

*Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God.  
A voice proclaims: In the wilderness prepare the way of the  
LORD! Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God!  
Isaiah 40:1, 3*

In our second week of Advent the lectionary brings us twice to the words of Isaiah: “Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God. A voice proclaims: In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD!” If we missed this reading the first time we get a second chance. It is like that with God. We get a second chance and a third, and a fourth—as many as we need. So if our plans have already been derailed to make this Advent be more about preparing for the birth of Jesus and staying focused on the true meaning of Christmas, that is okay. We can come right back to the path in the wilderness that leads us to God.

This is a good time to take a reflective look at our to-do lists and to ask ourselves what we are preparing for. Are we preparing to uphold some perfect image of what we think this holiday should be, or are we preparing to honor Jesus and those we love? Are we trying to impress someone, or are we more focused on showing them that there is peace and comfort in our world? If we are already feeling stressed out and concentrating on the next task to be done, it is very likely that we are focused on perfecting an image rather than joyfully anticipating the birth of our Savior.

A Savior is what our world needs; the comfort Isaiah calls out for God’s people. Our guilt is expiated, our valleys filled in, and those mountains in our life we are trying to ascend are brought low. God comes to us in our pain and weakness just as we think we cannot take one more step. That is the good news we long to hear, when we stop to listen to our soul’s greatest need. The most important thing we can put on our lists of things to accomplish is to stop; stop to breathe, stop to pray, stop to remember that we are God’s children and our path has already been prepared for us.