

Second Sunday in Advent

OLD TESTAMENT – Isaiah 40:1-11

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. ² Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. ³ A voice of one calling: "In the desert prepare the way for the LORD, make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. ⁴ Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. ⁵ And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken." ⁶ A voice says, "Cry out." And I said, "What shall I cry?" "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. ⁷ The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the LORD blows on them. Surely the people are grass. ⁸ The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever." ⁹ You who bring good tidings to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, "Here is your God!" ¹⁰ See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and his arm rules for him. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him. ¹¹ He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.

40:1–66:24† In chs. 1–35 Isaiah prophesies against the backdrop of the Assyrian threat against Judah and Jerusalem, in chs. 36–39 he records Assyria's failure and warns about the future rise of Babylon, and in chs. 40–66 he writes as if the Babylonian exile of Judah were almost over. He comforts the exiles and spiritual Israel of all times with the promise of deliverance from sin through the incarnation and death of the Messiah. (CSB)

Within the book of Isaiah, chapters 40-55 present prophetic instruction concerning the realization of Yahweh's worldwide plan of salvation (cf. 2:1-5; 7:14; 9:6-7; chapter 11). He has heard the cry of his people, and these chapters intend to get them ready for the new exodus so they can come home to Zion. (CC)

A foreshadowing the Babylonian exile and return comes in the life of Manasseh. The king of Assyria forcibly took him to Babylon (2 Chron. 33:11). There the king humbled himself and cried out to Yahweh, who was moved to bring the king back to Jerusalem (2 Chron. 33:12-13). (CC)

This act of redemption will take place on a national scale after Cyrus releases the Judeans from Babylonian exile as well as on a universal scale after the death and resurrection of Christ has freed all people from captivity to sin and death. The historical return to Jerusalem after the Edit of Cyrus (538 BC) is not only depicted in eschatological and cosmological colors, but the two are totally fused: the historical event

is a type, sacrament, anticipation and prophetic realization of the restoration of all things. (CC)

In chapter 39, Isaiah appears in Hezekiah's court and promises that Judah will undergo Babylonian exile but not annihilation. There will be an end, but the end will be the start of a new beginning. Chapters 40-55, then, naturally follow chapter 39 and fit into Yahweh's judgment as proclaimed to Hezekiah. There are then both thematic connections between Isaiah 1-39 and 40-55 as well as a logical progression. (CC)

These links, though do not abolish the gap between Isaiah 39-40, which represents the defining interruption in Israel's history. A series of massive changes occurred between Isaiah's call in 740 BC (see 6:1) and 539 BC (Cyrus' defeat of Babylon. The Northern Kingdom fell to the Assyrians in 722 BC. The Nineveh collapsed in 612 BC and along with the Assyrian kingdom (see Nahum). The disastrous reign of Manasseh hastened Judah's demise (Jer. 15:4). Josiah died at the battle of Megiddo in 609 BC (2 Ki. 23:29-30). And the subsequent rise of the Babylonian Empire under Nabopolassar and his son Nebuchadnezzar II brought with it near anarchy in Judah. Most importantly, however, was Jerusalem's destruction and devastation in 587 BC (2 Ki.24:20-25:30). The prophetic word in Isaiah 39 was true (cf. Deut. 18:21-22; 2 Pet. 1:19). Nebuchadnezzar's forces destroyed the capital city and brought its leaders to the other side of the Fertile Crescent. (CC)

The Babylonian Empire, however, was a brief blip on the stage of ancient Near Eastern history. By 550 BC, the kingdom of Persia began to eclipse Babylon and become the dominant power until the rise of Alexander the Great (333 BC). Isaiah 40-55 applies to these times between exilic displacement in Babylon and return under Persian permission. Isaiah's words of comfort follow directly upon the heels of his prediction of disaster (39:5-7). Now, the eighth-century prophet writes words that will address sixth-century postexilic Israel. (CC)

40:1-2 A Full Pardon – Sometimes a prominent person is found guilty of breaking federal law. After he is sentenced to prison, the speculation begins: will the President of the United States grant him a pardon? It certainly would be a great comfort to that man if that happened. (CSB)

In our own lives, we face the judgment that we have broken God's laws. We all fall short of what His holiness demands. But there is a great source of comfort for us. God Himself, speaking through His Holy Word, has issued us a full pardon.

This wonderful, comforting message is found in the prophecy in Isaiah 40. He writes of a great day to come, in the time of the Messiah's kingdom. God has put into motion a plan for universal salvation.

In a world full of problems, strife, and grief, this Advent season brings again the Good News of Jesus. God's own Son came to bring us an era of universal spiritual peace. In Him, we are no longer at war with God. He has pardoned our iniquity and brought

comfort to us. We can count on our heavenly Father to stand by us and help us meet all of life's challenges in faith. Best of all, the road to eternal life is open to us.

40:1 *Comfort, comfort.* Repeated for emphasis ("Comfort greatly"). The double imperative is found also in 51:9, 17; 52:1, 11; 57:14; 62:10. (CSB)

First of three heralds in vv 1–11. The Lord's prophet reminds the Israelites that they are still His covenant people (Ex 6:7; 19:5; Lev 26:12; Dt 26:17-19). Repetition is the Hebraic way of driving home a point; Isaiah used this literary device often (e.g., Is. 21:9; 51:9, 17; 52:1; 57:14; 62:10). Luther: "God's people are those who need comfort because they have been wounded and terrified by the Law and they are an empty vessel capable of receiving comfort. Only those who are afflicted have comfort and are capable of it, because comfort means nothing unless there is a malady" (AE 17:3). (TLSB)

The message of "comfort" presupposes that divine judgment has brought the people to repentance. In 687 BC Babylon unleashed against Jerusalem its policies of urbicide (the destruction of a city's architecture) and ecocide (the wiping out of an environment). When Nebuchadnezzar defeated Judah, it looked as though his gods Marduk (Bel) and Nebo (cf. Is. 46:1) had triumphed over the God of Israel. It seemed that Yahweh was impotent and no match for these foreign deities. Or perhaps the situation was even worse. Maybe Yahweh chose not to defend his people because he had spurned forevermore those who rejected him? (CC)

But Yahweh was not finished with the people! To the speechless silence of Judah's dislocation, God speaks! He does an about-face! Into the pain he commands his heavenly messengers, "Comfort, comfort my people. It is time for Israel to step out of darkness and into Yahweh's marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9)! (CC)

The repeated imperative "comfort, comfort" create a sense of urgency. On the one hand, it points to the people's great need of comfort and, on the other hand, to the Lord's ardent desire to extend the needed comfort. The double use of a word is a rhetorical technique known as multiclimate, which Isaiah uses frequently. This double comfort is not based on Israel's sincerity of faith. It is the determined and gracious initiative of Yahweh alone that makes a new life possible. (CC)

Israel's hurt was deep. But Yahweh's comfort is deeper. The people were "dead in transgressions and sins" (Eph. 2:1). So Yahweh, "being rich in mercy, because of his great love" (Eph. 2:4), takes the initiative and speaks the Gospel. This comforting Gospel comes before Israel responds in repentance and faith (cf. Rom. 5:6-10). Brueggemann writes: "The offer of comfort is not based on the suitability or qualifications of the people but upon the resolve of God." Paul clarifies the issue: "the kindness of God leads you to repentance" (Rom. 2:4). (CC)

nachamu is an imperative meaning to breathe pantingly. (QV)

God has always a message of comfort for His people, even in times of deep affliction; the end of all His dealings with them is their establishment in holiness and happiness. (Concordia Bible)

This verse presents the theme of the book from chapters 40-66; at the same time it presents the theme of this particular chapter. The verb-form at this point indicates that the Lord would have this comfort reiterated over and over again till finally the unbelieving and doubting heart begins to accept it as fully determined in the counsels of God. The repetition of the verb here, as often, spells urgency. The help stands ready at the door. (Leupold)

MY PEOPLE – After all their unfaithfulness, all their rebellion, all their sins, they are still his people. God remains their God. (PBC)

The covenant formula “my people...your God” is indicative of the election language Isaiah employs throughout chapters 40-55. The singular noun “my people,” also demonstrates that while redemption involves individuals, it always has a corporate dimension. Those whom God redeems are members of his one people Israel – in NT language, members of the body of Christ. No child of God is independent from his other relatives, but stands together with them as part of the corporate whole. (CC)

God would not be satisfied with merely changing individuals as if individuals were self-contained entities that could, for instance, serve God separately from their being part of their community... If God changes individuals, that will also do nothing for the corporate entity. If God changes the corporate entity, that will also bring about change in the individual. (Old Testament Theology, 2:394). (CC)

My has the accent, as if to say, “I have a people which I will not forsake.” But they are God’s people not according to the flesh but rather as people who are of a crushed and humble conscience and of a troubled heart and who call upon God in the day of trouble. Others who trust in their own merits, resources, riches, etc., are not the people of God. They do not need comfort, they are not in sadness and tribulation, because their vessel is full and can hold no consolation. Summary: God’s people are those who need comfort because they have been wounded and terrified by the Law and they are an empty vessel capable of receiving comfort. Only those who are afflicted have comfort and are capable of it, because comfort means nothing unless there is a malady. (Luther)

Exodus 34:6,7 “And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness,⁷ maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.”

SAYS YOUR GOD – *Your* is emphasized. A troubled conscience does not think it has God but considers God to be a devil, a judge, a prosecutor, and an enemy. This word *your* contradicts that opinion, as if to say, “Don’t be afraid, because God is not your enemy. Rather, He is on your side, He is gracious to you.” (Luther)

The verse ends, with the statement “says your God,” dovetailing with the command “behold your God” (40:9). Yahweh’s speaking is a major theme in Isaiah 40-55. Just as God created by means of his Word, so also his Word has the power to recreate, redeem, and save. The classic expressions in 40:8 and 55:10-11 further highlight this thrust. Yahweh’s Word is contrasted with idols who cannot say or do anything (e.g., Is. 41:22-24). (CC)

1 John 3:20, “whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. “

40:2 Jerusalem is a major motif in Isaiah. Earlier she was condemned. For example, the city is likened to a harlot (1:21) whose silver had become dross and whose wine had been mixed with water (1:22). Jerusalem’s leaders chased after bribes instead of looking after the orphan and widow (1:23). But this wanton woman is now pursued by her loving Husband, Yahweh! He commands his heavenly agents to speak upon her heart because his love for his bride had not grown cold. Yahweh is yearning to be reconciled with her, and the result will be that Jerusalem’s full beauty will emerge from the ashes (Is. 54; cf. Rev. 21). (CC)

Speak tenderly. The Hebrew for this phrase is used also in 2Ch 32:6, where Hezekiah “encouraged” Judah to trust in God in spite of the Assyrian invasion. (CSB)

The Hebrew word *אָרַךְ* denotes speaking in public, not in a subdued voice. *To speak tenderly*, or “to the heart,” is a Hebraism which means to flatter, to cajole, as in Gen. 34:3: “He spoke tenderly to her.” So here, the heart, groaning and sighing, is comforted by the Spirit, for the Spirit speaks to the heart as He wills. Do you want a gracious God? He answers: “You have a gracious God.” Do you want to be comforted? He answers: “You are comforted.” Here, then, you observe God’s people, afflicted and sad. To them the Gospel is spoken, to their heart and feeling. For Gospel preachers are commanded to say joyful things, more than the heart can grasp, as Paul says (Rom. 8:26), “with sighs too deep for words.” So these groans are comforted with consolations too deep for words. Let the preacher say, then: “I not only preach Christ to you as the One who forgives, but I also give you His righteousness, so that, clothed with Him, you may have all that is His. The comfort is therefore far more excellent than all groanings. Do you want to be holy? I will make you holy, yes, most holy through Christ.” (Luther)

Not harshly, as rebels against the King of heaven and earth should expect, but in the tone of winsome pleading with which a lover seeks to touch the heart of a maiden he is courting (Gn 34:3; Jgs 19:3). Jerusalem did nothing to deserve tender words. Her redemption would be an act of divine mercy without any merit or worthiness on her part. (TLSB)

Through means of human language, God transfers his comfort to others. The comfort originates with God, who reveals it in human language so that it can be extended to others by the same means. Speak to the heart and proclaim, to encourage. (PBC)

The comfort involved is so rich that it takes a number of statements to unfold the fullness of what is implied. The expression involved is almost untranslatable. It means to lay something tenderly close to the heart of another (cf. Hos 2:14). Like a gentle balm this message cools and soothes the troubled heart. (Leupold)

TO JERUSALEM – From this point on, more and more, terms like “Zion” and “Jerusalem” stand as synonyms for the holy people of God, the true believers in Israel. (Leupold)

PROCLAIM TO HER – Cry aloud, shout boldly, let yourselves be heard. It is necessary to speak with a very loud voice so that consciences afflicted with the worst despair may be banished and downcast spirits lifted up. For a troubled conscience is like a condemned man who has nothing to look forward to but the sword. (Luther)

hard service. The exile in Babylon (cf. Ps 137:1–6; La 1:1–2, 9, 16–17, 21). (CSB)

In the Sacred Scriptures every striving, attempt, and religious exercise represents this warfare of the Law. May the Spirit change it into the warfare of Christ! For to conduct warfare under the Law is to strive and to toil under the Law. Certainly those who are zealous in offering works of the Law have this warfare, like the self-righteous, just as the Jews conducted warfare under the Law with an evil zeal (Rom. 10:2). Warfare is the anxious and agitated concern to render satisfaction to God. For under the Law we are as it were under a custodian (Gal. 3:24). To love and to strive is to conduct warfare, and they are zealous in these works of loving and striving. When these works are finished, it is said that “your warfare is ended.” Thus those who are zealous of works here conduct warfare under the Law. For them another warfare is set forth by the Spirit and the Word, namely, Christ as the Mediator and the One who renders satisfaction, as the apostles teach. Every man must necessarily first be disturbed by the scepter of the Law, of death, and of hell and must experience a confounding of his conscience. Such people truly conduct warfare under the Law. To them properly belongs the comfort of the Gospel which says, “Do not fight any longer. Your warfare is finished and ended through Christ, the Redeemer.” (Luther)

All of these lie in the future. The events God announced were so certain that God speaks as if they had already been completed. No doubt exists about this future. (PBC)

This has primarily to do with military service, but can also mean difficulty and trials. On the one hand, the promise means that the Babylonian captivity has come to end. On the other hand, sin and death forge chains of bondage for every sinner. Every sinner longs for the announcement that he or she is free from such bondage. Because Jesus has come, we are released from death. We are no longer slaves to sin. We are no longer locked in the dungeon because of God’s wrath and anticipating an eternity of punishment and hell. Our hard service is completed, not because we have achieved release by our own effort or because we have done our time and satisfied the law. Our

bondage is over because God has achieved our release through his Son, the Messiah. (PBC)

ESV has “warfare.” Destruction of the nation and subsequent Babylonian captivity (Is 43:14). God promised to cut short the time of “hard service’ (14:3) in exile, even though justice required that suffering for sin should never end. (TLSB)

sin ... paid for ... double. † Although she could do nothing to make amends for the debt incurred by her sin, nevertheless the Lord would let her receive good things in “double” proportion to the punishment she deserved (cf. 61:7). (CSB)

