



Preparing for What We Can't See: Isaiah 40:3-5

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Group Leader Notes

Today we begin our Advent series, *Let Every Heart Prepare Him Room*. The word Advent comes from the Latin word *Adventus*, which means *to come*. The four weeks of Advent help us anticipate the arrival of a baby, Jesus, the Messiah, God's own son. Advent also reminds us that we await the return of Jesus, his second coming, when all will be restored, and we'll meet Jesus face to face.

Questions: How do we prepare the way to Christmas – not just around us, but also in our hearts and minds.

Bottom Line: Repentance prepares our hearts for Jesus to enter in, and even if we don't see him yet or know how it will all work out, we prepare the way for the Lord.

Take Home Message:

Advent reminds us to pause just long enough to look into our hearts, recognize we need a change of heart, and then go in a different direction. This is repentance. It's God drawing us back to him, preparing him room in our hearts and our world.

Main Scripture Reading: Isaiah 40:3-5

A voice of one calling:

"In the wilderness prepare
the way for the Lord^[a];

make straight in the desert
a highway for our God.^[b]

⁴ Every valley shall be raised up,

every mountain and hill made low;
the rough ground shall become level,
the rugged places a plain.

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

Other Scripture References

Malachi 4:5-6

Luke 3:3-4, 6

John 14:3

Luke 3:7-8a

Luke 3:10-14

Teaching Points:

The Prophetic Tradition:

- There are 17 prophetic books, from Isaiah to Malachi
- Prophets were messengers, led by the Holy Spirit, to speak on God's behalf. Their primary message was – Repent!

- The Prophets spoke to the Hebrews of their present-day about a promise they couldn't see, the Messiah. However, they still speak to us today as we await the return of the second coming of Christ.

Repentance:

- The Greek word for repentance is METANOIA, which means to turn around
- The Greek word for sin is HAMARTIA, an archery term meaning to miss the mark, to go astray
- Repentance means a change of mind, to think differently, and leads to a change of heart, which leads to the change of behavior.

Group Discussion

Begin in prayer before reading and discussing the text.

1. In sharing about his family's preparation for the birth of Elsie, Pastor Joshua said: *"We plan, prepare, and then life happens unexpectedly."* Ask your small group for one or two recent examples of how their own plans went awry.
2. Some describe the role of prophets to *comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable*. What do you think this means?
3. Read Isaiah 40:3-5 again.
We prepare the way, we make the paths straight, and we smooth the hills. We prepare our hearts for Jesus to enter in, and when we help others, we make God's kingdom come to life here on earth.
 - While many experience joy this season, others experience pain, grief, or sorrow. Share with the group some ways that you could serve someone you know who is struggling this season
4. Read Luke 3:10-14.
We are meant to look into our hearts to see where we need repentance. Sometimes, we don't see it. We need reminders. As we see in this passage, our lives are always in the process of repentance. Imagine asking yourself the same question John explores "What then shall I do?" Take a few moments and reflect on what that might mean to you, and identify one thing you can share.
5. God doesn't focus on our sins to condemn us; instead, he calls us to repentance, and he compels us to live differently. This is the true meaning of repentance – not merely to confess our sins but to change our hearts and, ultimately, to change our behavior. As you close in prayer, ask the Holy Spirit: *Where in my life am I missing the mark? In what areas of my life do I need to pause, repent, think differently, and then take action?*

Let's Pray