

**Introduction:** Our first song, with the middle verse lamenting the lack of peace on earth, could have been written this year. However, Longfellow wrote it in the middle of the Civil War, in the year one of his sons died in the war and another son was severely wounded. \*\*\* Violence has been part of human nature from the first man who was born, Cain (Genesis 4:1-8). Joseph's brothers thought to kill him, but they sold him into slavery and lied to their father (Genesis 37:17-28). Absalom killed his half-brother for violating his sister (2 Samuel 17). \*\*\* God spoke through Isaiah to say people do not know the way to peace (59:8). Paul picked up on this truth when he wrote that all people on earth sin, speaking deceit and shedding blood so they do not know the way to peace (Romans 3:9-18, quoting from the Greek translation of Psalm 14). \*\*\* Jesus said He did not come to bring peace on earth but division (Matthew 10:34). What He meant by this is that between His two advents those who surrender to Him through obedient faith in Him will offend those who do everything from their selfish pride, so they will not be at peace with each other. He will even divide families. He acknowledges Micah (7:5-6). \*\*\* However, Jesus did bring peace with God for all who turn from their ways to Him to receive Him as the one who has paid the debt for their sins on the Cross (Isaiah 40:2). \*\*\* The week before He was crucified, Jesus said David called Him Adonai (Matthew 22:41-45, from Psalm 110): 'Yahweh said to my Adonai'. Yahweh is the name of The Covenant God in His Triune fullness. Adonai is the name of Jesus. \*\*\* As we go through our Isaiah passage we will see that the one who is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6) is the mighty one who comforts people with the gentleness of a shepherd. **PEACE: *Adonai comforts with gentle power.*** \*\*\* The compilers of the Narrative Lectionary gave us an 'ABBA' pattern for today's readings. First, (A) The Covenant God tells people the debt of their sins has been paid, (B) then a voice says the glory of Yahweh will be revealed; next, (B') a voice says God will come with might to reward His flock, (A') finally a messenger tells people their repentance will lead to forgiveness of sins. This is: the debt for sin paid, God's glory is coming; God will come to reward, sins forgiven. Let's now go deeper into all this. )

**I. God exhorts His people to comfort because the payment of their iniquity debt has been accepted; and, He calls people to clear the way for His glory to be uncovered to all people. (Isaiah 40:1-5)**

A. God exhorts His people to comfort one another by telling them the debt for their iniquity has been acceptably paid. (*Verses 1-2*)

1. You all must comfort, you all must comfort, My people, says God of you all; you all must speak to the heart of Jerusalem and you all must cry to her that is ended her warfare. (*Verses 1-2b*)

**Comfort:** Through Isaiah, God exhorts His people to comfort one another with His compassion.

**Warfare:** He foresees the destruction of Jerusalem, but wants His people to cry to her heart that her conflict with Him will end.

2. That has been accepted (the payment for debt for) her iniquity; that she has received from the hand of Yahweh double for all her sins. (*Verses 2c-e*)

**Accepted:** The NIV 'paid for' and the NJB 'atoned for' rightly interpret the sense of accepted in this passage.

The word is used when someone has made an acceptable payment for a debt. The second phrase is difficult to interpret.

Was the punishment of exile, and the subsequent repentance of Israel, enough to pay the debt of sin? Christians say Jesus, as God and as Man, paid for the sins of all people; and, whoever receives His gift as the only acceptable payment in God's eyes, is comforted in salvation.

B. A voice is calling out: make the way smooth for the glory of Yahweh has been uncovered and all have seen it. (*Verses 3-5*)

1. A voice calling in the wilderness: You all must make clear the way of Yahweh; you all must make straight on the desert a highway to our God. (*Verse 3*)

**Clear the way:** The prophet of God is calling out in the wilderness to Yahweh's people a double command:

They must make clear Yahweh's way (as He comes to them); and, they must make straight (or right) a highway for God on an elevated desert plain.

2. Every valley will be lifted up and every mountain and hill will be made low; it has become the deceitful (crooked, uneven) right (straight), and the rough (place) level. (*Verse 4*)

**Yahweh's work:** The verbs all indicate that these miracles will not be done by people, but by The Covenant God, Yahweh Himself.

3. And it has been revealed (uncovered) the glory of Yahweh; and, they have seen, all flesh together, because the mouth of Yahweh has spoken. (*Verse 5*)

**Glory revealed:** The Covenant God has revealed His glory in such a way that every living creature with flesh has seen it together. This is because Yahweh has spoken it, and all He speaks He does!

**II. People are like grass that fades, but Adonai Yahweh comes with might to care for His flock; and,**

**John was crying out in the wilderness that repentance leads to forgiveness of sins. (Isaiah 40:6-11; Mark 1:1-4)**

B'. A voice is saying: thou must cry that people are like grass and flowers which are temporary, but God will come with might to reward and care for His flock. (*Isaiah 40:6-11*)

1. A voice saying: You all must cry; and, I said: What will I cry? All flesh (is) grass, and all its goodness (*khesed* – kindness, of men) as flowers of the field; it has withered, grass; it has faded, flower; because Spirit of Yahweh has blown in it (and) surely, grass (is) people. (*Verses 6-7*)

**All flesh is grass:** Isaiah again hears Yahweh commanding all His people. He responds as a prophet, by asking what he should do. He is told to say all creatures of flesh, especially people, are temporary, like the grass and flowers that wither and fade, because Yahweh has blown on them to break them up.