You are set free from sins, not by working and struggling but by forgiveness. Scripture teaches deliverance from sins by forgiveness and divine pardon, gratis and apart from works of the Law. This is contrary to the self-righteous, who teach that forgiveness of sins lies in works and strivings. For all seek remission of sins in their own powers, merits, and devotions as they busy themselves with the object of the Law. They want to be delivered by means of cowls, pilgrimages, etc. You shameless hypocrite, you want to revive those things which the Gospel looks back on. The Gospel says, “Believe God, trust in God. For your faith receives pardon for sins.” This is a grand text. Satan has often scolded me for believing the Christian faith to be contained in such few words, “The warfare is ended and iniquity is forgiven.” Mean-while he wanted to have me turn to the objects of the Law and tried to lead me back to this finished warfare. (Luther)

The debt caused by every twisted and perverted deed committed by God’s people and all humanity has been paid off. This does not mean that the 70 years of Judah’s captivity have been enough to pay the debt that Judah’s sins created. Judah could not atone for her own guilt or for the guilt of any other nation or people. But her sins have been paid for. If Judah could not pay the debt, how would her sins be paid for? The answer provides the reason why Isaiah’s prophecy remains so important. Someone will come to pay for her sins. In chapter 53, Isaiah clearly describes how this will happen. (PBC)

DOUBLE FOR ALL HER SINS – By the pure mercy of God doubled gifts are given for all sins. We have learned this by experience. By our endless works and labors and in endless ways we have resisted this grace and achieved nothing but anguish of conscience. Here, however, you see it said by the wisdom of the Spirit that we attain to all these things by the grace of God alone, not as a result of our merits, but for our sins. (Luther)

Penalty of her iniquity was paid, even though she could do noting to make amends for the debt she incurred. She received from the Lord’s hand good things in double proportion to the punishment she deserved for her sins (61:7; Jb 11:6). (TLSB)

“Double” points back to the double “comfort, comfort” announced in 40:1. Thus 40:1-2 bother begins and ends with the two-fold gift of comfort by grace. (CC)

Double grace, that is, much grace, for God not only forgive her, but also exalted her. (Concordia Bible)

An obvious prerequisite is implied in all this. God does not pardon the impenitent. Therefore a preceding repentance must have been shaping up. (Leupold)

Isaiah 53:6 “We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

The word double simply means that God’s blessing are ample, abundant, and beyond expectations. The sins of God’s people have deserved punishment, but God has offered forgiveness and eternal life instead of punishment. (PBC)

Romans 5:20 “The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more.”

I Am with You in Waiting

Comfort, comfort My people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem. Isaiah 40:1–2

Are we there yet? You said it was only a little farther a long time ago!” These are the familiar words of children on a long trip. It’s difficult to wait, whether to reach our destination, or for a special event to arrive.

The people of Jerusalem waited, as exiles in Babylon. Year after year, they longed to return to Jerusalem. Through the prophet Isaiah, God spoke to them and comforted them with a message of coming deliverance. God assured them that He had not forgotten them and was still with them. Their longing to return home was soon satisfied, and their longing for the promised Messiah would finally be fulfilled as well.

Over the centuries, God’s faithful people longed for the coming of the promised Savior. Through His prophets, God was with them, assuring, encouraging, and comforting them in their waiting. As we long for His return, we also may grow weary of waiting. As He sent the promised Immanuel to be with us, so surely will He also deliver us from our waiting. We can wait patiently because God is with us.

Thank You, my Immanuel, for being with me in my waiting and longing. As I wait, comfort me with the knowledge that You always keep Your promises and that You will never forsake me. Amen.

40:3 40:3-5 takes up promises from chapter 35 and announces their fulfillment. The wilderness will be transformed (35:1-2, 6-7), Yahweh’s glory will be revealed (35:2), and the King will come (35:4). (CC)

voice. Three voices are mentioned (vv. 3, 6, 9), each showing how the comfort of v. 1 will come about. The NT links the voice of v. 3 with John the Baptist in Mt 3:3; Mk 1:3; Lk 3:4; Jn 1:23. (CSB)

The second herald, John the Baptist, was commissioned to “go before the Lord to prepare His ways” (Lk 1:76-79). He did so when he preached repentance “in the wilderness of Judea (Mt. 3:1). (TLSB)

In the fullness of time (Gal. 4:4), the speaker with this voice is John the Baptist, the herald of the Christ (Mt. 3:1-3; Mk. 1:1-4; Lk. 3:1-6; John 1:19-23). To quote Pieper: “This prophecy, let it be said, concerns not only John the Baptist but also all other preachers who have a similar calling, whether they lived before John or later than he.” Following in the footsteps of John, we are reminded that those who speak God’s Word of comfort are of little consequence (cf. Jn. 3:26-30; 1 Cor. 3:7). It is the message, not the messenger, that is paramount. (CC)

The word voice appears three times in the next nine verses. The verses can be divided by the appearance of the word. God communicated his message through human speech – the means through which God works on the hearts of his people. God does not work through telepathy or inner illumination. He communicates his thoughts to humans through human words expressed by human voice. No human knows the gospel of God by intuition or meditation. Humans learn the love of God when messengers give voice to the Gospel: God hasn’t promised to work in any other way. (PBC)

It is as if he were saying: “The preaching of the Law was a muttering, incomplete and unpleasant to all ears, and produced nothing but hypocrites. But here comes a *voice*, a clear and complete and universal proclamation which purely and joyously and most loudly declares that the warfare is ended and that sins are forgiven.” This is received from a “voice,” that is, through the public preaching of the Word. It must be heard and received from a speaking voice. (Luther)

Romans 10:14-15 “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

IN THE DESERT – This voice is sent forth in the wilderness both by the preacher himself and by the hearers. By contrast *wilderness* is placed opposite the teaching of the Law. For like a jail, a wall, and a city, the Law secures and fences us in. The voice of the Gospel, however, is a free wilderness, open to all, public, and unrestrained like a wilderness. There is indeed a limitation about the Law, but the teaching of the Gospel is most free and most unrestrained. Hence all these words are as by contrast set against the teaching of the Law. (Luther)

prepare the way.† Clear obstacles out of the road (cf. 57:14; 62:10). The language of vv. 3–4 has in view the ancient Near Eastern custom of sending representatives ahead to prepare the way for the visit of a monarch. The picture is that of preparing a processional highway for the Lord’s coming to his people. In Mt 3:1–8 John declares that repentance is necessary to prepare the way for Christ. (CSB)

The double comfort of vv 1-2 will come about when the Lord breaks into history and comes to the aid of His people. The Lord has done before (cf. Dt 33:2; jgs 5:4-5; Ps 68:7-8) and will do so again (Is 52:7-10). The prophet may also be playing on a Babylonian hymn that speaks of making straight paths for Nabu, Babylonian god of writing and wisdom. Roads were often constructed for visiting dignitaries, triumphant kings, or for idols as they were carried in procession. (TLSB)

To prepare the way of the Lord means to prepare ourselves for the Lord’s activity in us, so that God may help us and our life may be the life of Christ. It is the way because men ought to have a heavenly way. But how is this way prepared? To prepare is to clear out of the way whatever will be an obstruction. This preparation is nothing else than our humbling ourselves from our arrogance and glory. Those are the chief obstacle for the hypocrites, who walk in human ways and in their own presumption and do not accept the grace of Christ. To prepare this way, however, means to walk on it naked, without merits of any kind, in the grace of God alone and with the reception of double gifts by faith. It is as if we should say: “If Thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities” and “But there is forgiveness with Thee” (Ps. 130:3 f.). Now, this preparation is twofold: (1) That we put off our gross sins. This is easy. (2) That we get rid of all self-reliance and count it as refuse (Phil. 3:8). This is difficult for the flesh. Therefore people must cry, importune, and shout, because they are not devoted to sound doctrine, but reason always thinks that justification is in the Law and in works. Thus the flesh and reason judge. Against this the Holy Spirit cries and says, “The Law must indeed be kept in training, as it were, in self-examination, but on a far higher plane and in God’s way through Christ by faith.” (Luther)

make straight ... a highway. See 11:16; 35:8 and notes. (CSB)

In typical Oriental fashion they are even to smooth the way for their king. Since he went into the wilderness, from the wilderness he will again come. (Leupold)

According to His eternal plan, “the way of the Lord” has as its predestined goal the redemption of all humankind through His Son, Jesus Christ. All obstacles will be cleared from His highway of salvation. His chosen people will come forth from the grave of the exile and survive the rise and fall of empires in order that the Savior might be born “of the house and lineage of David” (Lk 2:4) as foretold. (TLSB)

40:4 EVERY VALLEY ... RAISED UP – This is the way it must be. If I level hills and valleys, then they are all alike. So the Gospel makes us all equal. “We have borne the burden of the whole day. Then the Gospel comes and upsets everything. *Valleys* are

sinners, fools, lowly. *Mountains* are presumptuous saints. Here before God all things must be leveled. (Luther)

rough ground ... level. See 26:7 and note. (CSB)

Isaiah is not specifying a literal topographical change but the restoration of the fallen creation. The coming of Christ offers a joyful homecoming to all who have been exiled from the Father because of their sin, which can be described as mountains, hills, crooked ground, and rough places standing in the way of God's advent to them. The sins of the nation, which had brought about the period of indignation and had kept God from His people, will be removed so that they will not longer stand in the ways of His appearance among his own. (CC)

All obstacles to redemption of God's people shall be taken out of the way. (Concordia Bible)

In a general way all this is to be interpreted spiritually. The nation is to remove every spiritual barrier that might hinder the coming of their God. (Leupold)

This, too, is figurative. There are two inconveniences that weary us, the crooked road and the stony road. These denote ways of life according to commandments and reason because, when we attempt to go faster by way of the commandments, we proceed slowly on crooked roads. Then there is the stony road, that is, living according to the Law. This is a bothersome, troublesome, and inconvenient way, as you have experienced. As you toiled along, this way gave you nothing but trouble and unpleasantness. Summary: Every kind of world outside of grace is a crooked and rough road. This I experienced myself when I lived according to the human way in contrition, confession, and vigils and was walking on broken and rough ways. Let him who has never tried it see for himself. Thus the commentary adds more commentary, and one law follows another. There is no sure way. The Gospel, however, teaches the straight and level way, to believe in Christ and to serve the neighbor. This is the straight way to heaven. It is direct and does not meander and curve. (Luther)

40:5 *glory ... revealed.* God would redeem Israel from Babylon (see 35:2 and note; 44:23), and all the nations would see the deliverance (52:10; cf. Lk 3:6). Ultimately the glory of the redeeming God would be seen in Jesus Christ (Jn 1:14; 11:4, 40; 17:4; Heb 1:3), especially at his return (Mt 16:27; 24:30; 25:31; Rev 1:7)—but also in the redeemed (see 1Co 10:31; 2Co 3:18; Eph 3:21). See also Isa 6:3 and note. (CSB)

The Lord's presence in, with, and under a pillar of cloud or pillar of fire (cf Ex 16:10; 40:34). This phrase has played a key role throughout Isaiah thus far (cf 4:5; 6:3; 35:2) and will continue to play an important role, esp in ch 66. (TLSB)

God's glory may be seen by the eyes of faith as well as by the physical eye. (Leupold)

That is to say, the crooked and rough ways establish and produce nothing but our own righteousness and glow in our own works and despair in our sins, because our own glow naturally follows human righteousness. God alone must resist this so that He may reveal His own glow and we may appear empty, since our own righteousness has been condemned by the Law. Then the Christian will boast most proudly in the glory of Christ, who was born, who suffered and died. The Jews think this glory will come because they will return to Jerusalem. (Luther)

ALL MANKIND... WILL SEE IT – All people. When the Lord's glory was revealed in His incarnate Son, His purpose was not to destroy sinners but to bring the light of salvation to all peoples of the earth (52:10; 60:1-3). However, there will also come a time when "the Son of Man comes in His glory" to judge "all nations" (Mt 25:31-32). (TLSB)

LORD HAS SPOKEN – Christ Himself speaks in the New Testament. Moses has been repealed. The Word of God is set forth with full clarity, and through it Christ will be proclaimed. (Luther)

40:1–5 The Lord promises comfort and restoration for the Babylonian exiles. These promises, fulfilled through John the Baptist's ministry, have personal consequences for you and for all people. Just as the Lord doubled the comfort and forgiveness for the exiles, He has doubled comfort and forgiveness for you in the person of His Son. • Lord, as You have prepared comfort for all people through Jesus, prepare my mouth and heart to speak of that comfort and peace to those around me. Amen. (TLSB))

40:6, 8 Quoted in part in 1Pe 1:24–25. (CSB)

40:6 *voice*. The Lord's messenger. (TLSB)

CRY OUT – This time God directs his command to a single messenger, perhaps Isaiah as a representative of all messengers. But precisely who is to cry out is left indefinite and vague. Once again the Lord appears to cover all his messengers in these verses. Every messenger disappears behind the news. The news becomes more important than the one who delivers it. (PBC)

Here this imperative most likely means "to call out" or "to preach," but it could mean "to read." Isaiah's vision initially addressed those who could neither hear nor see (6:9-10). Those who opposed this Word understood it as gibberish (28:13). These examples demonstrate the interconnectedness between orality and written texts. Texts composed for public address are written for the ears and not only for eyes. This has multiple ramifications for the Divine Worship service, which features the oral reading of the Scriptures and the preaching of the same. (CC)

WHAT SHALL I CRY – A message of law and gospel. The law comes first and destroys all human pride. (PBC)

It is now being indicated that much as Israel might want to rebuild herself in her own strength – and who would not want a share in the achievement of great things? – human strength is too utterly inadequate a thing to achieve results like these. (Leupold)

like grass. See 37:27 and note; 51:12. (CSB)

The message to be called out or read aloud is sobering. “All flesh is grass, and all its covenant love is like a flower or the field.” At his call Isaiah had drawn attention to the sinful nature of humanity by saying that the people are “unclean of lips” (6:5). Original sin and its consequence, universal death, is the reason for the declaration that “all flesh is grass,” that is, we are temporal, unreliable, and dying. (CC)

beauty. Hbr *chesed*, typically translated “steadfast love.” All of Israel’s covenantal love is worthless. Their only hope is that the Lord’s mercy will triumph over His judgment (Jas 2:13). (TLSB)

The prophet’s message leaves no human glory standing before God’s great majesty and power. Twice we see the word all. All humans and all human achievements are included. That message devastates the human with its pride. All of us want to consider ourselves important, and we desire to do something important. But all humans are like grass, and every achievement – all their glory – is nothing more than the blossom of a flower, which blooms beautifully but soon drops its petals and dies. (PBC)

Grass came out beautifully in spring in the Holy Land and after a few weeks withered and shriveled. (Leupold)

all their glory ... field. Even the power of Assyria and Babylon would soon vanish. (CSB)

40:7 BREATH OF THE LORD – The “breath” or Spirit of the Lord is normally a life-giving breath (Gn 2:7; Ps 104:30; Ezk 37:1–6; Jn 20:22). However, here it brings death. It is like the hot, dry desert winds that come upon Israel in May to turn the lush, green countryside to a brown desert like land in less than 48 hours. (TLSB)

