

# “Prepare with Hope”

Isaiah 40:1, 3-5, 11 & Mark 1:1-5

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**Prayer for Understanding Redeeming God fill us with your hope. Open us to the Good News. Amen.**

The Israelites were in agonizing, bleak, terrible, exile for 22 years when the prophet Isaiah spoke today's scripture. Isaiah foresaw that the exile would be long. It lasted 180 years, several generations. Isaiah also foresaw that in the future love, joy, and peace would prevail on earth as in heaven. Isaiah urged the Israelites, and urges us today, to prepare with hope. Isaiah delivered his message of hope for 61 years until he was executed for his message of hope. Isaiah was resolute to not give up, to not become indifferent, to not despair for renewal is coming. Isaiah trusted in God's redemption.

**Isaiah 40:1, 3-5, 11 “Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. A voice cries out: “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. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the Lord has spoken. God will feed the flock like a shepherd. God will carry the lambs in God's arms, holding them close to God's heart. God will gently lead the mother sheep with their young.”**

When the world seems to be falling apart, listen for God's word of comfort that proclaims redemption, restoring your hope. In scripture, wilderness refers to times of adversity, suffering, crisis, and exile. Hope enables us to see a way through the wilderness to abundant life. God will get us to the Promised Land. God, our good shepherd, is our guide. God nourishes us with comfort, peace, love and joy. When we are unable to journey, God carries us. God is always with us. God will deliver us to glorious, abundant life. A former president said, “The audacity of hope: In the end, that is God's greatest gift to us, a belief in things not seen, a belief that there are better days ahead.”

Sin is anything that distorts our perception of God or the coming glorious Kingdom of God to earth. Sin is hopelessness, indifference, anxiety, worry, and fear. Anything that makes you feel unloved, left out, like your dreams are not important, are sins. Anything that diminishes your life or makes you feel like giving up is sin. Apathy in loving, rejoicing, serving is sin. Thinking that your life is not making the world a more loving place is sin. The gospels proclaim the Good News that Jesus is leading us through every obstacle to abundant life.

**Mark 1:1-5 NLT “This is the Good News about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. It began just as the prophet Isaiah had written: “Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, and he will prepare your way. He is a voice shouting in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord's coming! Clear the road for him!’” This messenger was John the Baptist. He was in the wilderness and preached that people should be baptized to show that they had repented of their sins and turned to God to be forgiven. All of Judea, including all the people of Jerusalem, went out to see and hear John. And when they confessed their sins, he baptized them in the Jordan River.”**

Jesus is forgiving and healing every sin. Jesus is transforming our negative thoughts to positive thoughts. Jesus is dispersing our despair and filling us with hope. Jesus is bringing us back from every exile to abundant life. Wherever we wander in far off lands Jesus will bring us back. Isaiah foresaw, proclaimed, and dreamed of a perfect world. Jesus is making a perfect world for us.

Prepare for Jesus with hope. Identify the hurts, brokenness, and suffering in the world and in your life then envision them healed, made whole and comforted. Dream grand, magnificent, extravagant dreams with hope that assures you that every pure dream will become reality. Spread hope by sharing your dreams.

The Reverend, Doctor, Martin Luther King Junior dreamed grand dreams and shared them. Martin's dream took him from the prophet Amos, to Isaiah to our Redeemer and Savior Jesus. When you have hope and watch Martin share his dream, you will be propelled beyond the limits of language and culture to join the dream and add to the dream. Dreams create reality. Dreams inspires us to be at peace, love and rejoice.

