



*Peace*  
**December 6, 2020**  
Isaiah 40:1-11

### Connect:

- Do you describe yourself as an introvert or extrovert? What does such a description mean to you? What about that designation has made life harder during the pandemic? What has made it easier?

### Engage

- Read *Isaiah 40:1-11*. This prophecy is classically shared during the Advent season because it describes a time when God was paving a new way forward. John the Baptist famously quotes this passage in the Gospels as he was preparing a new way forward for Jesus. *Godspell*, the musical, uses this line in its work as well which popularized this message to the masses. We often find ourselves seeking a new way forward as individuals and communities. What is a new way forward you see for your life right now? What do you envision for the church?
- As the name Isaiah means “*God Saves*,” this prophecy is often called “*The Salvation Symphony*.” While the book is packaged as one work, theologians split it up into three movements which, while not notated in your Bibles, are referred to as 1<sup>st</sup> Isaiah (*Messages of Judgment*), 2<sup>nd</sup> Isaiah (*Messages of Comfort*), and 3<sup>rd</sup> Isaiah (*Messages of Hope*). Our passage of focus today launches 2<sup>nd</sup> Isaiah with the obvious, “*Comfort, O Comfort, my people*.” The Israelites have been in Babylonian exile for a long while and are surely skeptical about this new word of comfort given they’ve only received judgment for so long. When people (*or messaging*) in our lives makes such a shift, we are cautious to trust at first. Share from your own experience, a time when a person, or some general messaging, shifted and opened you to a new and welcomed understanding. When did you come to trust the shift was legit?
- Bob Goff shares a practice he learned from his father when hiking the Sierra Mountains. As rattlesnakes can hide under logs, Bob was taught to always step on a log and leap forward in case a snake was hiding underneath. Bob noted that forty years later, he’s encountered exactly zero rattlesnakes in the Sierra Mountains “*and that’s rounding up*.” Even so, to this day, when he encounters a log, he steps on it and bounds forward to avoid the snake’s bite. Sometimes, unsubstantiated fears hold us back from dreaming the world better. What fears currently hold you back from trying something new, following your ambitions or living a new dream forward?

### Next Steps:

- If we continue to do the same things, we’ll continue to get the same results. If your faith life seems high-centered right now, try something new this week. Make more room to quiet your mind. Get some fresh air and allow that space to be judgment free dream space. How might you dream the world better? What can you do, even now, to make that dream one step closer to reality? Take notes of your experience this week and share about it with a friend or your small group next week.

### Pray:

- “*Let there be peace on earth, O God, and let it begin with me. Show me the agency, God, planted within me to promote and be a peaceful presence in the world. May your light of peace shine through me today. Amen.*”