

2nd Advent Devotion

Methodist Liaison office in
Jerusalem

10 December 2017

Song: sing verses 1 and 3 of
“Light a Candle in a Darkened
Place” by Care Stainsby
(www.methodist-liaison.org
under resources)

*“Comfort, comfort my people,
says your God. Speak tenderly to
Jerusalem, and cry to her that
her warfare is ended.”*

-Isaiah 40: 1-2

Reading the words of Isaiah 40 is
a joyous experience in itself. It is
hard to read these words without
breaking into Handel’s Messiah

and hearing all the beautiful
music that they have inspired.
“Comfort ye my people,” “Every
valley shall be exalted and every
mountain and hill made low,”
“He will feed his flock like a
shepherd.” These words have
touched our hearts and minds
over and over again, year after
year, as we celebrate the
Christmas season.

But when I first began preparing
this devotion, the words that
stood out for me were from the
assigned hymn, “Light a candle in
a darkened place.” My
immediate thoughts were of
darkness, of prophets speaking
difficult words to ears that were
not open to hearing. Surely our
present time is a time of
darkness: natural disasters, lack
of wisdom in our leaders, rumors
of war, the list seems to increase
daily. But the hymn says, “words

of joy and hope they bring.” I felt
a tug of war between the
darkness and the joy, between
words of despair and words of
hope.

Prophets are needed today in our
world, in our churches. They
awaken us to realities that we
would rather stay hidden. They
challenge our comfort and
complacency and, as Jesus did,
turn our worlds upside down.
And because of that, they are
usually rejected and
marginalized. Their words are
difficult to hear, and yet...

Read Isaiah 40 again. What I see
are words of tenderness,
comfort, gentleness, of not being
afraid. Words of love and hope.
And I love the opening words,
“Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and
cry to her that her warfare has
ended.” Every day, as I walk the

streets of East Jerusalem, I feel the noose tightening. I hear stories from locals of how difficult life is becoming, of their despair as they have less and less cause for hope. And what do I have to offer? What candle can I light in this dark time and place?



But then I read Psalm 85 and I know that there's more than what I feel and see. God

promises to speak peace to God's people. God promises that "steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other."

Again, I ask myself, what candle am I lighting that points the way to God's promised reality?

What is your candle? How are you a light in the darkness?

Light the 2nd candle

Let us pray, Lord, our realities are difficult. Despair and lack of hope wherever we look. But you brought a Light into the darkness and have promised that the darkness will not overcome it. For this we give you thanks and praise. Amen.

Picture credit: "The light shines in the darkness." Taken by Tina Whitehead, Bethlehem, Fall 2016

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