

Old Testament Texts for Life Sunday

Series B

Advent 2

Text: *Isaiah 40:1-11 (focus on v. 11)*

Focus: *The focus is on the LORD's tender love and care for His people. He loves them, forgives their sins, and promises to deliver them. He is the kind of God who neither abandons His people nor tramples the weak members in His zeal – He maintains a fatherly concern for all people. The LORD is not only the God of perfect standards and righteous wrath (over sins like abortion, etc.) – He is also the kind of God who is more nurturing than a mother and more caring than a father, who can be trusted to keep His promises of protection and love. The picture of a shepherd gently leading the ewes that have young is also literally true of the LORD's tender care of expectant and new mothers.*

Theme: *Share the Lord's tender love*

- Isaiah uses a beautiful picture of a shepherd to illustrate the Lord's tender love. A shepherd loves his flock, takes care of them, keeps them safe, gives anything for them. He watches over each one of His sheep including those that need special attention. They need special care, and the shepherd is sensitive to their needs.
- The Lord's love is like the love of a shepherd. He loves His people, cares for them, and protects them. The Lord also takes special care of the weak, the helpless, and others who need special care.
- In our society today, there is a strong tendency for the strong to oppress the weak, for the powerful to take advantage of the helpless. Abortion attacks the very young and defenseless, and assisted suicide targets the elderly and disabled.
- What about us? Do we have compassion for the weak and helpless of our world? Perhaps if we don't join the wicked world in exploiting them, do we sometimes fail to intervene to protect them? Do we stand up and let our views and values be heard when it comes to life issues? Or do we assume sometimes that others will speak, and we can go on with our regular lives?
- Having experienced God's tender love for us, we have every reason to share God's tender love for the weak and helpless. We have the opportunity now to act on our desires to help the helpless. There are countless ways we can help the weak: visiting nursing homes, supporting families whose loved ones are dying; being loving and merciful toward family members in their old age; writing letters to federal and state legislators encouraging them to vote for life-affirming bills; supporting the spread of the gospel so that more people may hear about the Lord's love for them!
- One special way to share the Lord's tender love for "those that have young" is to pray for and support *New Beginnings, a Home for New Mothers* in Colorado. *New Beginnings* helps young, single mothers stay safe and focused, get back on

their feet, and especially to learn about the Lord's forgiving love in Christ.

Easter 4

Text: *Acts 4:23-33*

Focus: *While the world seems to get more and more evil, Christians have a powerful tool to use against the evil of the world: prayer. As the early church prayed for victory and strength despite persecution, we can also pray for the success of the Gospel in our world.*

Theme: *Pray for Victory!*

I. *Over God's enemies*

- Peter and John and the early church were up against an alliance of God's enemies. Herod and Pontius Pilate and later, the Roman emperors, sought to persecute the church and stamp out the message of Christianity. The Jewish leaders also did their best to oppose Jesus and His followers.
- So the Christians prayed. They praised the Lord for His work in creation, and acknowledged His rule over all the nations of the world since creation. They prayed that the Lord would triumph over His enemies and that the little flock would be preserved despite persecution.
- There is an alliance of enemies united against God today also. The leaders of the world seek to increase their power and legacy, at the expense of God's power and glory; intellectuals try to outsmart the Lord, always claiming some brilliant new invention or discovery. Man is constantly trying to change the world and claim the throne as lord of his own destiny. This is especially evident in the area of life issues as man finds new ways to assume authority over live and death.
- Pray that these seemingly powerful leaders and thinkers would come to a knowledge of the Lord. Pray that the Lord would rule over the nations for the benefit of his church (Eph. 1:22-23).

II. *Through the Word*

- Although there certainly was severe physical persecution at times, the primary opposition to Christians came against their message. Civil authorities used their power to hinder gospel preaching.
- So the prayer of Christians focused on the message. They prayed that they would be able to speak the Word boldly, that God would assist their preaching with signs and wonders to support the message.
- God answered their prayer: He sent the Holy Spirit to empower and embolden His people. They did not shrink back in fear, as the disciples once did behind locked doors – they preached the gospel boldly.
- Pray for the preaching of the Word! Pray that the message be proclaimed far and near, to those who like it and to those who are hostile to it, to those who already know it and to those who have never heard it. Pray that those who preach and teach and confess Jesus would not shrink back in fear, but would preach boldly.
- Then be prepared for God to use you to answer your own prayer.

Pentecost 21

Text: *Amos 5:6,7, 10-15*

Focus: *The LORD is a God of justice. He desires and demands to see things happen according to His good and holy standards, in our dealings with Him and in our dealings with others. Yet the LORD also transfers His just judgment to His Son, and treats us only with mercy.*

Theme: *The LORD loves justice*

I. *In our relationship with Him*

- God demands exclusive worship (He condemns the unjust worship going on at Gilgal, Bethel, Beersheba, etc. which were set up in competition with God's chosen worship place in Jerusalem)
- Exclusive worship in today's world is obviously not linked to a place or a temple. God demands total allegiance, perfect trust in him, overflowing love for him. It's a complete condition of the heart and a lifestyle that is wholly given to God.
- It's a high standard that no one can keep.
- The LORD is not only the God who demands justice – He provides it! His Son came to take our place, to achieve perfection before God, and to satisfy God's justice in our place on the cross. The LORD in mercy pours out all His just and righteous anger on His Son and turns to us in mercy.

II. *In our relationship with others*

- In response to His merciful love for us, we want to serve the LORD by treating others with mercy and justice.
- The LORD hates it when the poor are downtrodden, when the orphans are neglected, when the weak and helpless are killed, when the powerful dominate and oppress. That is not justice.
- That is what was happening in the land of Israel. The LORD's justice had been perverted into injustice; the court system was a tool the powerful used to oppress the poor; the truth no longer held a place of prominence; right and wrong were interchangeable.
- Sound familiar? Think about our court system and the impact it has had on society's issues: gay couples, abortion, elections, ending the lives of those who are suffering but not dying as well as finding innocent those who commit the most heinous crimes.
- Just as (v.13) a prudent man keeps quiet in the evil times of Israel, we too can quietly wait for the Lord's judgment. There is, however, a time to speak up and to speak out. Society's issues are an opportunity to share with people God's perfect standard, as well as God's perfect solution.