2. It has withered, grass; it has faded, flower; and, The Word of our God will stand to eternity. (*Verse 8*)  
**God's Word:** After restating the here today, gone tomorrow nature of plants, God tells Isaiah that His Word will stand in the highest place for all time, in perpetuity!
3. Upon a high mountain must go up the one bearing good news; Zion, thou must lift up with strength thy voice bearing good news, Jerusalem, thou must lift up; thou must not fear, thou must say to the cities of Judah: Behold! The God of you all. (*Verse 9*)  
**Announce Good News:** Continuing to speak through Isaiah, God commands Jerusalem to be the one bearing good news, figuratively going high so all the cities will behold God in all His glory!  
**Application:** We must announce The Good News of Jesus; and, and we must pray all will receive this Good News of God's living eternal Word.
4. Behold! Adonai Yahweh, in might He will come, and His arm is ruling for Him; Behold! His reward (is) with Him and His work (is) before Him. (*Verse 10*)  
**Fear not:** This is the reason why Zion-Jerusalem must not be afraid. Adonai (Lord Jesus of) Yahweh (Triune Covenant God) will come in might to rule; but, His work will be to both judge those rebelling against God, and reward with gentle mercy all who have humble obedient faith IN Him.  
**Application:** Let us pray that people will cease fearing punishment for their sins and iniquities; and, they will know peace because God is powerful to comfort, forgive and save in Adonai-Jesus.

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5. As a shepherd, His flock He will feed; in His arms He will gather lambs; in His bosom He will carry them; those who are nursing He will gently lead to rest. (*Verse 11*)  
**Gentle care:** In every way Jesus (of Yahweh) will care for His people as a Shepherd (Psalm 23; John 10:11-18). He will comfort them by leading them gently to a place of rest and peace.  
**Application:** May we do all God leads us to do so all will take comfort to know their warfare with God can give way to peace from the Gentle Shepherd – Adonai-Jesus.

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- A'. The good news of Jesus was proclaimed in the wilderness by John that repentance leads to forgiveness of sins. (*Mark 1:1-4*)
1. Beginning of The Gospel of Jesus Christ, Son of God: As it had been written in Isaiah the prophet. (*Verses 1-2a*)  
**Book title:** Some commentators believe this is the Title and Sub-title of the book. Mark (and Peter) knew The Good News about The Savior-Messiah would continue until He returned. Mark's Gospel is based on the book of Isaiah. The Greek New Testament has sixteen cross-references to Isaiah in the margins, evenly distributed in the book.
  2. Behold! I will send the messenger of Me before the face of Thee, who will prepare the way of Thee. (*Verses 2b-c*)  
**Sending My messenger:** Most Bibles cross-reference this sentence to Malachi (3:1). It is a paraphrase of that verse; but, it has significant differences in vocabulary, sentence structure and pronouns.  
**Prepare the way:** What is being said by Mark is that God will send a messenger before The Savior-Messiah to prepare the way of Jesus Christ. Through Malachi, God said His messenger would prepare His way.
  3. Voice crying in the wilderness: you all must make ready (prepare) the way of The Lord; straight, you all must be making the paths of Him. (*Verses 3*)  
**Exact quote:** While this only looks similar to the Hebrew of Isaiah (40:3), it is an exact quote of the Greek translation of Isaiah!  
**John the baptizer:** The messenger is John the baptizer, who exactly fits this prophecy.
  4. It was John, the one baptizing in the wilderness, and preaching baptism of repentance into forgiveness of sins. (*Verse 4*)  
**Repentance to forgiveness:** This Gospel description of John (Yahweh is grace) the baptizer as the one preaching that when people turn from their iniquity and sin to God in faith, they will have their sins forgiven through what Jesus The Savior did, is described in the rest of his Gospel of Jesus. This is what was hidden under the confusing language we saw in the beginning of the passage in Isaiah (40:2).  
**Application:** May we be in awe that the mighty and glorious God has paid the debt for our sins and will care for all who turn to Him in faith and He will save them. We must receive forgiveness for ourselves; and, tell others about what The Savior-King did so they too may receive forgiveness of sins.

*The Savior-King comes to forgive sins*

**Conclusion:** The Covenant God exhorts His people to comfort one another because the payment of their iniquity debt has been accepted. Then, He calls them to prepare their hearts to see the revelation of His glory. Although people are as temporary as the grass in the field, Adonai Yahweh comes with might to care for His flock as a shepherd. The Good News of Jesus The Savior was announced by John: people can repent and receive forgiveness in Jesus.

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