

Isaiah 40:1-11

January 18, 2015

“I am Jesus’ Little Lamb”

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

Advent 4 – Christmas and Carols

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Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God, our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen! Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

[**Introduction**] It is over! It is done! It’s...

*"Deader than a door-nail... a lost cause... time to throw in the towel...*

*sianara baby.. mighty Casey has struck out... the fat lady has sung!"*

This is what Israel thought.

This is what Israel thought during the dark days of the Babylonian exile.

Our text has 8th century Isaiah

positioning himself to speak to this

6th century lost cause.

You see, already in the 8th century,

Isaiah knew that the days were coming when Israel would have

no temple, no Jerusalem, no Davidic king,

no annual pilgrim feasts, no commercial or political significance ...no hope!

Mighty Casey will strike out! Or, to use Israel's favorite –

***"By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion."***(Ps 137:1)

To those who had thrown in the towel

the prophet proclaims compassion, tenderness ...comfort.

[**Beginning**] In fact, our reading is framed by means of ...comfort.

Like bookends, there's comfort in the beginning and comfort at the end.

At the beginning, Is 40 :1 ... ***NACHUMU, NACHUMU "Comfort, comfort"-***

The use of repetition is Hebraic way to drive home a point. In Isaiah alone we have, among others:

***"Fallen, fallen is Babylon"*** (Isa 21:9)

***"Awake, awake, O Zion"*** (Isa 52:1)

***"Build up, build up, prepare the road"*** (Isa 57:14)

and the classic threefold, ***"Holy, holy, holy."*** (Isa 6:3)

Then God calls us ... ***AMI "My people."***

No more scornful ***"THIS PEOPLE"*** of Is. 6:9 ...but ***"MY PEOPLE."***

Remember how God talked about us at the call of Isaiah?

<sup>8</sup> *And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me."* <sup>9</sup> *And he said, "Go, and say to this people: "Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive."*

Here in Isaiah 40 the word explodes with comfort,  
for Yahweh's covenant promise is exactly this,  
*"I will be your God, and you will be ... my people."*

[*End*] Comfort in the beginning. Also, like bookends, comfort at the end.

*He will tend his flock like a shepherd;  
he will gather the lambs in his arms;  
he will carry them in his bosom,  
and gently lead those that are with young.*

Our reading ends with a description of a Shepherd.

The idea of a Shepherd drives us to the conviction that  
all this compassion, tenderness ...comfort was needed  
because the exiles and their forefathers had been like... sheep!

[*Sheep*]

Now sheep are not intimidating creatures!

We have St. Louis Rams... Detroit Lions ...Denver Broncos ...  
Atlanta Falcons ... Chicago Bears.

I'm not a prophet, nor son of a prophet, but there will never, ever be  
a NFL expansion teams called the Los Angeles Lambs or the San Antonio Sheep!

What would the cheerleaders say, "*Fleece em, Fleece em – ba,,ba, ba!??*"

Sheep are not intimidating creatures, truth be told –

***Sheep are dumb.***

They graze on the same hills until those hills turn to desert wastes.

Sheep bend down to drink from a pond, get too close,  
allow the water to absorb into their wool, fall in, and drown!

*We aren't like that... are we?*

***Sheep are dirty.***

Their wool is like a magnet. It attracts mud, manure, maggots.

It becomes caked with dirt, decay, disease.

Sheep absorb every particle of filth in the atmosphere.

*We aren't like that... are we?*

***Sheep are defenseless.***

They turn over on their back to rest, but then can't get up.  
Canines, coyotes, cougars all know that a cast sheep is a sitting duck!

***But we aren't like that ... are we?***

Israel had been just like that... and so it was sianara baby...

Nebuchadnezzar did it, aided by Nebuzaradan.

The towel was thrown in 587 all because they had been like ...sheep!

Dumb... Is. 1 -"***The ox knows his master, the donkey his owner's manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand.***"

Dirty... Is. 64 -"***All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.***"

Defenseless... Is. 1 -"***From the sole of your foot to the top of your head there is no soundness -only wounds and welts and open sores.***"  
***We're not like that ...are we??!***

Hear the word of the LORD; Isaiah 53:6 –

***"We all like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way."***

And the result?

***"By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remember Zion."***

You and I are living testimonies of lost causes...

of being deader than a doornail... exiled.

We are so far from the Father's will and ways –

so far from bearing each other's pain and burdens –

so far from spouses, children, sisters ,brothers.

No doubt! Mighty Casey has struck out ...

**[Lamb]**

So what's a Shepherd to do???

One option ...to become a Lamb. But not any ordinary Lamb ...

***"A virgin will conceive and bear a Son and you will call his name Immanuel!***

***Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."***

No ordinary Lamb -"***He was led like a Lamb to the slaughter,***

***and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth."***

No green pastures. Rather spit and blood are caked to his cheeks.

No quiet waters -in fact, no water at all.

His lips are cracked and swollen, his throat, parched from the hot sun.

There's no rod or staff for comfort.  
The cup overflows all-right ... he drinks from the cup of the fury,  
from the cup of the wrath of God Almighty.

Surely goodness and mercy have been twisted and perverted  
in the most inhumane way.

Had we been there we would have surely said, that Jesus was...  
“*Deader than a door nail... a lost cause ...the fat lady has sung!*”

[***Delivered!***]

But, but ...Is. 40:8 ... “***The Word of our God stands forever.***”  
The WORD stands when Israel bursts forth from Babylon...  
The WORD stands when the Babe bursts forth from Bethlehem...  
Climactically after three days  
THE WORD STANDS when Jesus bursts forth from Joseph’s tomb.

***NACHUMU, NACHUMU AMI... COMFORT, COMFORT MY PEOPLE ...***  
You see, that's what the Shepherd does.

When I'm lost and exiled he leaves the 99 and runs after me.  
When I'm confused by voices of demons and devils  
he calls me by name and I know His voice.  
When I'm dirty and full of filth he is the Lamb of God  
who takes away the sin of the world.

There is a Shepherd who gathers me in his arms until I'm better,  
who holds me 'till can live with the hurt, and  
who carries me close to his heart forever!

Dumb ...dirty... defenseless – We are like that ...aren't we!? One more, though!  
Dumb ...dirty... defenseless AND DELIVERED!

The Good Shepherd freely, lovingly died ... for us – you and me!  
And he lives to deliver compassion, tenderness ... comfort like bookends ...  
in the beginning... all the way through... and comfort at the end of life.

You know, it’s an awfully good thing, “I am Jesus’ Little Lamb!” Amen.

***[STAND]***

Now you are the body of Christ, each one of you part of it! Amen!