In the face of the Lord’s hot breath, both the people, who are grass, and their achievements, which are flowers, wither and fall. No matter what humans may accomplish, death still stalks every last one of us and will eventually pounce on us all and devour us. We are not to place our hopes and dreams on anything human, no matter how glorious it seems. The above phrase perhaps recalled the hot dry winds that frequently blew across Palestine from the desert. In a short time such a hot, persistent wind could dry up everything and make life in Jerusalem miserable. (PBC)

It takes nothing more than “the breath of the Lord” – we might say “any passing wind” – to bring about the quick withering of the grass and the fading of the flower. (Leupold)

The Spirit may also bring death to sinners upon whom he blows. In this capacity, Yahweh's Spirit is likened to the hot, dry desert winds that come upon Israel in May to turn the lush green countryside to a brown desert-like land in less than forty-eight hours (cf. Jer. 13:24). The Babylonian devastation of Judah and Jerusalem can be likened to this particular case of withering. In turn, Yahweh will also execute judgment on Babylon through Cyrus, who will drive out the empire like chaff (40:23-24; 41:2) and reduce its hills to stubble (41:15). (CC)

This comparison between people and wilting vegetation is not simply a figure of speech. A profound theology is contained in the words "surely the people are grass." Humanity was created to tend and govern the rest of the creation (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:5, 15). We are inescapably rooted in the created order, as expressed by Moses' pun on the words "the man," and "the ground," in Gen. 2:7. The sin of Adam and Eve brought death upon humanity as well as a divine curse upon the earth and its vegetation (Gen. 3:17-19). What happens to trees and grass impacts people, whose sustenance is the fruit of the earth. Plants thrive and we thrive; they die and we die. The earth mourns and laments (e.g., 16:8; 24:4; 33:9) as do people (e.g., 19:8; 61:2-3; 66:10). Conversely, trees rejoice (e.g., 14:8 44:23; 55:12) and so do people (e.g., 42:10; 51:11). Attribution of human characteristics to plants, like the attribution to people, affirms the critical ties binding humans to the landscape they depend upon. (CC)

Long before the environment movement burst into the mainstream of Western society's consciousness with its warning about pollution, the abuse of pesticides and herbicides, and the fragility of ecosystems, Isaiah testifies to the connections between civilization and vegetation. Spiritual health and environmental well-being are interconnected throughout chapters 40-55. Land degradation signals that people have turned away from Yahweh. On the other hand, the land will flourish when the people return to their God, and he revisits them (e.g., Lev. 26:3-6, 10; Deut. 28:2-5, 11-12; Ps. 65 and 72). (CC)

40:8 *word of our God stands.* The plans and purposes of the nations will not prevail (see 8:10 and note). (CSB)

Unlike the frailty of created things, God's Word remains for all time. Cf Jb 14:1-2; Ps 102:14; 103:15-17; Is 55:10-11; 1Pt 1:24-25. (TLSB)

Matthew 24:35, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away."

Finally, when the Lord returns, the earth and all that is within it will be destroyed. The Word of the Lord will survive even that catastrophe. It is permanent and enduring. (PBC)

The power is the Word of the Lord. Trusting in that Word and using that Word, God's people can confidently face the future, which will bring Israel results that are otherwise humanly impossible. (Leupold)

In the original there is a “but” that precedes the phrase “word of our God stands forever.” This is a defiant “but.” God’s Word is indestructible! It is “forever fixed in the heavens” Ps. 119:89). And so, the Gospel promises in Is. 40:1-2 forever stand! (CC)

The “Word of our God” takes us back to 40:1 and its echo of the covenant formula “my people...your God.” This is not just any god, but the Word of the covenant God, Yahweh, who graciously reenters into a relationship with Israel to bestow his gift of double comfort. (CC)

40:6–8 The Lord’s messenger contrasts the Lord’s faithfulness with the unfaithfulness of all people. Rather than defend your weaknesses, confess them before the Lord, who gives life through His Word. • Dear Lord, breathe on me Your life-giving Spirit through the faithful promises in Your Word. Then I will be swayed by Your mercy and bear fruit to Your glory. Amen. (TLSB)

40:9 Zion. So Zion, though she will lie in ruins and lament Yahweh’s absence, will resurrected. Then she will be able to get up to a high mountain and announce her glad tidings. Yahweh, then, tells Zion not what she is, but what she will become. A similar strategy is used in Gen. 17:5 when Yahweh reminds Abram (“exalted father”) Abraham (“father of man”) and in Gen. 32:27-28) when he dubs Jacob (he supplants, tricks”) Israel (“he wrestles with God”). Zion’s final destiny is made manifest in Is. 2:1-5, where the prophet foresees the day when she will be lifted up as the highest of all the mountains and Gentile nations will stream to her. “For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not remain quiet, till her righteousness shines out like the dawn and her salvation life a blazing torch” (62:1). (CC)

good tidings. † The news that God cares for his people and will redeem them (52:7–10; 61:1). The NT explains that this “good news” or “gospel” refers to the salvation that Christ brings to all people (1Co 15:1–4). See NIV text note for an alternative translation. (CSB)

Last of the three heralds in vv 1–11 is Jerusalem. She broadcasts good news to surrounding neighborhoods, in this case “cities of Judah.” (TLSB)

Every Christian is also an evangelist, who should teach another and publish the glory and praise of God. But the order must be preserved intact so that we do not teach in a confused manner. I would, however, rather hear him who has been sent, and I will hear him, than preach myself, unless I were sent myself. For we must be humble, and we should outdo one another in showing honor (Rom. 12:10). *O Zion, herald of good tidings.* מְבַשְׂרֵת. The emphasis lies on the word *herald*. בְּשֵׂר means to proclaim joyful and happy tidings. For since Zion has been well informed and taught, she must proclaim and urge joyful tidings. (Luther)

GO UP ON A HIGH MOUNTAIN – The message to be published is so momentous that Zion is bidden to go up into the high mountain in order that her voice may carry far and wide. (Leupold)

VOICE – The word “voice” appears for the third time but this time not as the first word of the verse. Two ideas receive emphasis before we read the word “voice.” First, the Word of God rises far above anything human. It deserves to be proclaimed from the highest mountain. God directs the messengers who possess the “word of our God” (Verse 8) to go up to a high place where their message can be broadcast to the widest audience. Second, the message they were to proclaim is “good tidings.” This is the gospel – the good news of God’s tender love for His people. In the verses that follow, we will learn more about the good news. (PBC)

DO NOT BE AFRAID – To announce the good tidings, for thou shalt not disappoint the hopes of those that hear them. (Concordia Bible)

HERE IS YOUR GOD – If the breath of the Lord caused the grass and flowers of humanity to wither, why would anyone want to hear that the Lord is coming? We find the answer in the law and the gospel. Those who reject God will fear His coming, but those who believe will anticipate His coming and prepare for it, will actually look forward to it joyfully. The Lord’s good news works this change, for the good news reveals not God’s anger against sin and the sinner – that is the message of the law – but His compassionate and gracious heart. Both law and gospel reveal the same God. The law reveals Him as fierce in judgment. The gospel reveals Him as gracious and loving. (PBC)

Focus is on God only—not His city, temple, or people. (TLSB)

40:10 COMES WITH POWER – “He comes with might.” Know, then, that although you are only one, your word will go forward because it is the power of God. This appeared in the weak apostles, where the strength of God moved forward against the power of the world, according to 1 Cor. 1:18 ff. (Luther)

arm rules. Cf. 51:9; 59:16. He is characterized by both strength and gentleness (v. 11). (CSB)

Personal strength in action. Cf 48:14; 51:5, 9; 52:10; 53:1; 62:8; 63:5, 12. (TLSB)

Yahweh’s tough and tender arm defines not only the last words of 40:9, “behold your God,” but also the Gospel that Zion/Jerusalem is commanded to announce. The political, economic, and theological claims of Babylon and other oppressors would try to banish Yahweh from the horizon. While he may have left his people for a short time (54:7-8), now he is back, returning as King (41:21; 43:15; 44:6; 52:7). Yahweh’s royal authority will trump the Babylonian hegemony and its claims regarding Marduk. Babylon’s power was celebrated in the festivals marking the coming of their deities into the city, but now a far greater One was coming to his people and his coming would wither the pretensions of Babylon and its man-made gods. (CC)

Our eyes are to look to God and see His coming. What do we see? The Sovereign Lord, that is, the powerful gracious, and faithful God of the covenant. He controls all

things and comes in power. He comes leading the exiles back home from their captivity. He leads them in triumphant procession. (PBC)

“Arm rules” says that His strength prevails and gains the victory. (Leupold)

reward ... recompense.† The efforts he puts forth bring the desired results (cf. 59:16; 62:11–12). (CSB)

The Lord brings punishment for the wicked and blessings for the faithful. (TLSB)

The reward is the result of the work that God Himself performed. God has obtained the reward by the suffering, death, and resurrection of His own Son. Through that work God has achieved forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and deliverance from everything that would separate His people from Him. Blood bought this reward, and God achieved it by His own work. Such blessings no human could achieve. God appears in this portrait ready to dispense these blessings to His people. (PBC)

40:11 *tends his flock.* Cf. Jer 31:10; Eze 34:11–16. (CSB)

Congregation of believers. (TLSB)

Because of His work, God has claimed us as His own, and by grace and the power of the Holy Spirit, we surround this glorious and powerful Lord as sheep surround a shepherd. As God’s people, we are familiar with the picture of the shepherd tenderly caring for his flock. Jesus made use of the image (John 10), so did others like David (Psalm 23) and Ezekiel (Ezekiel 34). The powerful Lord cares for His people. He places the lambs, weak and newly born, in the folds of His garment close to His heart. Those who have young need His special care to lead them. It is no wonder that this message, these good tidings, should be proclaimed from the mountains for all to hear. (PBC)

These are the things that Zion is to publish throughout the cities of Judah. But she cannot publish them effectively unless she first appropriates them in faith. (Leupold)

He assumes the role of a mother and a nurse. He will so fructify the Word that it will in no wise appear futile but will encourage both the strong and the weak. He will feed His sheep, that is, the believers and the instructed. (Luther)

like a shepherd. Those who hear His voice and follow Him can depend on Him to be kind and generous in caring for them, be they ever so helpless and weak (Ps 23:1; Lk 1:52; Jn 10:3–4). Once the Lord arrives, He will deal with Israel as a shepherd cares for his sheep. The militaristic arm of v 10 is also a shepherding arm. This change from soldier to shepherd occurs elsewhere (2Sm 5:2; 7:7; Mi 5:4). (TLSB)

The victory parade from 40:10 continues. Yahweh, the Mighty Warrior, is also the Good Shepherd. On his way back to Jerusalem (cf. 40:5), he carries Israel as a shepherd

tends to his sheep. He leads the procession returning to Zion (52:8-12). The details given in 40:11b emphasize the fact that the shepherd does not lead an undifferentiated multitude, but individuals: each one receives the care he needs from him. "My people" in 40:1 is equivalent to "his flock" in 40:11. And the flock that Yahweh gathers includes the most vulnerable: newborn lambs and their nursing mothers. (CC)

GATHERS THE LAMBS – This is taken from the life of shepherds, who deal thus with the newly-born lambs. As a shepherd protects them with his cloak and in his bosom and gently leads the mother with him, so our God gathers us in His bosom and His arms like a shepherd. He grazes the strong flock running about, but He carries the weak little lamb. These are charming words. Here you see that in the church there are the strong and the weak in faith, and a conscientious pastor looks after them both. To *carry in the arms* means to receive the weak brother. The kingdom of God rejects no one but receives all who hear the Word. (Luther)

carry them in His bosom. Fold of a robe above the sash could hold a sick or injured lamb. (TLSB)

LEADS THOSE WHO HAVE YOUNG – That is, He deals with them as they can bear it. This is what Jacob did when he was accompanying his brother Esau. Jacob said (Gen. 33:14): "I will lead on slowly ... according to the pace of the children." Thus we must deal with the weak brothers. We must gather them. The Hebrew word for "lambs" means "spotted ones," which is the genus in place of the species. Here you see the supreme consolation. First He invigorated the preachers with His own strength. So He consoles them here by assuring them that He will regularly be with them as their Shepherd, so that they may not despair in their own faintheartedness. (Luther)

EPISTLE – Second Peter 3:8-14

⁸ But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. ¹¹ Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ¹² as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. ¹³ But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. ¹⁴ So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.

3:8-14 The pastor will recall that the canonicity of 2 Peter was questioned in the early church and the debate still goes on. (Buls)

Franzmann: While the place of the first letter of Peter in the canon has always been an assured one, the second letter is decidedly an antilegomenon, with the weakest historical attestation of any book in the New Testament . . . Origen (AD 185 to 254) is aware of the fact that its place in the canon is in dispute The authenticity of the second letter was questioned even in the early church and is denied by the great majority of scholars today. . . But the Second Letter of Peter is designed to maintain hope pure and strong in men whose hope is threatened by false teaching and is in danger of being weakened by doubt. . . . The church has been strengthened for battle and heartened in its hope by the living words of this letter, words which are as clear and sure as the history of the letter is dark and uncertain. (Buls)

2 Peter does not teach anything that is not found elsewhere in Scripture. We should be content to consider this book truly canonical. (Buls)

The repetition of individual words in this chapter is truly remarkable. Read the entire chapter marking the repeated words, notice the effectiveness of the repetition. (Buls)

Verses 1-7 give us the situation in which the Christian finds himself in this world. There will be unbelieving scoffers. They will contend that there will not be an end of this world simply because it has not yet come. These scoffers deny two great truths: (Buls)

1. that the universe was created by the Word of God but the world was destroyed by the flood; and,
2. that by the same Word of God the universe is being kept for its final judgment and dissolution.

