

LECTIONARY REFLECTIONS ADVENT 2, Year B  
The Rt. Rev. Susan B. Haynes

**Isaiah 40:1-11**

**Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13**

**2 Peter 3:8-15a**

**Mark 1:1-8**

**Isaiah 40:1-11**

Imagine a time when you might feel overwhelmed and in need of refuge and shelter. Such imagining would not be too hard a thing to do in these days. We are all overwhelmed. We all have responsibilities to fulfill. We all have people depending on us. In our fatigue and anxiety, we long for a place where we can lay down our burdens and simply rest. The prophet Isaiah reminds the people of Israel that God is that kind of shepherd. He is the one that gathers up all of the vulnerable in his arms and carries them. He is the one that leads even the mother sheep. Even those of us who extend emotional and physical energy to the care of others have a shepherd who will provide that kind of care for us. He leads even the mother sheep. Even as we care for those who depend on us, we are cared for by the God upon whom we depend.

***What anxieties and responsibilities are overwhelming you in this hour? Name them before God and climb into His arms to be drawn to Him. While you may be a mother, a father, a pastor, a CEO, the buck ultimately does NOT stop with you. God leads even you. Find a way to thank Him for that leading, that care and that refuge.***

**Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13**

This Psalm reminds us of the beauty of a world that contains the union of righteousness and peace. Truth is the fruit of a world that considers mercy. When mercy is extended to forgive sins, when peace is spoken to those who look for God, when righteousness becomes a lifestyle, when truth is the fruit of the Earth...then and only then does the world become right. The first step is to turn our hearts to God and then to consider with love our brother and sister.

***Inherent in this Psalm, of course, is the exhortation to love God and love neighbor. The action of love (notice I said "action" and not "feeling") brings about the mercy, truth, righteousness and peace that are the hallmarks of the reign of Christ. Consider your plans for the day. In what ways are you going to love God and in what ways are you going to love neighbor?***

**2 Peter 3:8-15a**

We live in an Advent time of waiting and watching. The Letter of Peter reminds us that the passage of time for us is not the same as it is for God. We can feel like we have been waiting a whole lifetime for the darkness to subside, but for God, that passage of time is inconsequential. God is not bound by time in the way that we are bound. If any action from God seems to be slow in coming, likely it is because God is exercising patience as He waits for humanity...all of humanity... to come to His side. The writer here reminds us that when the end of times comes, all will be dissolved instantaneously. This is good news! Our task is to consider and attend to how we will lead lives of godliness and holiness. When we

attend to living lives of godliness and holiness, we actually do our part to hasten the coming of God's Kingdom. A new heaven and a new earth are the gifts for which we wait. They are promised. The slowness that we experience in their realization is actually a hallmark of God's love and salvation.

***Again, as you consider your plans for this day, are they plans that include godliness and holiness? Turn your hearts to God and to your brothers and sisters, and your actions will hasten the day of the Lord's coming. Isn't this a better way to spend our time than worrying about why God is taking so long?***

### **Mark 1:1-8**

Mark announces the purpose of his Gospel as "The beginning of the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." We are primed for glory. We anticipate glory. Surely the Son of God will begin with fanfare and pizzazz! Instead we are given a messenger and really quite a strange messenger – John the Baptist. His startling voice pierces the silence of the wilderness and calls us to preparation, path straightening and repentance. He's a wild man, clothed in hairiness and observing a strange diet. This messenger who is supposed to be "the beginning of the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Son of God," doesn't really resonate with how we think things ought to begin. In John the Baptist's time, when kings visited an area, the people knew well in advance that he was coming. They were to use this advance notice to build a king's highway – a straight path with boulders removed, with rough places made smooth, with valleys and mountains eliminated so that the path was straight and easy. This making the path straight was so that the king would have easy access to his destination. This kind of path straightening required a significant amount of preparation. The kind of preparation and path straightening that John the Baptist expects is repentance – change of life, stopping and turning around, changing our focus to be on God rather than on ourselves.

***Does God have a straight path to your heart? If not, what boulders are in the way? What valleys exist and what mountains prevent passage? How can you stop in your tracks and enter into a spirit of repentance that will make this way straight? What preparations can you make for God who is on the way?***

### **COLLECT:**

***Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way of our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.***