

Advent Devotional Guide – Week 3

Emmanuel: The Comfort God Promised

Sunday 14 December 2025 – Third Sunday of Advent

Opening Prayer

Gracious and comforting God,
As we pause in this Advent season, still our hearts and open
our minds.

Let Your Word speak to us with tenderness,
and let Your Spirit meet us in the places where we feel weary,
uncertain, or afraid.

Draw near to us as Emmanuel—God with us.
May we encounter Your comfort afresh today.
In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading

Take a moment to reread the Scriptures slowly and prayerfully:

- **Isaiah 40:1–3**
- **Matthew 1:18–25**

Invite the Holy Spirit to highlight a word, phrase, or idea that stands out to you.

Summary of the Scriptures

Isaiah 40:1–3

Isaiah speaks to a people in exile—tired, grieving, and disoriented. Into this wilderness God speaks the profound words:

“Comfort, comfort my people.”

God assures His people that their suffering will not have the final word. A new beginning is coming. A way is being prepared in the wilderness for God Himself to draw near.

Matthew 1:18–25

Joseph learns that Mary is pregnant, and he faces heartbreak, confusion, and fear. Into his emotional wilderness, God speaks through an angel:

“Do not be afraid.”

Joseph is told the child is conceived by the Holy Spirit and will be called **Immanuel—God with us**.

The comfort promised in Isaiah now becomes flesh in the person of Jesus.

Sermon Recap: *Emmanuel – The Comfort God Promised*

Advent is often painted as a season of joy, but for many it is also a season of grief, uncertainty, or longing. The sermon explored how God meets us in these wilderness places.

- In **Isaiah 40**, God speaks comfort to exiles who feel forgotten and broken. He reminds them that they are still “my people” and that His compassion is coming toward them.
- In **Joseph's story**, we see another kind of wilderness—an emotional and spiritual one. His world collapses when Mary becomes pregnant, yet God comforts him by reminding him of his identity (“Joseph, son of David”) and reassuring him (“Do not be afraid”).
- Both passages show that God meets His people exactly where they are—not where they think they should be.
- The comfort God promised in Isaiah takes on human form in Jesus. Emmanuel is the ultimate answer to every wilderness season: **God is with us**.
- God’s comfort is not sentimental or self-generated—it is supernatural, steadyng, and rooted in the presence of Christ.

As Timothy Keller wrote:

“The heart of Christmas is the staggering truth that God became human so He could bring us home.”

Reflection Questions for Groups or Personal Use

1. Scripture Reflection

1. Which word or phrase from Isaiah 40 or Matthew 1 stood out to you as you read? Why?
2. In Isaiah, God says “Comfort, comfort my people.” How does this double emphasis shape your understanding of God’s heart?
3. What do you notice about the way God speaks to Joseph in his moment of crisis?

2. Personal Reflection

4. Are you experiencing any kind of “wilderness” right now—emotional, spiritual, relational, or physical?
5. Where have you sensed God drawing near to you in difficult seasons, even unexpectedly?
6. Joseph’s plans were disrupted, yet God was working through that disruption. Can you recall a time when God met you in an unexpected or unwelcome situation?

3. Advent and Emmanuel

7. What does “*God with us*” mean in your life today?
8. How does God’s comfort differ from comfort we try to create for ourselves?
9. Advent invites us to wait expectantly. Where do you need God to bring comfort, hope, or reassurance?

Action Section: Living the Word This Week

Choose one or more of these simple practices:

1. A Wilderness Prayer

Spend five minutes each day identifying one area of your life that feels like a wilderness.

Invite Emmanuel into that space with this simple prayer:
“Lord, be with me here.”

2. Speak Tenderly

God speaks tenderly to His people.

This week, intentionally speak words of comfort or encouragement to someone who is struggling.

3. Identity Reminder

Write down the identity God speaks over you (e.g., beloved, forgiven, chosen, child of God).

Carry it in your pocket or display it somewhere visible.

4. Comfort in Action

Following the example of the Christmas Gift Service, choose one practical act of generosity—a gift, a call, a visit, or an anonymous kindness—to reflect Emmanuel’s presence.

5. Re-read Isaiah 40:1–3

Each morning or evening, re-read these verses and imagine God speaking directly to you:

“Comfort, comfort my people.”

Closing Prayer

God of all comfort,
Thank You for speaking tenderly into our lives, just as You
spoke to Your people long ago.
Thank You that Jesus is Emmanuel—God with us—
our comfort, our peace, and our hope.
As we journey through Advent, help us to recognise Your
presence in every wilderness
and to offer Your comfort to others.
May Your joy rise within us and Your peace steady us.
In Christ, our Emmanuel, we pray.
Amen.