The denial of God's creation out of nothing is very prevalent in our time. And the denial of the final judgment and destruction of the universe is also very prevalent. People live as if they were going to live forever with impunity. God's Word is completely disregarded. (Buls)

3:8 BUT DO NOT FORGET – If people in Peter's day thought that God would never return (if indeed He was ever there in the first place), how much more hardened and apathetic are the people of today with two thousand more years of getting comfortable with their "nothing will happen" mentality. (PBC)

"But" contrasts verses 5-7 with 8-9. Literally the first part of this verse reads "but let not this one thing escape your notice." The one thing which the scoffers overlook is an attribute of God. The beloved should not forget that their Lord is the eternal God. (Buls)

Bengel: He does not so fully reply to the mockers as he instructs the faithful. (Buls)

Franzmann: To speak of 'delay' in connection with the Lord's coming is to impose human standards on the Lord, to try to fit Him into categories which are not His. (Buls)

a thousand years are like a day. Cf. Ps 90:4. God does not view time as humans do. He stands above time, with the result that when time is seen in the light of eternity, an age appears no longer than one short day, and a day seems no shorter than a long age. Since time is purely relative with God, he waits patiently while human beings stew with impatience. (CSB)

Peter refers to Psalm 90:4, an ancient prayer of Moses. It is important to recognize that Peter is not saying a thousand years and a day are the same. Nor is he providing a numerical formula for predicting the day of Christ's return, as some have suggested. He says that to the Lord one is "like" the other. Since God is eternal, what seems to us to be long time is not very long at all to Him. (TLSB)

TEV gets at the meaning of this verse: "There is no difference in the Lord's sight between one day and a thousand years; to him the two are the same." Peter is not quoting Psalm 90:4 which reads: "For a thousand years in Thy sight are like yesterday when it passes by" NASB. (Buls)

Bigg: St. Peter is not quoting, but drawing an inference from, the Psalm What St. Peter wishes is to contrast the eternity of God with the impatience of human expectations. (Buls)

Bengel: Moses describes God's eternity somewhat more absolutely; Peter, in its relation to the last day, and to men looking for this. (Buls)

Old Concordia Bible with Notes: What he has determined to accomplish a thousand years hence, is just as sure as if he had determined to accomplish it tomorrow. (Buls)

Stoeckhardt: Our time does not affect him, nor does our measurement fit into His calendar The space of a thousand years it to Him but a moment. (Buls)

Time began in Genesis 1. It will end on the last day (Revelation 10:6). We are bound to time. God is not. (Buls)

Lenski: His relation to time must never be confused with our relation to time. . . . Peter does not say 'A single day IS a thousand years and a thousand years ARE a single day.' . . . Both are really the same with the Lord; neither hampers nor helps him. (Buls)

This verse looms large as a basis for two false doctrines: (Buls)

1. The evolutionists and their sympathizers have used this passage as a basis for interpreting the word 'day' in Genesis 1 as a thousand years or a long age; and,
2. The chiliasts (millennialists) have used this verse for their interpretation of the thousand years of Revelation 20.

Both false doctrines are a clear violation of simple rules of interpretation. (Buls)

3:9 NOT SLOW - *ou bradunei*, “not slow,” and *bradutēta*, “slowness,” but *makrothumei*, “patient.” Some are confused and make an accusation about the slowness of the day. Slowness is not a synonym of patience; it is contrasted with patience. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part1)

Who are the “some”? Here is a helpful comment from Lenski: “These ‘some’ are not the mockers (vv 3–4) who claim that all this talk about the Parousia is nothing, these are some of the Christians who will be disturbed by these mockers. Since the Parousia has not yet come, and since time keeps going on, ‘some’ who are unable to account for this ever-increasing delay and who let what verse 8 states escape them get uneasy and think that the mockers are perhaps right in claiming that there is nothing to this whole promise of Christ’s return. Peter furnishes the correct answer: God uses time so as to serve his purposes of grace” (R .C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of The Epistles of St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude* [Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1966], 345). The Lord has every right to choose revenge, to make the unrepentant pay and suffer and die. More than the timeless nature of God is revealed in this verse; the heart of God is revealed. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part1)

Just as there is certainty to the infinite patience of God, there is also certainty to the promise of the Day of the Lord. It will come. Bishop Giertz offers this: “Christ will come again. We have His word on that. But what’s taking Him so long? . . . The kingdom should break through and come in all its glory. What’s holding it back? Peter answers: God’s patience. God doesn’t want anyone to perish” (Bo Giertz, trans. by Richard Wood with Bror Erickson, *To Live with Christ* [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2008], 738). For God’s great desire is that all men will be saved (1 Tim 2:3–4), for Christ died for all (2 Cor 5:14–15) so that the Father might reconcile all to himself through his Son (2 Cor 5:19). (See also 2 Pet 3:15a: “And count the patience of our Lord as salvation.”) God does not desire that his creation *apolesthai*, (“perish”), but that many more should reach *metanoian* (“repentance”). Note also the contrast between some[one] (*tinās*) and all (*pantas*). God literally “makes room” (*chōrēsai*) and prepares room (Jn 14:2–3) so that all should have room (and time) for a change of mind. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part1)

Note that the Majority text reads an article before "Lord." In any case in this verse Peter surely is speaking about Jesus as Lord. We think immediately of Hebrews 13:8 where the attribute of eternity is attributed to the incarnate Christ. (Buls)

"Keep his promise" means "the Lord does not hold back from the promise, from fulfilling it." (Buls)

Old Concordia Bible with Notes: (The promise) of a future judgment when he will save his people and destroy their enemies. (Buls)

It is wider in application than the word in verse 13.

He had many people in Asia Minor to call to faith. And the only reason the world has lasted this long is that God still has people to gather into His church. Let His patience arouse in not apathy but evangelism! (PBC)

Stoeckhardt: What some men call slowness is longsuffering and patience on God's part. (Buls)

Franzmann: The question of the time of His coming fades into insignificance, look at 11, 12, 15. (Buls)

JB renders this verse: "The Lord is not being slow to carry out his promises, as anybody else might be called slow." That gives a wider application than Lenski allows. By the way, note the utter importance of "repent," the very lifeblood of a Christian. Bigg quotes Augustine: "God is patient because He is eternal." Is maybe God delaying the Parousia because of my sloppy repentance? Lord have mercy on me! (Buls)

COME TO REPENTANCE – Repentance leading to faith and salvation is the issue for the Lord, not times or timing. He is patient, wanting all to come to salvation. Repentance consists of contrition (godly sorrow over one's sins) and faith (trusting in the divine promise of forgiveness through faith in Christ). "God, who has called us, is faithful. So when He has begun the good work in us, He will also preserve it to the end and perfect it, if we ourselves do not turn from Him, but firmly hold on to the work begun to the end. He has promised His grace for this very purpose" (FC SD XI 32). (TLSB)

Bengel: The promise will be fulfilled whatever mockers may prate. (Buls)

Lenski: The 'some' are not the mockers, who claim that all this talk about the Parousia is nothing; these are some of the Christians who will be disturbed by these coming mockers. . . . 'Some' get uneasy and think that perhaps the mockers are right in claiming that there is nothing to this whole promise of Christ's return. (Buls)

But the application is wider than Lenski allows. It seems to cover the mockers also. "As if delay sprang from impotence or unwillingness to perform." They merely "consider," They do not believe. They impute slackness, negligence, sloppiness to God because He waits so long before executing His threatened judgments. "But," (untranslated) before "he is patient with you" divides the false thought of this verse from the correct through. note that the majority text reads "toward us" not "toward you." (Buls)

In this verse we have the same truth as is clearly stated in 1 Timothy 2:4. The *Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord* uses verse 9 four times in the article on *Election*. See Tappert 621.28 and 32 and 629.81; 630.84. God's serious desire that all be saved must not be overlooked in the discussion of Election. The second "but" in this verse does not distinguish false from true doctrine but contrasts the two sides of God's will toward all men. (Buls)

3:10 *day of the Lord*. See notes on Isa 2:11, 17, 20; Am 5:18; 1Th 5:2. (CSB)

The Last Day, when the Lord returns to judge the ungodly and to redeem the faithful. (TLSB)

This earth, though outwardly as beautiful as Sodom, is doomed. At a time known only to God, He will intervene suddenly, massively, destructively in the universe. (PBC)

WILL COME - *Hēzei*, "Will come." The verb leads the sentence. Though we don't speak this way, the placement in Greek helps us see the emphatic and certain nature of this verb. The prophets spoke boldly of the Day of the Lord. John the Baptizer declares its imminent reality. Peter writes of its future certainty. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part1)

Verses 8-9 stress the fact that the day of the Lord will truly come according to His promise and purpose. Verse 10 tells us how that day will come. Verses 11-13 linger on the "how" but are already a bridge to the exhortation. The verbs are in the first person plural. Verse 14 is purely hortatory or parenetic. The verb is in the second person plural. All our version, except AAT, follow the paragraphing in the Nestle-Aland XXVI Greek text. (Buls)

Note the prominent and emphatic position of the verb. Note the "but" in all but the AAT translation. "But there will come the day of the Lord as a thief." "Despite the fact that the Lord delays the Parousia for the sake of men's repentance, nonetheless it will come, and what's more it will come as a thief." (Buls)

Bigg: There will be no time for repentance then. This is the essential point on which the wise teacher will dwell. (Buls)

By the way, the terms "the day of the Lord," "the day of God," "the day of Christ," "The day of the Son of Man" are used synonymously in Scriptures. Look at verses 7, 10, and 12. The words "in the night" are most likely imported from 1 Thessalonians 5:2. Jesus used the comparison with a thief at Matthew 24:43 and Luke 12:39. (Buls)

Franzmann: Jesus cut off all attempts at calculating the time of His return, Matthew 24:43. It is echoed by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:2 and John in Revelation 3:3; 16:15. (Buls)

like a thief. Suddenly and unexpectedly. (CSB)

Emphasizes the surprise people will experience at His coming (cf Mk. 13:36; Lk. 24:36; 1 Thess. 5:2; Rev. 3:3; 16:15). (TLSB)

To unbelievers that day will come like a thief's attack. It seems as if thieves just seem to know when to steal. Their act of theft is always unexpected, always a cruel shock,

and by the time we find out, it is too late to prevent it. It leaves us feeling helpless and angry. (PBC)

For believing Christians, however, that day will come not like a thief, dreadful and shocking. It will be like a beloved father who finally comes home from a lengthy business trip, bursting suddenly through the door, arms wide open to hug his children, pockets bulging with treats. His children's hearts will be filled not with terror but delight. (PBC)

The heavens will disappear with a roar. Apocalyptic language, common to books like Daniel and Revelation. Due to the figurative nature of such writings, we must not expect complete literalism but recognize it as an attempt to describe the indescribable, a task as impossible as it would have been for a first-century writer to describe the phenomena of our atomic age. What may be referred to is the destruction of the atmospheric heavens with a great rushing sound (see v. 12). (CSB)

The heavens will pass away with great force and speed. (TLSB)

There are four descriptive verbals in this verse: *pareleusontai* ("pass away"), *kausoumena* ("burned up"), *luthēsetai* ("dissolved" or "disintegrate"), and *heurethēsetai* ("exposed"). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part1)

Hroizēdon ("roar") modifies *pareleusontai*. This descriptive adverb is one of the fifty-four hapax legomena in 2 Peter. The word is onomatopoeic; it suggests a hissing or crackling sound. *Hroizēdon* could express the whizzing sound of rapid motion through the air, the thrumming of a bird's wings, the rattle and hiss of a snake, or the whirr of an arrow in flight (Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, vol 2 [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981], 435). Don't just see a fire here; listen to its noise! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part1)

"Roar" is defined by Rienecker-Rogers thus: "with a hissing or crackling sound. The word is onomatopoeic, expressing the whizzing sound produced by rapid motion through the air and was used of shrill rushing sounds, the hissing of a snake, the whirr of a bird's wings, the hurtling sound of an arrow and is then used for the rushing movement itself of the accompanying crash or roar. Here probably the roaring of flame is meant." (Buls)

elements. Refers either to the heavenly bodies or to the physical elements—in the first century, such things as earth, air, fire and water; in today's more precise scientific terminology, hydrogen, oxygen, carbon, etc. (CSB)

"Heavens," as always, causes much discussion. Because of its proximity to "elements" and because it is distinguished from "earth" many feel that it means the heavenly bodies. Thus Bigg, Bengel, Alford, Plumptre, Green, and TEV. Not so Lenski. In any case the words denote a sudden, universal conflagration and dissolution.

The "heavens," "elements," and "earth" denote the things which God Himself created. But the "and everything in it" denote the things man has made. (Buls)

This doesn't refer to the elements of the periodic table, which of course was unknown in the 60s A.D., but rather to the ordered structure of the universe. Everything will be taken apart everything above (the heavens) and everything below (the earth). Everything that seems so permanent – oceans and mountain ranges – and everything we thought we could depend on – the sun's radiant light and the food chain – will be dismantled. (PBC)

fire. See vv. 7, 12. (CSB)

kausomena was used as a medical expression to describe "feverish heat." As Peter uses the word, it may suggest a conflagration arising from internal heat. The middle two verbs might be understood in this sense: "Being burnt up—or melted—the 'heavenly bodies' will dissolve." (But see the note under v 12 on *stoicheia*.) (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part1)

earth ... laid bare. See NIV text note. Either the earth and its contents will disappear and not be seen anymore, or the earth and all man's works will appear before God's judgment seat. (CSB)

To the fire of God's judgment. God will refine and purify them as the "new heavens and a new earth" (2 Peter 3:13). Luther: "This life amounts to eating, drinking, sleeping, digesting, begetting children, etc. Here everything goes by number: hours, days, and years in succession. Now when you want to look at the life to come, you must erase the course of this life from your mind. You dare not think that you can measure it as this life is measured. There everything will be one day, one hour, one moment: (AE 30:196). (TLSB)

Kretzmann: All the mighty and magnificent structures of man's hands, the immense cities with their proud skyscrapers, the great ships and all conveyances which the ingenuity of man has devised for used in the sea, on land, in the air, all the wonderful works of art which are exhibited with such self-satisfaction; they all will perish by fire in the destruction of the last day. (Buls)

Even the most beautiful Renaissance works of art and the exquisite music of Bach are to be used now only to glorify God. THEY WILL PERISH ON THE LAST DAY. (Buls)

The final verb in verse 10 is very difficult. There are three variant readings: "will be burned" (Codex A, Lenski, KJV, NKJV, RSV, JB, NASB. Another is "will disappear." Thus TEV. But the most difficult is that found in Nestle-Aland Greek text "will be found." Thus NIV, AAT, Rienecker, and Franzmann. (Buls)

Franzmann: The best attested text is the very difficult 'will be found,' which may mean that THE EARTH AND THE WORKS of man that both adorn and disfigure the earth will

be exposed to the fire of God's judgment, be refined and purified, and emerge as God's 'new heavens and new earth' (13). The universe will pass through fearful convulsions (DISSOLVED, 10 'melt,'12) as Jesus foretold in Matthew 24:29. But God's goal for His creation, over which He once spoke His 'very good' (Genesis 1:3; 1 Timothy 4:4), is not extinction but restoration and transfiguration. (Buls)

What are *ta erga* ("the works")? Whose works? Theirs? Ours? Mine? Yours? There are homiletical possibilities here to proclaim God's word of Law. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part1)

Peter was probably remembering Jesus' own words of warning and preparation from Tuesday of Holy Week. The disciples had been babbling away about the timeless beauty of the temple in Jerusalem when Jesus gave this solemn prophecy: "The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken. Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: if owner of the house had known at what the time of the night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect Him" (Matthew 24:29, 42-44) (PBC)

The Greek says literally "the earth and all the works in it." Those works surely are God's and a stunned humanity will behold the outward and inward wonders of God's ordered structure. But those works to be laid bare will also be the things people have done. "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account" (Hebrews 4:13). Yes, God's eyes are universal enough to see the works of billions of people, His memory is big enough to keep them all straight, and His mind is sharp enough to evaluate them. (PBC)

3:11-18 The Lord's delay in returning is actually a matter of urgency for the Church, which He has called to spread the Gospel of repentance and salvation. (TLSB)

3:11 *Since everything will be destroyed.* The transitory nature of the material universe ought to make a difference in one's system of values and one's priorities. The result should be lives of holiness (separated from sin and to God) and godliness (devoted to the worship and service of God). Cf. Mt 25:13; 1Th 5:6, 8, 11; 2Pe 1:13-16. (CSB)

