

Readings + Second Sunday of Advent, year B + December 10, 2023

Prayer of the Day

Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming strengthen us to serve you with purified lives; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

First Reading Isaiah 40:1-11

- ¹ Comfort, O comfort my people,
says your God.
- ² Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to the city
that it has served its term,
that its penalty is paid,
that it has received from the LORD's hand
double for all its sins.
- ³ A voice cries out:
"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert a highway for our
God.
- ⁴ 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.
- ⁵ Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all flesh shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."
- ⁶ A voice says, "Cry out!"
And I said, "What shall I cry?"
All flesh is grass,
their constancy is like the flower of the field.
- ⁷ The grass withers, the flower fades,
when the breath of the LORD blows upon it;
surely the people are grass.
- ⁸ The grass withers, the flower fades;
but the word of our God will stand forever.
- ⁹ Get you up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good news;
lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of good news,
lift it up, do not fear;
say to the cities of Judah,
"Here is your God!"

- ¹⁰ See, the Lord GOD comes with might,
with an arm to rule;
God comes bearing the reward,
preceded by the recompense.
- ¹¹ The LORD will feed the chosen flock like a
shepherd;
God's arms will gather the lambs,
God's bosom will carry them,
and the LORD will gently lead the mother
sheep.

Psalmody Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

- You have been gracious to your land, O LORD;
you have restored the good fortune of Jacob.
- You have forgiven the iniquity of your people
and blotted out all their sins.**
- I will listen to what the LORD God is saying; for
you speak peace to your faithful people and to
those who turn their hearts to you.
- Truly, your salvation is very near to those
who fear you, that your glory may dwell in
our land.**
- Steadfast love and faithfulness have met together;
righteousness and peace have kissed each other.
- Faithfulness shall spring up from the
earth, and righteousness shall look down
from heaven.**
- The LORD will indeed grant prosperity, and our
land will yield its increase.
- Righteousness shall go before the LORD and
shall prepare for God a pathway.**

Second Reading 2 Peter 3:8-15a

- ⁸ Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that
with the Lord one day is like a thousand years,
and a thousand years are like one day. ⁹ The Lord
is not slow about the promise, as some think of
slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any
to perish, but all to come to repentance. ¹⁰ But the
day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then
the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and
the elements will be destroyed with fire, and the
earth and everything that is done on it will be
disclosed.

¹¹ Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, ¹² waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and destroyed, and the elements will melt with fire? ¹³ But, in accordance with God's promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

¹⁴ Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by God at peace, without spot or blemish; ¹⁵ and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

Holy Gospel Mark 1:1-8

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all introduce John the Baptist similarly. All quote Isaiah 40 referring to John. Mark's record of John's preaching is much shorter than the other two, excluding the fire and winnowing imagery, and the part where John calls the crowds a "brood of vipers".

¹ The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ.

² As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way;

³ the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight the paths of the Lord,' "

⁴ so John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ And the whole Judean region and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the River Jordan, confessing their sins.

⁶ Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I have baptized you with water; but the one who is coming will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."