



The
mountains
and the hills
shall break forth
before you into
singing...

Isaiah 55:12

SUNDAY
SCHOOL *Superintendent*

Winter Quarter | December | January | February 2024-25

Sunday School Superintendent

WINTER QUARTER

December 2024, January, February 2025

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Editorials

BY TOM GREENE

God's Breathtaking Love

We begin this season by looking at promises from the Old Testament about Jesus and parts of the Christmas story. For hundreds of years, Israel anticipated the fulfillment of the promises about the coming Messiah. Although Israel received many promises about their coming Deliverer, He was not just for Israel—He was for all people. Because the Father loved the world, He sent His Son as a Redeemer to die for humanity's sins.

Many Jews did not expect the prophecies about the Messiah and the Suffering Servant to be about the same person, but they were. Jesus came to deliver His people and save them from their sin by suffering on their behalf. He was pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities, and by His wounds we are healed.

Jesus' forgiveness is more than a mere second chance. Imagine playing a solo on an instrument you had never touched before in a famous concert hall in front of an audience of thousands. After you quickly failed, would you feel much better if given a second chance? Even if you were to receive a second chance, you would fail again, and again, and again. You would need someone else to come and play the instrument for you, not another

chance. Likewise, even if God gave us a second chance to live a perfect life, it would be no comfort. We would fail quickly and repeatedly. However, because Jesus lived the perfect life we could never live and died the death we deserved, we can now have His perfect righteousness. This is truly good news!

God's ways are far beyond ours, and His wisdom is unsearchable. He humbles the mighty and lifts up the downtrodden. When Jesus came, He was truly God with us. The eternal Creator of all (cf. John 1:1-14) was born as a tiny, fragile infant. How could the omnipotent God accept weakness? How could the omnipresent One accept such limitations? The mystery of the incarnation is truly beyond our understanding. The marvelous truth is that He has always been fully God, and now He is also fully man, forever. Every Christmas, we are reminded of His amazing love in coming to rescue us.

When Jesus came to earth, He intentionally sought sinners. He came for those who knew they were sick, not those who thought they were well. He even spent time with well-known and unpopular sinners and forgave them. He healed those who were sick from all kinds of afflictions.

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Perhaps these are truths you have heard repeatedly, and they do not amaze you as much as they once did. Or maybe you feel that you have sinned too much after coming to know Christ for Him to use you in His service. Perhaps you think that you are destined to slink into heaven, barely getting by without really being noticed. There is good news for you as well. Peter walked with Jesus for three years and saw Him perform miracles. He was a part of the inner circle of disciples, heard Jesus' quiet thoughts, and confessed that Jesus was the Christ. But when opposition came, he denied even knowing Him. Could any of us have betrayed Jesus this deeply? Despite everything, Jesus restored Peter. His forgiving love is greater than any sin you can ever commit. Anyone who asks for forgiveness will always find it, regardless of what he or she has done. He turns no one away. There is absolutely no condemnation for those who are in Christ (Rom. 8:1).

The relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is our principal model of love. As John reminds us, God is love (1 John 4:8). We see Jesus exemplify this in His submis-

sion to the Father's will. Praying alone on the Mount of Olives, Jesus surrenders His will and embraces His Father's.

In response to the astounding love of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, God calls us to love others. Indeed, His love will inspire and empower us to love others. The early church was marked by tremendous generosity, close fellowship, and hospitality. They were brave enough to challenge one another and humble enough to receive correction when needed. We, too, should display all of these qualities. It will certainly involve a lot of hard work, but we do not need to rely on our own sweat and willpower. Instead, God has given us all we need in Christ, who motivates and enables us (cf. 11 Pet. 1:3-7). Because of the amazing love that God has shown us, we can love others as well.

Jesus promised that the world would know we are His disciples by our love, and many spiritual gifts are worthless without love (John 13:35; 1 Cor. 13:1-3). We should love one another, as Christ has loved us (cf. John 15:12; 1 Pet. 4:8). When we focus only on our responsibilities or the things we ought to do for one another, we can quickly become discouraged and worn out. However, when we focus on how God has loved us first, we will be able to love others sacrificially.

This Christmas season, take time to marvel at God's great love for us. There are many responsibilities this time of year. But before you rush to think through the logistics of putting on special programs and services or coordinating volunteers, take the time to admire God's infinite goodness and rest in His love.

Child of God, He loves you far more deeply than you imagine.

Comfort for God's People

Lesson Text: Isaiah 40:1-5, 25-26, 29-31

GOLDEN TEXT—“He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength” (Isaiah 40:29).

OPENING MOMENTS

Suggested Song (Adults)

“He Leadeth Me: O Blessed Thought” (Gilmore)

Suggested Song (Children)

“Jesus Loves Even Me” (Bliss)

Icebreaker

What are some of the truths about God that you find most comforting?

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **An offer to comfort**
(Isa. 40:1-5)
2. **The greatness of the Comforter** (Isa. 40:25-26)
3. **The promise of power**
(Isa. 40:29-31)

KEY ISSUES

All of us need help from time to time. Many of us, though, are so independent that we are reluctant to ask for help or accept it when it is offered. We struggle on alone, never completing our task in a satisfactory manner. We do not like to admit that there is something we cannot do or become obligated to another person. Pride is at the center of our reluctance, and pride is sin (Mark 7:22; I John 2:16).

We must learn to accept help,

especially when someone who loves us offers it. If we accept help for our physical needs, how much more should we accept help for our spiritual ones?

This week's lesson reminds us that God is always ready to provide the strength and comfort we need.

No one can live the Christian life in his or her own strength. We are not strong enough or wise enough. God must give the necessary strength and, sometimes, comfort.

Everyone needs a little comfort now and then—even the people of God. That is why God told Isaiah, “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people” (Isa. 40:1). He gave the prophet one of the keys to being a comforter when He said, “Speak ye comfortably” (vs. 2). It is not very comforting to tell someone what a failure he or she is. Both the words we speak and the manner in which we speak them must be comforting.

Isaiah prophesied of John the Baptist, who was to come. John had some hard things to say to the people of his day, but his message also concerned repentance and forgiveness. He pointed his hearers to the One who was to follow him, Jesus. That is always the greatest means of comfort—to point people to our Savior.