Luther: "Since you know that everything must pass away, both heaven and earth, consider how completely you must be prepared with a saintly and godly life and conduct to meet this Day" (AE 30:197). (TLSB)

Note that a subparagraph begins here. We touched on this matter in verse 10. The first four words in Greek are a genitive absolute. Most versions begin with the word "since," making it causal. For the second time the dissolution of all of creation is mentioned. The version take it either as "dissolved" or "destroyed." (Buls)

Franzmann: This is the center of gravity in all the New Testament teaching of last things from John the Baptist and Jesus onward. (Buls)

Stoeckhardt: Three times the Apostle Peter asserts that the heavens and the earth and all the works on earth, and even the elements, out of which all things are made (atoms), will be destroyed by fire. Does it follow from this that the world will sink back into nothing, as was taught by the dogmatists of the seventeenth century? It does not. It says here that the elements will be dissolved by fire. That means that that which burns is dissolved into atoms. Peter does not say that the substance of heaven and earth is annihilated and turned back into nothing. All that he claims is that the present form of the world shall be totally destroyed. (Buls)

WHAT PEOPLE OUGHT YOU TO BE – What difference does this foreknowledge of judgment day make in our daily lives? Peter is blunt. He calls on people who are washed, justified, sanctified, and filled with the Spirit's power and gifts to "live holy and godly lives...be.. spotless, blameless, and at peace with Him. (PBC)

The New Testament is constantly saying: "be ready, be faithful, be watchful" Sanctification does not save us. It is the *fruit* of justification. Sanctification means to take justification seriously. It is God's way of preparing us for eternity. The last five words of this verse are a prepositional phrase denoting manner "in holy conduct and godliness." (Buls)

Bengel: Peter talks about conduct as regards human affairs, godliness as regards divine things. (Buls)

Rienecker: In the context the words hint that great things are expected of the readers. (Buls)

Kretzmann: The thoughts and minds of the Christians are under no circumstances to cling to the things of this world . . . Our conduct should be holy and unblamable, that our behavior at all times should express true godliness and reverence of His holy will. (Buls)

Potapous dei, "what sort of people ought . . ." Is this an imperative or an encouragement/exhortation? God's Advent people are not scoffers; they do not waffle with uncertainty. Perhaps we could preach this: "As the redeemed people of God, waiting for the Day of the Lord, how, then, should we live . . . and as what kind of people?" (Vv 13 and 14 provide answers!) (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part1)

3:12 AS YOU LOOK FORWARD – Preparing for and earnestly desiring the salvation which will be given to God's people. (Concordia Bible)

This verse continues the thought begun in verse 11. Verses 11-12 constitute one sentence. The word "expecting" can mean either "causing to come early" or "being zealous about." It is amazing how almost all of our versions, in one way or another,

prefer the former translation, NKJV, RSV, and NASB have "hastening the coming." TEV reads "do your best to make it come soon." NIV has "speed its coming." Likewise AAT. We prefer Rienecker-Rogers explanation "to be eager for." (Buls)

Franzmann: Preparing for and earnestly desiring the salvation which will be given to God's people. (Buls)

Lenski: One may expect and yet not be eager regarding what he expects; here also eagerness is to fill the hearts. (Buls)

the day of God. Apparently synonymous with "the day of the Lord" (v. 10) since it is characterized by the same kind of events. Cf. Rev 16:14. (CSB)

speed its coming. That day may be hastened by God's people as they speed up the accomplishment of his purposes. Since he is waiting for all who will come to repentance (v. 9), the sooner believers bring others to the Savior the sooner that day will dawn (cf. Ac 3:19–20). Prayer also serves to hasten the day (Mt 6:10), as does holy living (v. 11). (CSB)

God has determined the day of our Lord's return (Acts 17:31), but from a human perspective, we hasten the Lord's coming as we pray, "Your Kingdom come" and "Come, Lord Jesus!" (Mt. 6:10; Rev. 22:20). (TLSB)

Bengel: He who eagerly desires, presses the matter itself, if possible to a speedy accomplishment. . . . God grants TO MEN many thousand days; one, the last, is the great day OF GOD himself. (Buls)

Prosdokōntas kai speudontas, "waiting for and hastening." We are called to eager and expectant awaiting. A possible translation of the participles would be "expecting and being eager for . . ." or "being eagerly expectant of . . ." And how do we "hasten" the final appearing of Christ? Luther, as we know, would say that we are doing so when we pray, "Thy kingdom come." Yet, "The coming of God's kingdom to us' takes place in two ways: first, it comes here, in time, through the Word and faith, and second, in eternity, it comes through the final revelation. Now, we ask for both of these things: that it may come to those who are not yet in it and that, by daily growth here and in eternal life hereafter, it may come to us who have attained it" (Robert Kolb, Timothy Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000], 447:53). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part1)

destruction of the heavens. See v. 10. (CSB)

elements will melt in the heat. See v. 10; Isa 34:4. (CSB)

Stoicheia, "elements," rendered as "heavenly bodies" in ESV (also in v 10). What are these? Some interpreters suggest these are the atoms out of which everything is made. Others suggest that the *stoicheia* are the works of man (note also *ta erga* in v 10) in

contrast to the works of the Creator God. This is certain: the structure of creation will be consumed and reconstructed. Once all creation was purified by water (vv 6–7; 1 Pet 3:20); now all creation will be set on fire (*puroumenoi*). The Day of the Lord will bring pyrotechnics no one has ever imagined! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part1)

The day of the Lord itself will be the cause of the fiery dissolution of all things. In this verse Peter mentions only heavens and elements. These words and those which follow are a variation on verse 10. But we agree with Franzmann who interprets "elements" here as "the various parts of which the world is composed." (Buls)

Kretzmann: The present heavens and present earth will pass away, not in utter destruction, but to be changed into a new form of existence. (Buls)

3:13 *his promise*. New heavens and a new earth are promised by Isaiah (65:17; 66:22). This promise is confirmed by Rev 21:1. (CSB)

Here faith confesses in the first person plural, in keeping with God's promises found in Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22. The objects are placed first for emphasis. Note the chiasmic arrangement of adjectives and nouns. The phrase is adverbial denoting correspondence. In verse 9 we had the promise of the Parousia. Here it's the promise of eternal life. (Buls)

NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH – Ushered in when Christ returns. Paradise will be regained as all the ruin and frustration with which man's sin has disfigured God's good world will have passed away. Cf Romans 8:19-22. Luther: "That will be a broad and beautiful heaven and a joyful earth, much more beautiful and joyful than Paradise was. There were no stinging nettles or prickly thorns and thistles or noxious creatures, worms and vermin in Paradise, but lovely and noble roses and aromatic creatures. All the trees in the garden were lovely to behold and good to eat... Then no sins or unrighteousness will dwell on earth, no homicide or murder, no hate or envy, but perfect righteousness, love and friendship. Now righteousness and infidelity dwell on earth; from this we should realize what we have lost through Adam's fall and our sin and learn to long and yearn for the restoration and renewal of the creation and for the liberty of the children of God" (AE 12:121). (TLSB)

Franzmann: 'Heavens and earth' indicate the continuity of the world to come with God's first creation, our world. The otherness of the coming world is expressed by 'new,' a word characteristic of the new quality of all that pertains to the world to come. Look at Matthew 26:29; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:24; Hebrews 10:10; Revelation 2:17; 3:12; 5:9; 14:3; 21:1-2,5; for the whole expression look at Isaiah 65:17; 66:22; Revelation 21:1. *Righteousness dwells* in the world to come God's will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven. All the ruin and frustration with which man's sin has disfigured God's good work will have passed away, look at Romans 8:19-22. (Buls)

Lenski: The question is raised as to whether this universe shall be annihilated, and a new heaven and earth shall be created *ex nihilo*. To answer it one must not stop with passages like Psalm 102:26; Isaiah 51:6; Jeremiah 34:4; Matthew 24:35; Mark 13:31; Hebrews 1:11; Revelation 20:11. Include also Romans 8:19-22; 1 Corinthians 7:31; Revelation 21:1-5. The heavens and the earth shall be renovated, renewed, purified, made perfect. There shall be no further separation between earth and the abode of God; they shall be one at last. Besides Revelation 21:1-5 read the whole of Revelation 21:10-27, and close with Hebrews 11:10. (Buls)

kainous . . . kainēn, “new.” The first word is a key word. (Note also the wonderful chiasm in this phrasing.) Peter writes deliberately: *neos* means “new” in sequence or in existence; *kainēn* means “new” in quality when placed against the old. “New” is a great theme of the salvation story. Is 43:18–19a: “Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing.” Ezek 36:26a: “I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you.” Rev 21:5a: “Behold, I am making all things new” (*kaina poiō panta*). 2 Cor 5:17a: “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation” (*kainē ktisis*). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part1)

What is the “new thing” that God is doing? And that God will do on the Last Day? How will he make a “new heavens and a new earth”? He will do so by restoring to its original glory his “very good” creation (Gen 1:31a), setting it free from its bondage to sin (Rom 8:21), purifying and then uniting heaven and earth as one eternal place. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part1)

These new heavens and new earth are the place *en hois dikaiosunē katoikei* (“in which righteousness dwells”). Note the alliteration in the Greek of this phrase. The promise is this: a real existence in a real place. But the greatest reality is that righteousness dwells here. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part1)

home of righteousness. Righteousness will dwell there as a permanent resident. Cf. Isa 11:4–5; 45:8; Da 9:24. (CSB)

"Righteousness" is very dear to a Christian. It is that reconciling gift of God in Jesus Christ which is the very antithesis the condition of man and the whole universe ever since the fall. (Buls)

There will be no more sin, evil, violence, war, cruelty, crime, and jails. The second half of Isaiah chapter 65 is a poetic description of how wonderful life with God will be. “the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more” (verse 19). Jesus Christ has done far more than to just bring us back to the Garden of Eden, back where Adam and Eve started. Once we enter the new heaven and earth, there will be no more satanic testing and tempting. (PBC)

Revelation 21:27, “Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

3:1–13 Knowing that this world will not last, we are to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Mt 6:33). Sadly, we are often distracted by “the cares of the world” (Mt 13:22). Despite our many failures, the Lord graciously works through Word and Sacrament to forgive our sins and to renew us in the faith. He will preserve us unto the end. • O Lord, keep me with Jesus Christ in the one true faith, that I may wait for the coming of the day of the Lord, when You will raise me and all the dead and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. Amen. (TLSB)

3:14 SO THEN – “So then,” in view of all that's been said in this chapter. In 2 Peter 2:13 the willful sinners are called “spots and blemishes.” We are reminded of the righteousness mentioned in the previous verse. Who are these “dear friends?” Look at Matthew 25:34-40. They are those who live now in daily repentance. Such people produce the fruits of the Spirit and fight sin. (Buls)

spotless, blameless. Cf. 1Pe 1:19, where the same two words are applied to Christ. (CSB)

Cf 1 Peter 1:19. Christians are to make every effort to conform to the character of Christ. These efforts do not gain salvation (Jesus has already accomplished that), but they do bear witness to His amazing grace toward all people. (TLSB)

Aspiloī kai amōmētoi, “without spot or blemish.” Both words have the alpha prefix of negation. It perhaps works best to translate them “spotless and blemish-free” (or “unblemished”). (See also Eph 5:27; Gal 3:26–27; Rev 7:13–14; Mt 22:11–12.) (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part1)

at peace with him. † Believers have peace with God as a result of being justified through faith (Ro 5:1). (CSB)

Christians are to make every effort to conform to the character of Christ. These efforts do not gain salvation (Jesus has already accomplished that), but they do bear witness to His amazing grace toward all people. (TLSB)

The dative *autōi* is translated “by him” and is followed by *heurethēnai en eirēnēi* (“be found in peace”). We suggest reading this gracious truth as “in him.” It is a gift. It is from outside of us. So, “Be found in him spotless and unblemished and in peace.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part1)

GOSPEL – Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.² It is written in Isaiah the prophet: “I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way”—³ “a voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’”⁴ And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.⁵ The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing

their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. ⁶ John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ And this was his message: "After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

1:1-8 The theme of preparation introduced in the Gospel for the First Sunday in Advent (Mark 13:33–37) is continued in the text for the Second Sunday in Advent. It describes one of the messengers who prepared the way for the mission, ministry, and message of Jesus Christ, John the Baptist. Indirect references also point back to Isaiah and Malachi. Mark prepares us for the coming of Jesus Christ so that we in turn might prepare the way for others through the proclamation of the gospel. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

The Nestle-Aland text¹ divides the text into two paragraphs: Mark 1:1–6 and 1:7–8. The UBS text² treats the text as one paragraph. Since vv 7–8 continue the description of John's characteristic activities begun in v 4, the UBS arrangement of the text appears to be superior. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

The parallel accounts are found at Matthew 3:1-12; Luke 3:1-17; John 1:19-27. Isaiah 40 ought to be read in its entirety. (Buls)

Unlike Matthew and Luke, Mark says nothing about the announcement of the birth of John and Jesus, nor anything about the birth of these two. Mark begins with the public ministry of the Baptist which likely began in the summer before the appearance of Jesus, which came six months later. (Buls)

The evangelist Mark offers the comic-book version of the Good News of Jesus, not in the sense of a humorous or silly fantasy, but in moving quickly from one frame to the next. Action and expectancy characterize Mark. Narrative and teaching are left to a minimum. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 1)

This makes it challenging for the preacher, especially at this juncture of the church year. There is no visitation, no announcement, no genealogy, no angels, just "Bang, they're off!" jArch; tou' eujaggelivou, the beginning of the Gospel. Mark submits a reference verse from the prophet Isaiah, combines it with a verse from Malachi, and then writes the story of John the Baptizer, the short version, of course. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 1)

Everything about John causes his hearers to be attracted to him. His message, his attitude, clothing, and diet all cause the crowds (and us, for that matter) to wonder what he is all about. But just as the chartreuse and hot pink billboard ad gets your attention for the product it promotes, John is a man designed to bring attention, not to himself, but to the Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 1)

This text leaves the preacher to focus on the person and actions of John the Baptizer as they relate to Jesus. The force of this text rests in the last two verses, where Mark relates John's understanding of his purpose. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 1)

Mark's is the most compact of the four Gospels. He begins not with a birth narrative as in Matthew or Luke, or a cosmic overview of the incarnation as in John, but with a concise summary of the work of John the Baptist. Kingsbury sees Mk 1:1 as "caption-summary" to the whole book (see Jack Dean Kingsbury, *The Christology of Mark's Gospel* [Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1983], 69). The good news about Jesus then begins with the prophetic words from Malachi and Isaiah in 1:2–3 and the appearance of John and his Baptism in 1:4–8. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

The penitential character of Advent is evident in this text, as John preaches "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (1:4). Hearers would be well served by preachers who carefully think through the meaning of repentance. For this work, the essay by James Nestingen, "Preaching Repentance" (*Lutheran Quarterly*, vol. 3, no. 3 [Autumn 1989], 249–65), will prove invaluable. Nestingen makes it clear that "under the power of the gospel, repentance can come to its true end: faith" (261). While based on the Gospel for Advent 3, Year B (Jn 1:6–8, 19–28), the sermon of Gerhard Forde, "On Getting Out of the Way for Jesus" in *The Captivation of the Will* (Steven Paulson, ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005], 94–98), contains many helpful insights for preaching on John the Baptist. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

