPEAK TENDERLY
TO JERUSALEM, AND
PROCLAIM TO HER THAT
HER HARD SERVICE HAS
BEEN COMPLETED.**

~ISAIAH 40:1-2A

Living in exile, they longed to return home: to their land, their country, their villages, and their families. But the people struggled as well, to remain centered in their faith. Some had found a way, to manage within their hearts, the ability to remain faithful to YHWH, in the midst of chaos and uncertainty in the world

around them. Isaiah reminded these people of a God who,

"...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." (v6)

Others fought the system, the unfairness of the world, living as if caught in a storm, raging this way and that, as the world pulled them in all different directions. To these unsettled souls Isaiah promised them, "There is one coming, who will lighten your load, smooth the rough path; soothe the jagged and raw edges of your emotions."

Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low;

the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain.

*And the glory of the Lord
will be revealed,
and all people will see it
together. (v4b-5)*

Oddly enough, though, was the fact that those who were calm, and those who were feeling caught in 'the storms of life' were all headed in the same direction. The winds of the storm, or the calm of the current move all of us down the meandering creek called life, headed in the same direction, pushing us towards the same destiny. (And if you notice the dove in our picture today, so does the dove, PEACE, Christ.) Life continues to move us forward, from today, into tomorrow. The only question is, will you do it calmly, or as if in the midst of a storm?

Some lit candles today to bring light back to fond memories, a way of saying 'thank you' to God for those good memories. They have found some measure of 'calm' I think. Some lit candles today searching for light to lessen the shadows of sadness and struggle. I pray that the storms they journey through may be lessened by what we have done today.

So heed Isaiah's words carefully, as you consider the

person in the apartment next to you, or beside you at the Christmas luncheon you will attend this week, or in the pew ahead of you. Speak tenderly. Take care. You may be the one who makes the light of PEACE and of good memories burn brighter. You may be the angel who helps someone struggling find PEACE IN THEIR HEART this Christmas.

Amen.

~We welcome our friends from Prince Rupert as they join us in this Advent Series.

