



## Sermon, Sunday, December 24, 2023 “The Lord Who Comforts His People”

**SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 52:7-10** <sup>7</sup>How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.” <sup>8</sup>Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices; together they shout for joy, for in plain sight they see the return of the LORD to Zion. <sup>9</sup>Break forth; shout together for joy, you ruins of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem. <sup>10</sup>The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

### **Introduction: Everyone needs comfort**

Today is the fourth Sunday of Advent and Christmas Eve. The year 2023 is coming to an end. How did you guys spend this year? Have you had a happy and satisfying year? Or have you been through difficulties big or small? Just because we may have been happy this year does not mean that happiness will always last. On the other hand, just because this year was difficult doesn't mean next year will continue to be difficult. Humans live like this, an unpredictable life.

Even though we have spent this year in peace, it does not mean that there were no difficulties, big or small, in our lives. So we all need comfort.

In general, people live with peace of mind when there are no difficulties in their lives. However, we cannot be sure that we will not experience the misfortune that others are experiencing. We can develop an incurable disease, get into a car accident, or suffer from a natural disaster. So just because we are happy enough to not need comfort from anyone right now doesn't mean we won't ever need comfort.

In today's text, Prophet Isaiah proclaims the Lord's comfort for all people in the world. I hope that the words of today's text will be of great comfort in our difficult lives.

### **Body: The Lord who comforts his people!**

In the Old Testament, various prophets appear who prophesy the word of God. The core message they delivered to the Israelites was ‘God's comfort.’ However, in most cases, rather than finding comfort through the words of the prophets, the Israelites turned away from or ignored them. Why did the Israelites react this way after hearing the words of the prophets? It was for two reasons. First, because their lives were going as they wanted, and they did not need God's comfort at all. The second reason, contrary to the first reason, is that their lives were so completely hopeless that they could not expect comfort from God.

The situation of the Israelites described in today's text corresponds to the second case. At that time, the southern kingdom of Judah was destroyed by the Babylonian Empire. The temple and royal palace in Jerusalem were all destroyed. The people of Judah were taken captive and taken to Babylon. In this situation, Isaiah proclaimed God's comfort. **Today's text, Isaiah 52:9, says: “Break forth together into singing, you ruins of Jerusalem; for the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem.”**

However, not everyone accepted Isaiah's cry as God's words of comfort. Why is that so? This is because our hearts lack understanding and inspiration for the Word of God. Also, it is because we do not have faith (confidence) or experience that God's comfort does not end with words but is revealed in actual power. Specifically, in the case of today's text, the Israelites are liberated from Babylonian oppression. Also, in our lives, it is an experience of freedom from oppression and escape from despair.



But why do some people not receive grace and comfort from the word of God? That's because they consider only what they can see right now as absolute. For example, many people judge the revival of a church by how many members attend worship, how much the church spends per year, how many different programs there are in the church, and how well the church is equipped with facilities. However, if we look at the church based only on these elements, we overlook the fact that the church is an eschatological (study of end times) worship community. Furthermore, we cannot experience God's comfort through worship alone. Because we need something else to be satisfied.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! The head of the eschatological worship community is Jesus Christ, and we are his body. As the body of the church, we are connected and grow through our head, Jesus Christ, and are built up through love.

The Lord, who came to this earth as baby Jesus, suffered a cruel death on the cross, abandoned by God the Father, at a young age in his early 30s. However, the Bible says that the salvation of mankind began through that event. God the Father transformed Jesus into a completely new life after he died on the cross. We call it resurrection.

There are many people in my life who have given me comfort. My family, friends, colleagues, and church members are my comforters. However, the greatest comfort in my life is the death and resurrection of Jesus. The comfort of the Lord fills my selfish desires with love. Selfish greed cannot be satisfied, and we are always thirsty, but a heart filled with love allows us to be thankful even for small things. Additionally, the comfort of the Lord changes my narrow-minded heart into forgiveness and tolerance toward others. Furthermore, the Lord's comfort reminds me of how precious I am, even though I am imperfect and lacking.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! All the comforts we seek in this world are relative. However, the comfort that the Lord has given us through the cross and resurrection is absolute. The Lord's comfort never disappoints us.

If you need the Lord's comfort in your life right now, I hope you can open your heart wide and accept the love of the Lord's cross and the power of His resurrection.

### **Conclusion: May you enjoy rest for your soul through Jesus.**

Now let's summarize today's sermon. Today is the fourth Sunday of Advent and Christmas Eve.

**Luke 2:29-32 says: "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."** This verse is the confession of Simeon, a righteous and devout man waiting for the consolation of Israel, who met the baby Jesus when he came to the temple for a purification ceremony. Through this confession, we can see how Simeon found rest in his life. In other words, through the attitude of life and faith that completely entrusts one's future to the Lord, one can live in eternal rest. Comfort and rest for our souls are only possible through Jesus Christ. Do you agree with this statement? And are you enjoying that comfort and rest now?

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! I encourage you to believe in and rely on Jesus Christ, who gives you eternal comfort and rest through a deep fellowship with Him.

If this becomes possible in our lives, we will no longer be thirsty for other comforts. **In John 7:37-38, Jesus said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him"**. Can you truly say Amen to this promise of the Lord? May the comfort and rest that the Lord gives fill our lives.