1:1 *The beginning*. See Introduction: Special Characteristics; suggests the opening verse of Genesis (see Jn 1:1). (CSB)

Much has been written about this verse, only one line. It is a formal introduction. Note that the Nestle/Aland Greek text places a period at the end of the line. Likewise NIV, JB, NEB. These Notes consider this the correct punctuation. We agree with Franzmann as to the meaning of this verse: (Buls)

This is too comprehensive and solemn a phrase to be the title of the opening section only, as some have thought, the part which deals with John the Baptist and Jesus' baptism and His temptation, the preparation for Jesus' Messianic ministry. It is designed to be the title of the whole work, and it is a significant one. Mark's book aims to set before the readers the record of the beginning and origin of that Good News which they knew and believed, that powerful and saving Word of God which the Son of God first proclaimed in word and deed (1:14-15), a word which was still the voice of Christ when proclaimed to men by human apostles and evangelists. (*Concordia Bible With Notes*, page 73) (Buls)

Lenski: These words must be considered the title of the entire Gospel of Mark. . . Mark considers this beginning of the Gospel to start with the work of the Baptist and the Baptism of Jesus, and to extend to his resurrection and glorification. 'Beginning' connotes continuation, and this would be the glad news concerning the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and concerning all his blessed work in the world, ending with the consummation of the Gospel at the last day. (Buls)

The Greek word *arxē*, “beginning,” is the word the Septuagint uses in Gen 1:1. John introduces his gospel with the words *en arxē*, “In [the] beginning” (John 1:1), and says that Christ was the agent of the creation described in Genesis. Mark 1:1 does not directly refer to the creation narrative. The verse may serve as the title of the gospel (so Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key To The Greek New Testament* 88). It may also stress that God is the one who initiates salvation; he is the one who acted in the beginning (William Lane, *The Gospel of Mark* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974] 42). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

These words take all who are acquainted with Scripture back to Genesis 1:1. With the coming of Jesus Christ, Mark tells us, there is a new beginning, a new creation. His coming fulfills all the OT promises and prophecies concerning the Savior who would come to redeem men from sin and everlasting death. Mark’s words, “the beginning,” include everything he wrote in his Gospel. He identifies the new beginning as Jesus Christ and all that he said and did. (PBC)

Mark’s book aims to set before the readers the record of the beginning and origin of that Good News which they knew and believed, that powerful and saving Word of God which the Son of God first proclaimed in word and deed. (B)

This whole verse is designed to be the title of the whole work, and it is a significant one. Mark’s book aims to set before the readers the record of the beginning and origin of that Good News which they knew and believed, that powerful and saving Word of God which the Son of God first proclaimed in word and deed.

gospel. From the Old English *godspel*, “good story” or “good news,” which accurately translates the Greek. The good news is that God has provided salvation through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. (CSB)

Greek euangelion. Here used as (1) fulfillment of God’s promises to Israel about forgiveness and new life through the Messiah and (2) an extended account of Jesus’ teaching and healing ministry, His crucifixion, and resurrection from the dead. “Sometimes (gospel) is used to mean the entire doctrine of Christ, our Lord...this includes the explanation of the Law and the proclamation of the favor and grace of God His heavenly Father” (FC SD V 4). (TLSB)

“The gospel” is “God’s good news to men” (BAGD 317). The subject and content of “the gospel” is “Jesus Christ.” Martin Franzmann (*The Word of the Lord Grows* 170) understands that the aim of Mark “is to confront men with the Christ.” Martin Hengel (*Studies in the Gospel of Mark* 53) states that “the gospel about Jesus Christ” refers to “the saving events of the ministry and death of Jesus in the ‘biographical’ work that is now beginning . . . it contains the whole saving event which begins with the forerunner, John the Baptist, and culminates in the death of Jesus for many and his resurrection.” Regarding the word “gospel,” Vincent Taylor (*The Gospel According to St. Mark* 152) writes, “Characteristic of Mk . . . and freely used by St. Paul, the word is employed here,

not of a book or generally, but of the Apostolic message of salvation in Christ.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

The Formula of Concord (Solid Declaration, Article V: Law and Gospel; Tappert edition, 558–59), refers to Mark 1:1 in a discussion of the word *gospel*. In the broad sense, it denotes “the entire teaching of Christ, our Lord . . . both the exposition of the law and the proclamation of the mercy and grace of God, his heavenly Father, as it is written in Mark 1:1, ‘The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.’ Shortly thereafter the chief parts are announced, namely repentance and forgiveness of sins (Mark 1:4).” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

Our text is certainly one of the clearest calls to repentant preparation in all of Scripture. The evangelist Mark, said to be Peter’s interpreter, follows Peter’s straightforward manner and immediately gets to the point. His writing is a “gospel.” In the Roman world, euangelion denoted “an historical event which introduces a new situation for the world . . . a radically new state of affairs for mankind,” such as the birth of an emperor (William Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974] 43). But while the Roman concept was retrospective, looking back on an event that had already taken place, in biblical thought the word had a distinctively forward-looking, eschatological flavor. The gospel announces that the promised time of eternal salvation has now come (Is 40:9–11; 52:7,10). Mark states clearly that this eternal salvation has come in the person of Jesus, who is the Christ, the Son of God—no question, no debate, but simple statement of fact. Mark does not rationalize; he simply proclaims. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

The good news which Mark and the other Gospel writers report centers in Jesus of Nazareth. Mark calls him Jesus Christ the Son of God. (PBC)

The term “gospel” or “evangel” was not a word first coined among the Christians. On the contrary, the concept was significant both in pagan and Jewish culture. Among the Romans it meant “joyful tidings” and was associated with the cult of the emperor, whose birthday, attainment to majority and ascension to power were celebrated as festival occasions for the whole world. The reports of such festivals were called “evangels” in the inscription and papyri of the Imperial Age. A Calendar inscription from 9 BC found in Priene in Asia Minor, says of the emperor Octavian (Augustus): “the birthday of the god was for the world the beginning of joyful tidings which have been proclaimed on his account. This inscription is remarkably similar to Mark’s initial line and it clarifies the essential content of an evangel in the ancient world: an historical event which introduces a new situation for the world. In this perspective the Roman would understand Mark’s proclamation of Jesus the Messiah. Beginning with the inauguration of Jesus’ public ministry, Mark announces Jesus’ coming as an event that brings about a radically new state of affairs for mankind. (Lane)

Jesus. See NIV text note on Mt 1:21. (CSB)

A major theme of Mark. (TLSB)

"Jesus Christ, the Son of God" is adjectival genitive. The Good News is ever and always and only about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Jesus is the personal name of the incarnate Christ (Matthew 1:21). Christ denotes His office, the Anointed One, the Messiah, Who was anointed with the Holy Spirit when He was baptized (Mark 1: 10). There are six nouns in this line. Only the second has an article. But all six are definite: "The beginning of the good news about the Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the (Only) God." Plainly this one-line title stresses both natures in Christ: "Jesus Christ" speaks of the incarnate Christ; "Son of God" speaks of His divinity. "The Son of God" is applied to Jesus again and again in this Gospel (3:11; 5:7; 9:7; 14:61.62; 15:39). (Buls)

The verse serves to introduce Mark's account. It is *to euaggelion* of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Some manuscripts omit the title. For a treatment of *huiou theou*, see Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1959, 1963), 270–305). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

Jesus was his personal name chosen by God and revealed to Joseph by the angel saying, "You are to give him the name of Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Jesus is the NT form of the name of Joshua which means "Yahweh is help and salvation." It was a very popular name. But for Jesus of Nazareth it is descriptive of our Lord's mission – to be mankind's Savior. (PBC)

jlhsou', an objective genitive, refers to the story of Jesus, not the message preached by him. Cristou' points to the Gentile understanding of the Jewish promise of one coming to save. The object of v 1 is much the same as the time/date/place stamp at the opening scene of a historical movie. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 1)

Christ. See NIV text note on Mt 1:17. (CSB)

The name Christ, used here a proper name, is also descriptive of our Lord's mission. Christ means "the anointed one." This Jesus, of whom Mark writes, is thus not just any Jesus, but the Jesus anointed by the Holy Spirit to be our prophet, priest and king. Jesus himself in his ministry avoided using the name Christ, or Messiah, because by that time the name had been given false, political overtones. (PBC)

SON OF GOD – Using this title, Mark comes from the point of view presents his account of the good news about Jesus Christ. Though Jesus Christ was rejected by his own people and crucified as a malefactor, Mark tells us that he was anything but a malefactor. The study of Mark's Gospel leads step by step to the conviction arrived at the centurion at the cross, "Surely this man was the Son of God (15:39). It is Mark's God-given purpose to lead you and me to recognize the man Jesus Christ as the very Son of God and to confess him as such (see 1:11; 3:11; 5:7; 9:7; 12:16; 13:332; 14:36,61; 15:39). In this Matthew (1:23), Luke (1:35) and John (1:14; 20:31) fully agree with him. (PBC)

The words “the Son of God” pose a text-critical problem. Some manuscripts lack the phrase. Most English versions, including the NIV, NASB, and RSV, retain the words but indicate the problem in a footnote. The omission of the phrase would not cause any theological difficulties since the intent of the gospel is to lead the reader to the conviction that Jesus Christ is indeed the Son of God who came “to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

1:2-3 *in Isaiah the prophet.* The quotation that immediately follows (see first two poetry lines) comes from Mal 3:1 but is followed by one from Isa 40:3 (see note on Mt 27:9). Understanding the ministry of Jesus must begin with the OT. What Isaiah says about God applies to Jesus, his Son (v. 1). The passages cited speak of the messenger, the desert and the Lord, each of which is stressed in vv. 4–8. (CSB)

OT passages now fulfilled. “John the Baptist (preceding Christ) is called a preacher of repentance, but this is for the forgiveness of sins. That is, John was to accuse all and convict them of being sinners. This is so they can know what they are before God and acknowledge that they are lost. So they can be prepared for the Lord to receive grace and to expect and accept from Him the forgiveness of sins” (SA III III 5). (TLSB)

Isaiah is mentioned because he was Israel’s preeminent prophet, only his name need be mentioned here. He is the only prophet quoted in Mark (cf 7:6-7). (TLSB)

Notice that Mark begins his gospel not with the story of Christmas, but with the words of the prophet Isaiah. The same prophet who had so much to say about the coming Messiah also spends time previewing the one who would prepare his way. And Mark thinks it’s so important that he repeats those prophetic words in order to introduce the event at the Jordan. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 1)

The verse attributes the OT quote to Isaiah, but while v 3 is from Is 40:3, v 2 is from Ex 23:20 and Mal 3:1. That this was recognized as a problem is indicated by the fact that some manuscripts have the reading “in the prophets.” The most likely explanation is that Mark was using a catena of Bible passages in which the Isaiah passage was at the head. Taylor (p 153) suggests that Mark was using “a collection of Messianic proof-texts.” What is obvious is that Mark, under inspiration, sees the Old Testament as the basis for understanding John the Baptist’s role as the one whom God has raised up to prepare the way for the Messiah in the person of Jesus Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

The quotation is from the Septuagint version of Is 40:3, with one change. The Septuagint reading is “make straight paths for our God” instead of “make straight paths for him.” Mark clearly understands that Isaiah pointed forward to Jesus Christ, the Son of God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

Next, following apostolic practice, Mark immediately cites OT authority. The gospel fulfills what God had promised through the centuries. Mark follows a rabbinic method of citing only the most prominent source, Isaiah. Actually, the quote combines three

passages. In Ex 23:20, God promised to send his angel before Israel in the first exodus through the wilderness to the Promised Land. The quote also draws from Mal 3:1, 23 (English 3:1; 4:5) where the promise is reiterated in more detail and applied to a future deliverance: the messenger will be a second Elijah, and the Lord himself will suddenly come to his temple. The second part of Mark's quote is from Is 40:3, which speaks of a second exodus through the wilderness to the final deliverance prepared for the people by the Lord himself. Thus both the Torah and the Prophets attest to the promise of a herald in the wilderness who will precede the Lord himself, and then the Lord will lead his people into the promised "land" of eternal salvation. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

My messenger. Mark brings the reader the first essential information needed to understand the story. The great Jewish prophet wrote long ago that a messenger would come. Mark connects Isaiah's words with Malachi's description of where the messenger would come from and what he would pronounce. Mark joins them together to introduce the Baptizer to the reader. This seems to be a passing of the torch from prophet to prophet to quickly prove John's legitimacy. *¡¡douv*, a term weakly translated "behold/look/see," offers the effect of an upside-down exclamation point at the beginning of the sentence in the Spanish language. *eJtoimavsate*, an aorist imperative, sums up the message of the Baptizer, "you must prepare now!" (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 1)

Matthew stressed that the connection to the OT because he wrote his Gospel for Jewish readers well-acquainted with the OT. Mark wrote for Gentile readers and so, except for this one instance, does not personally refer to the OT prophecies. In writing his Gospel he simply wants us to observe Jesus in action and in doing so wants us to come to the same conclusion Matthew drew from the OT prophecies he quoted so frequently. Mark opens his Gospel with the OT prophecy concerning John the Baptist. In thus presenting John's credentials Mark likewise presents the credentials of Jesus Christ the Son of God, whose forerunner John was. Note, therefore, that Christianity is not a new religion, but is the fulfillment of God's OT promises. (PBC)

This citation is from Mal 3:1 and Is 40:3. John the Baptist brings the prophetic office to a point as he comes as the messenger sent from God to prepare his way. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

Exodus 23:30 contains God's promise to send his messenger before the people on a first exodus through the wilderness to Canaan. In Isaiah 40:3 the messenger announces the second exodus through the wilderness to the final deliverance prepared for God's people. (Lane)

PREPARE YOUR WAY – At Malachi 3:1 the LXX reads in translation: "Behold I am sending my messenger and he will take an interest in the way before me, and suddenly the Lord will come to his temple, namely the Lord of the Covenant, whom you desire."

Note that the Greek text has a comma after verse 3. RSV and JB follow this idea which we consider correct. "Just as it stands written" is answered in verse 4: "Just as it stands written, so there came John the Baptist etc." Fulfillment corresponds precisely to prophecy. Only verse 3 is found in Isaiah. Mark has been accused of ignorance because the prophecy in verse 2 is from Malachi 3:1. (Buls)

For several reasons we confidently defend Mark against such accusation: (Buls)

- a. Matthew 3:3; Luke 3:4 and John 1:23 tell us that the Baptist spoke only Isaiah 40:3 of himself. This is found at Mark 1:3. Nowhere does it say that the Baptist spoke Malachi 3:1 of himself, though Jesus Himself applied it to him at Matthew 11:10 and Luke 7:27. In other words, at Mark 1:2 only Isaiah is mentioned because the Baptist quoted only Isaiah concerning himself; (Buls)
- b. And Bengel rightly points to other instances like this in the NT: "In the same way as Matthew in 21:4.5 quotes Zechariah under the title of one prophet, and at the same time blends with Zechariah's words something out of Isaiah 62: 11; and as Paul also, in Romans 9:27 quotes Isaiah by name, and yet has interwoven with Isaiah's words something out of Hosea 2:1, so Mark quotes two prophets, and yet mentions only the one by name. . . . John the Baptist himself quoted Isaiah, not Malachi, concerning himself." (Buls)

Note that Nestle/Aland note a reference to Exodus 23:20 in the margin. Mark 1:2 is found verbatim at Exodus 23:20 in the LXX. But there the reference is plainly to the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night. At Malachi 3:1 the LXX reads in translation: "Behold I am sending My messenger and he will take an interest in the way before Me, and suddenly the Lord will come to His temple, namely the Lord of the Covenant, whom you desire." The Hebrew at Malachi 3:1 reads: "Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me." (NASB). Therefore, though Mark 1:2 agrees verbatim with Exodus 23:20 in the LXX, but does not do so at Malachi 3:1, the reference at Mark 1:2 is clearly to Malachi 3:1. Some critics have played havoc with this. For example Danker (*Multipurpose Tools for Bible Study*, p. 90, edition of 1960. (Buls)

Matthew (11:10 where this same passage is found) evidently ties up the fortunes of Israel's past history as presented in the Exodus along with her future destiny as seen by the prophet Malachi and alleges that Israel's entire history has meaning only in terms of John the Baptist's activity as related to Jesus' Messianic mission. Significant is the alteration in the second quotation of "my" to "your" to conform to the pronoun in the quotation from Exodus. Jesus is the embodiment of Israel. (Buls)

Mark 1:2 is not conforming to Exodus 23:20, but *DID* change "my" to "you" from Malachi 3:1 because "you" (twice in this verse) is referring directly to Christ, true God incarnate. Jesus is not the embodiment of Israel. That false idea is a subtle way of identifying "The Servant of the Lord" in Isaiah 53 with all of Israel, not just Jesus in prophecy. (Buls)

Back to Mark 1:2. As already stated, "you" (twice) refers directly to Christ. Jehovah sent the Baptist to prepare the way for Christ. Prophecy was fulfilled. (Buls)

1:3 MAKE STRAIGHT PATHS – Before a king made a journey to a distant country, the roads he would travel were improved. Similarly, preparation for the Messiah was made in a moral and spiritual way by way the ministry of John, which focused on repentance and forgiveness of sin and the need for a Savior. (CSB)

Exodus 23:20 contains God's promise to send his messenger before the people on the first exodus through the wilderness to Canaan. In Isaiah 40:3 the messenger announces the second exodus through the wilderness to the final deliverance prepared for God's people. (Lane)

This is what the Baptist said of himself. All four Gospels make a point of this. (References above). Matthew, Mark and Luke quote the first three lines alike. These words are from the LXX. They change "of our God" to "His" meaning Christ. The divinity of Christ is implicit. "In the desert" in Isaiah was figurative, denoting the miserable condition of Israel, but, in all four Gospels where it is quoted, it is literal. Mark 1:4 clearly shows that. Verses 4-8 will show us that what the Lord said through the Prophet Isaiah came true in the person of John the Baptist. The second and third lines of Mark 1:3 are an example of Hebrew parallelism, saying the same thing in different words. (Buls)

1:4-11 The Baptism of Our Lord serves as the foundation for the life and work of Jesus in the Gospel according to St. Mark. In the Gospels according to Sts. Matthew and Luke, it plays a pivotal role that is preceded by Jesus' rather low-key birth and youth and followed by his high-profile public ministry. From a slightly different perspective, Jesus' Baptism in Mark serves as the initial introduction to Jesus and, thus, forms the basis for interpreting his later temptation, the calling of the four fishermen, and the series of miracles that follow. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

It is important to note here that the very early placement of the Baptism of Our Lord in Mark has been erroneously interpreted by some. Already in the third century, Paul of Samosata, an Adoptionist, erroneously suggested that Jesus was born a simple man. Later, he was adopted by God in his Baptism and then became the recipient of divine powers similar to the prophets, but to a much greater degree. This heresy has been termed Dynamic Monarchianism. This interpretation has been "adopted" by some modern theologians who deny the mystery of the incarnation. According to Scripture and the tradition of the Fathers, the Baptism of Our Lord is revelatory. That is, it makes known what would otherwise remain unknown. Jesus, born of Mary in time, is eternally God and the Second Person of the Holy Trinity: he is the beloved Son of the Father and the bearer of the Holy Spirit. (See Augustine, *Sermon 52.*) (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

In this Series (B) of texts, verses 4-8 have already been covered in the text for Advent II. Very likely verses 4-8 are repeated here to show the close connection between the

mission of the Baptist and the baptism of Jesus. Consult the Notes for Advent II for verses 4-8. (Buls)

The Notes on this text will not repeat all the thoughts put forth in three other textual studies in the three-year series, namely, Matthew 3:13-17, Series A, Epiphany I, pp. 19-21; John 1:29-34, Series A, Epiphany II, pp. 22-25; and, Luke 3:21-22, Series C, Epiphany I, pp. 18-19. Matthew 3:13-17 (five verses) gives us the fullest account of Jesus' baptism. Luke 3:21-22 (two verses) gives us the briefest account. Mark 1:9-11 (three verses) is parallel to that in Matthew and Luke. The account at John 1:29-34 assumes knowledge of Jesus' baptism, for in verses 32-33 the Baptist clearly refers to the incident of Jesus' baptism. (Buls)

Mark 1:4 And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Mark 1:5 The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. Mark 1:6 John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. Mark 1:7 And this was his message: "After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie." Mark 1:8 "I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." (Buls)

1:4-8 The main ideas of Mk 1:4–8 are the great words of John the Baptist: “preaching,” *kērussōn*, means “to proclaim,” much as a herald announces a king’s message. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 1)

John’s message was not simply the hammering blows of the Law, calling sinners to confess their sins. He was a preacher of the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins, offered by his Baptism, which pointed forward to the “one more powerful than I.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 1)

John is greater than the Old Testament prophets because he is the last herald before the coming of Jesus Christ. He is the announcer *before* the main event. He prepared the way (v 3) for “the Lord” (Is 40:3)—Jesus Christ, who would baptize the people with the Holy Spirit. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 1)

1:4 *John came.* Mark, like John, has no nativity narrative, but begins with the ministry of John the Baptist. The name John means “The LORD is gracious.” (CSB)

The appearance of a prophet shattered 400 years of silence from heaven. Israel knew that the age of prophecy had ceased long ago, but the faithful remnant still cherished the hope that God would fulfill his promise to send the Prophet (Deut 18:15– 19). John’s appearance confirmed that the fulfillment of that hope was at hand. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

From Mark’s perspective, John is important not for his own sake but as the beginning of the unfolding drama of redemption which centers in Jesus of Nazareth. The brevity of

his presentation of John serves to project into sharp relief two features of the Baptist's ministry which were of special significance to him (1) John's career was the result of divine appointment in fulfillment of prophecy; (2) John bore witness to the supreme dignity and power of the Messiah, whose coming was near. (Lane)

baptizing. John's practice of baptizing those who came to him in repentance was so characteristic of his ministry that he became known as "the Baptist" or "the Baptizer." (CSB)

AAT is a typical translation: "So John the Baptizer came into the wilderness, preaching, etc." AV and NKJV: "John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching etc." We would translate: "(In keeping with prophecy) there came John, baptizing in the wilderness and preaching etc." In other words, the two participles denote attendant circumstance. He did two things: baptized and preached. We have already mentioned that "in the desert" is locative. The Gospel of John (1:28 and 3:22) clearly indicates that the Baptist did not always stay in one place. He did his work in the desert on both sides of the Jordan between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. (Buls)

Bengel suggests that this verse is elliptical for: "baptizing the baptism of repentance and preaching the preaching of repentance." That makes sense. He preached both Law and Gospel as is clear from Matthew, Luke and John. Lenski rightly points out that "repentance" literally means "to think after, to regret." Regret what? Their sins. It becomes clear at the end of verse 5. But there "repentance" is evidently used in the wider sense denoting both contrition and faith. It was a "contrition and faith baptism." The language here denotes both the purpose and the result of the baptism. (Buls)

Here we must mention that, to this day, the Reformed do not consider baptism a means of grace. In this pericope Hendriksen (a Baptist) refers to baptism as a "rite, a powerful stimulant to conversion, a symbol of divine purification, only the outward rite." But the text speaks of "contrition and faith baptism for the forgiveness of sins." Hendriksen considers no instance of baptism as a true means of grace. Furthermore, some claim that John's baptism did not forgive sins, but Jesus' did. (Buls)

Lenski: Not a few consider John's baptism to be different from Christ's, John's conveying no grace and remission, while that of Jesus does. On this point Acts 2:38 is decisive. . . Jesus himself took up and continued John's baptism (John 4;1.2), and eventually instituted this Baptism for all nations. In essentials John's and Christ's baptism are the same. The Baptist's was administered on the basis of the revelation made at that time; that of Jesus on the level of his completed work. The Baptist's made followers of the Christ to come; that of Jesus followers of the Christ already come. Thus the baptism of John was preparatory for Israel alone, Christ's permanent for all nations. Only in this way was the one merged into the other. The remission bestowed by them was identical. (Buls)

Furthermore, with reference to "forgiveness of sins" Bengel remarks "without the need of Levitical sacrifices." True. The Mosaic Law, including the Ceremonial Law, served as bondsman until Christ would come. Galatians 3:23.25. The whole Epistle to the Hebrews attests to this truth. But the Baptist made no mention of circumcision, sacrifices, etc. He preached and baptized. Period. He was Christ's immediate forerunner. Christ abolished the necessity of the Ceremonial Law. (Buls)

ejgevneto, aorist from givnomai, carries the sense of Ed McMahon's introduction, "Here's Johnny!" khruvsswn, "preaching" or "proclaiming," connects John's actions with Malachi's prophesy. baptisma metanoiva" eij" a[fesin aJmartiw'n is seen as a baptism that the hearer chooses to undergo, demonstrating his heartfelt repentance. This must be contrasted to v 8, baptivsei uJma" eijn pneuvmati aJgivw/. The first baptism is chosen by the hearer and performed by a human with water. The latter Baptism is chosen and performed by the Christ with the Holy Spirit. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 1)

baptivzw: While much has been written on Christian Baptism, several points of contrast need to be made between the Baptism via Holy Spirit, and the baptism John was performing. John, being the last in line of Old Testament prophets, uses baptism as a demonstration act of repentance. This seems to have been a custom used for Jewish proselytes, but adopted by John for use among all people to prepare them for the coming One. baptivzw, "I bathe" or "I wash" or "I dip," is redefined by John to be a sign of repentance among the Pharisees, as well as the hated Gentiles and even Roman soldiers (from the parallel passages, Mt 3:1–10; Lk 3:2–17). And yet in v 8, John differentiates between his practice and baptism as refined by the Christ. He will use not only water, but also the Holy Spirit. If baptivzw is translated to mean "wash with water/Spirit," then v 8 conveys an unusual force. "I wash you with water, but the coming One will wash you with the Holy Spirit." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 1)

baptizōn en tēi erēmōi, "baptizing in the desert." Whereas Baptism is a washing with water, the desert is the place one would least expect to find water, but, no doubt, a dry and dusty place where a washing with water is most needed. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

Another text-critical problem is whether the participle *baptizōn*, "baptizing," is preceded by the article *ho*. If the article is absent, the phrase reads "John came, baptizing" (as in NKJV, TEV), while if the article is included, it would make the participle John's title: "John the Baptist" (as in NIV, RSV, NASB, NEB). The RSV has "John the Baptizer." In any event, the distinctive feature of John's activity was baptizing, and this led to his title. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

In explaining the participle *kērussōn*, "preaching," Robert G. Bratcher (*A Translator's Guide to The Gospel of Mark*, 5) suggests "proclaiming his message, announcing, telling people." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

The NASB, RSV, and NKJV have identical translations of the phrase "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." The TEV reads, "Turn away from your sins and be baptized." Taylor (p 154) states that the Greek word for baptism "is the distinctive NT word for 'baptism.' Here it is characterized by the genitive of quality 'a repentance-

baptism.” He sees the Greek word for repentance as denoting “a change of mind,’ but in the NT it is used in a deeper sense, indicating a deliberate turning . . . , ‘a coming to one’s senses, resulting in a change of conduct.” He understands that “the baptism has for its end . . . the remission of sins.” Larmar Williamson (*Mark 31–32*) comments, “Since in verse 5 John’s hearers respond to his call by ‘confessing their sins,’ repentance seems also to imply recognizing one’s sins, being sorry for them, and admitting them publicly. . . . Repentance, no less than the heavenly kingdom, is the gift of God.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

The NEB translation, “a baptism in token of repentance, for the forgiveness of sins,” obviously does not see John’s baptism as a means of grace. In his commentary on the NEB (*The Gospel According to Mark 9*), C. F. D. Moule writes, “Thus, the Baptist, who was so called because of his symbolic use of water, was in this way evidently giving dramatic, visible expression to his call to repentance. Those whose consciences responded to John’s call to moral reform submitted to being dipped in the river . . . as a sign of their response.” In stark contrast to this, the clear statement of the text is that John’s baptism was “for the forgiveness of sins.” Baptism was not symbolic or just a sign; those who were baptized did in fact receive forgiveness. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

Pieper (*Christian Dogmatics* 3.288–89) indicates that Lutheran theologians have claimed “the essential and complete identification of the Baptism of John with Christian Baptism.” Pieper writes, “according to Scripture, the Baptism of John actually was a means of grace with *vis dativa* (power to give remission) and *vis effectiva* (power to effect faith) . . . the Baptism of John is expressly described as a ‘Baptism of repentance for the remission of sins’ . . . (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3).” Acts 19:1-6 may indicate that there was a difference between Christian baptism and that of John, since those baptized by John did not receive the Holy Spirit until later baptized into Christ. Nevertheless, this passage gives no indication that John’s baptism did not convey forgiveness and faith. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

John came baptizing. This was such a striking activity that he became known simply as John the Baptizer. While there are OT and Jewish parallels (cf. the cleansing of Naaman in the Jordan, 2 Kings 5), this “baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” was quite unique. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

the desert region. The arid region west of the Dead Sea, whose inhabitants included those who wrote and preserved the Dead Sea Scrolls. (CSB)

Prophets and their activity are frequently set in the wilderness (e.g., Elijah; 1 Kings 19:4-8). Here, it probably refers to where the Jordan River empties into the Dead Sea. (TLSB)

In the OT the period of Israel’s wilderness wandering is often portrayed as the time when the people learned what it truly meant to be the Lord’s. There God chastised Israel as his beloved son and taught him true repentance (cf. Hosea 11). So now the

divine call to repentance summons the people again to the wilderness, where they will experience a second exodus. They must leave behind their comfortable surroundings, their old habits and cozy lifestyles. In the harsh wilderness they must rely on God alone to sustain them. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

As long ago Israel was separated from Egypt and its prosperity by passing through the Red Sea. Now John calls the people to again journey into the wilderness and pass through water. The Messiah, the Holy One of Israel, is coming. The Lord is opening heaven and coming down (Is 64:1), not in wrath, but in mercy. Prepare to meet him!. St. Paul compares the first exodus to a kind of baptismal washing in 1 Cor 10:1–6, and stresses that drastically changed lives of repentance must follow Baptism or else we will perish as did those Israelites who hardened their hearts in the wilderness. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

Following our text, Jesus himself will fulfill this whole pattern as he comes to be baptized in the wilderness as God’s own Son, then is tempted in the wilderness as God’s faithful Son. Though he has no sin, he demonstrates true “repentance” in the sense of total selflessness, humility, and dependence on God, his Father, to sustain him through all trials. Jesus reenacts and completes the history of Israel, but in perfect “repentance” and faith. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

John comes in the wilderness, that is, in Judea on the banks of the southern Jordan. Wilderness brings to mind where Adam and Eve are after the fall as well as Israel’s forty years in the desert. John preaches “a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” Repentance means to be turned from sin to faith, from self to God. It is not a “sorry” contrived by human beings, but God’s own work. On *hē metanoia*, see the articles in TDNT 4:626–29, 975–1008. On the nature of John’s Baptism as a Baptism of anticipation, see Edmund Schlink, *The Doctrine of Baptism* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1969, 1972), 17–21. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

AND PREACHING - *baptizōn . . . kērussōn*: “baptizing . . . preaching.” These two actions of John parallel those spoken of to the apostles by Jesus at the end of the Gospel (Mk 16:15–16) and so serve as bookends to Mark. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

baptism. John was preaching repentance-baptism, i.e., baptism that was preceded or accompanied by repentance. Baptism was not new to John’s audience. They knew of baptism for Gentile converts, but had not heard that the descendants of Abraham (Jews) needed to repent and be baptized. (CSB)

Even before John the Baptist appeared, different groups within Judaism likely practiced Baptism. Rabbinic literature notably mentions that Gentiles converting to Judaism were expected to undergo circumcision and a proselyte baptism, and to make an offering. These rites marked full acceptance into the community of God’s chosen people. But John insisted that Jews needed to repent and be baptized, implying that they were no better than Gentiles. (TLSB)

The hearts of the people had become a desert region, and they needed to be rescued. What he offered them in this baptism of repentance was not merely a ritual washing, but the gift of forgiveness. His baptism was essentially no different from the baptism by which our Lord comes to us today with his pardon and peace. The forgiveness granted through John's baptism was not a reward because they repented, but a wonderful gift of God who through John's preaching brought them to repentance and gave them a change of heart. (PBC)

repentance.† Involves deliberate turning from sin to righteousness, and John's emphasis on repentance recalls the preaching of the prophets (e.g., Hos 3:4–5). (CSB)

FORGIVENESS – John's Baptism removed the guilt of sin. Christian Baptism, which Jesus instituted after the resurrection (Mt. 28:19-20), delivers this same blessing (Acts 2:38-39; 1 Peter 3:21). (TLSB)

eis aphasin hamartiōn, "for the remission of sins" (KJV). St Peter speaks of the same benefit attached to the Baptism of Jesus and the apostles (Acts 2:38). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

1:5 *whole ... all*. Obvious hyperbole, indicating the high interest created by John's preaching. For centuries Israel had had no prophet. (CSB)

John attracted large numbers. For this reason, Herod began to worry about his influence. (6:17-20). (TLSB)

The first "and so" denotes continued action. "All the people" is evidently hyperbole, not to be taken literally but meaning "in large numbers." Josephus mentions that the preaching and baptism of the Baptist caused a great sensation. It has been estimated that the Baptist baptized 200,000 to 500,000 people. (Buls)

By the way, at Matthew 3:15 Jesus says to John: "Thus it becomes US (not ME) to fulfill all righteousness." Though baptism John was an active agent in forgiving peoples' sins. "In the Jordan" is purely locative and cannot be invoked to support immersion. The aorist "confessing" would mean that first they confessed and then were baptized. Contrition is a constant in the life of a Christian. "Their sins" is subjective genitive. They committed them and were responsible for them, until forgiven. (Buls)

The use of the words *whole* and *all* "is a typical idiomatic expression in Hebrew" and in this context means "many of the people" (Newman and Stine, *A Translator's Handbook on The Gospel of Matthew*, 64.) (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

ejxeporeuveto, an imperfect, offers the reader the idea that it was the normal or routine practice of those living in Jerusalem to venture out to the wilderness to hear the engaging preacher. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 1)

CONFESSING – Greek *exomologeō*, a public acknowledgement of the need for forgiveness and a belief that God provided it through this washing. (TLSB)

John's Baptism is tied to the confession of sins, the acknowledgment that God's verdict on sin is indeed right. See Ps 51:4. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

Jordan River. The principal river in Palestine, beginning in the snows of Mount Hermon and ending in the Dead Sea. Its closest point to Jerusalem is about 20 miles. (CSB)

pasa hē loudaia chōra kai hoi Ierosolimitai pantes kai ebaptizonto . . . en tō Iordanē potamō: "all the land of Judea and all those from Jerusalem were baptized in the Jordan River" (author's translation). While this may refer to the popularity of John's preaching and baptizing, it also points back to the Mosaic Baptism at the Red Sea (1 Cor 10:1–2) and Joshua leading the Israelites through the Jordan and leaving a memorial of twelve stones, one for each of the twelve tribes, taken from the river (Joshua 4). The Jordan River is a place where the Lord gathers his people and reveals himself and his will to them through his actions on their behalf. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

1:6 *camel's hair ... leather belt.* Worn by Elijah and other prophets (2Ki 1:8; cf. Zec 13:4). (CSB)

Worn by Elijah and other prophets. Jews of Jesus' day expected Elijah to return just before the Messiah would come. Jesus later equated John's ministry with this expected return of Elijah (9:11-13; cf 6:15). (TLSB)

The attempt a translation: "John was permanently dressed. . . . and constantly eating etc." He always dressed thus. The obvious meaning is: "John wore clothing made of camel's hair." NIV. The leather belt was worn to keep the clothing from opening and to draw the coat up when walking or running. Jesus mentioned that John did not wear fine clothing (Matthew 11:8). Both food and clothing were simple. The word "locust" is not equivalent to "grasshopper." Even today certain Arabian tribes relish these locusts. The author of these Notes witnessed the fact that in Nigeria the people consider a certain kind of locust as a delicacy. (Buls)

Hendriksen: John's food was as simple as was his clothing. (Buls)

Stoeckhardt: John conformed his preaching of repentance through his whole outward appearance, through his clothing and way of living, wearing a garment of camel's hair, and feeding himself with the food of the wilderness, locusts and wild honey. (Buls)

Lenski: The very appearance of John was a stern sermon. John was a living illustration of how little man really needs here below. The Baptist's mode of life marks him as a Nazarite (Luke 1:15), and up to the time of his preaching he must have lived like a hermit (Luke 1:80). In this he was the antithesis of Jesus (Matthew 11:18). (Buls)

John lived his message as a “wild man” after the fashion of Elijah, who once was sustained by ravens in a wadi (1 Kings 17:1–6). John begins his ministry where Elijah left off—along the Jordan, where Elijah had been taken up to heaven. He rejected all pretense, wearing coarse camel’s hair and a leather girdle, eating locusts (a clean food, Lev 11:21–22) and wild honey. He lived off the land, even as reluctant Israel had been forced to do after the exodus, though they lusted to return to the fleshpots of Egypt. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

h\n, the imperfect of eijmiv, leads the reader to understand that this was John’s usual or habitual garb. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 1)

John’s vesture of camel hair and diet of locusts and wild honey were as strange as his austere and ascetic life in the desert. Yet in this strangeness, God is calling Israel (and us) to repentance and faith. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

When John began his work in the desert region, the uninhabited area near the Jordan, the similarity to the OT prophets was not lost on the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem who came out to hear him. The twenty-mile journey was an arduous one, downhill from Jerusalem and uphill on the way back. But it took them away from their business deals and their hours of relaxation. They came because they sensed the power of God in John. They were excited. After all, it had been 400 years since a legitimate prophet had appeared on the scene. They had to find our, and they did. (PBC)

Both his garb and his food are those familiar to the wilderness nomad, and characterize life in the desert. The reference to the leather girdle about the Baptist’s waist recalls a characteristic feature of another man of the wilderness, the prophet Elijah (2 Kings 1:8). (Lane)

locusts and wild honey. See note on Mt 3:4. (CSB)

John’s diet was just as unusual as his attire. These foods functioned as “enacted prophecies” against the prevailing worldliness and excessive concern for creature comfort. Locusts are mentioned as food in the Cairo Damascus Document 12:14. They were cleansed by water or fire before eaten. (TLSB)

John conformed his preaching to repentance through his whole outward appearance. (Stoeckhardt)

1:7-8 John argues from the lesser to the greater: himself and the One; his own Baptism of water and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. If all of Judah comes to John’s Baptism, who will come for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit? As important as were John and all of the Old Testament, they pale in comparison to Jesus. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

1:7 message. Mark's account of John's message is brief (cf. Mt 3:7–12; Lk 3:7–17) and focuses on the coming of the powerful One. (CSB)

In this verse John clearly indicates the superior person of Christ. He is divine. Only Mark has the word "to stoop down." The point of the second part of verse 7 is the Baptist's feeling of unworthiness. This is important for verse 8. (Buls)

John was not seeking his own enhancement. He was only the messenger, heralding the Coming One, a term that reflects Mal 3:1; 4:5; Ps 118:26, which speak of the arrival of God himself or his specially appointed representative. John considers himself unworthy to do the most menial tasks. The Jewish rabbis taught that even an Israelite servant should not be required to untie the shoes of his master because that job was too demeaning (Lane, p. 52, note 45). Yet Jesus humbled himself to do even that task (John 13). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

John's message is telescoped to focus upon a single theme, the proclamation of a person still to come who will baptize the people with the Holy Spirit. (Lane)

Again, *eikhvrussen*, the imperfect of *khruvssw*, may direct the reader to the idea that John was continually or normally or routinely proclaiming the message that follows. This would further verify John's purpose: he had come to point to the One to come. *e[r]cetai* carries the idea that he is presently coming or that his journey is already underway. Much is made of John's comment here concerning the loosening of the Christ's sandal laces being the task of the slave. Perhaps, though, *iJkano*," translated as "fit" or "worthy," offers the preacher a better point. John was calling the crowds to repentance, and yet he proclaims himself not fit to meet the coming Master. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 1)

In characteristic fashion, Mark gives an abbreviated account of John's preaching. John identifies himself as an unworthy servant. Lohmeyer interprets *ho ischuroteros mou opisō mou* (literally, "the stronger one than me after me") as indicative of a master/slave relationship, suggestive that the One who follows after John is the Judge and Savior of the end time (see Ernst Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Markus* [Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1937], 18). For this Messiah, John confesses that he is unqualified to perform even the most menial task of a slave. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

MORE POWERFUL – The coming Messiah. Jesus later characterizes Himself as the One stronger than Satan (3:23-27). (TLSB)

WHOSE SANDALS I AM NOT WORTHY TO STOOP DOWN AND UNTIE – John affirms that he is not worthy of performing the most menial task, from which even the Hebrew slave was released. (Lane)

Tying and untying the master's shoes were among the lowliest tasks performed by slaves. Thus, John casts himself as a humble servant of the coming Messiah. (TLSB)

Taylor (p 156) comments, "John speaks of the Mighty One as stronger than himself . . . which may suggest a consciousness of standing at the beginning of the unfolding of the eschatological drama." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

This points to the Baptist's telling of unworthiness. This is important for verse 8.

1:8 I HAVE BAPTIZED YOU - The first Greek verb, *ebaptisa*, "I have baptized," is in the aorist tense. Rienecker (p 89) comments, "The aor. represents John's course as already fulfilled in view of the coming of Messiah." According to Williamson (p 32), "The major emphasis in verses 6-8 . . . is neither on the place nor on the prophet, but on the Lord whose way John prepares, on the one who is coming." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

Note emphatic "I." AV and NKJV read "I indeed." Its counterpart is emphatic "He." In this verse John is comparing persons, not baptisms. John is not saying that his (John's) baptism was devoid of the Holy Spirit. John 3:5 clearly proves that. The only baptism known at the time when Jesus spoke with Nicodemus was the baptism of John. Nor is John saying that Jesus' baptism would not involve water. But John is saying that Jesus and Jesus only makes baptism effective by bestowing the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, what John says is akin to what Jesus says at John 7:39 where Jesus refers plainly to Pentecost. (Buls)

Furthermore, read Acts 11:16. There Peter is not downgrading John's baptism. But he is speaking about the bestowal of the Holy Spirit, through baptism, beginning with Pentecost, bestowed, without distinction, on Gentile and Jewish repentant sinner. (Buls)

Lenski: The distinction is not before Pentecost NO Spirit; after Pentecost the Spirit. The true distinction is: before the actually completed work of redemption the limited preparatory work of the Spirit; after the super-abounding fullness of the Spirit. There is no such thing as 'Baptism of the Spirit', a fanatical conception and substitute for these means, human emotions, imagining, and dreams by which the Spirit never comes. (Buls)

Stoeckhardt: John baptized with the water of repentance, with which he testified that the people needed the washing and cleansing from their sins above everything else, which would be provided by Christ. Since the preaching and baptizing of John pointed to Christ, his baptism was a powerful sacrament and produced forgiveness of sins. (Buls)

Verse 8 should not be read apart from verse 7. John was the humble servant, Christ the Master. The baptism of John was effective through the Master. (Buls)

baptize you with the Holy Spirit. See note on Mt 3:11. (CSB)

The contrast between John and the coming One is seen in their respective Baptisms. John baptizes with water; Jesus with the Holy Spirit. John's Baptism will have a short

shelf life, while Jesus' Baptism will endure forever. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

John baptized with the water of repentance, with which he testified that the people needed washing and cleansing from their sins above everything else, which would be provided by Christ. Since the preaching and baptizing of John pointed to Christ, his baptism was a powerful sacrament and produced forgiveness. (Stoeckhardt)

In describing how much greater Jesus is, John points to Christ as the one through whom the Spirit will be poured out. It is the descent of the Spirit onto Jesus that causes John to recognize the Son of God (In 1:33–34). The involvement of the Spirit is also a fulfillment of prophecy. The first exodus had been a march under the guidance of the Spirit (Is 63:11, 14), and the second exodus through Christ will bring a fresh outpouring of the Spirit (Is 32:15; 44:3). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

The contrasts of this verse are tremendous. First there are the subjects, eJgwv and aujto", I do this, and he will do that. Of particular interest here are the means by which baptism is effected. John's is with u{dati (from the muddy Jordan, no less). Jesus' is with the Spirit (the pneuvmati aJgiw/, the holy one contrasted to the water of the Jordan). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 1)

1:1–8 Mark begins by telling of (1) John's call to repentance, (2) Baptism, and (3) eager expectation of the Messiah's coming. John warns us not to adopt worldly values and expectations. Happily, all of us who are baptized have received the promised Holy Spirit, who continually forgives us, restores us, and focuses us on the splendor of Jesus' second coming. • Lord, remind us of the washing we received in Baptism, for through it Your Holy Spirit was poured into our hearts. Keep us steadfast in the hope of Your glory. Amen. (TLSB)