

**Advent/Christmas texts**  
**Bible Study class**  
**June 25, 2017**

**Introduction**

1. As we noted last week, the book of Isaiah is commonly thought to be the work of as many as three writers: Isaiah 1-39, 40-55, and 56-66 are how the book is commonly divided. The first section (chapters 1-39) speaks of things before the exile in Babylon. The second and third sections (chapters 40-55 and 56-66) speak to the people's situation near the time of their return to Jerusalem.
2. One of the challenges of "Isaiah of the exile" is to get people to trust God again. After the loss of all their hopes and dreams, how can these people decide that God is either *good enough* or *powerful enough* to be trusted?
  - a. Have you ever experienced situations of such difficulty in your own life, that issues of God's goodness and power were difficult for you?
3. Isaiah of the exile appeals to their *imagination*. As they think upon their recent circumstances—and all of the promises of God—can they trust God again? Isaiah's answer is "yes." What will be their (and our) answer?

**Isaiah 40:1-11**

1. Read the text.
2. Notice how *personal* these verses are. Make a list of all the words and phrases that indicate their personal nature. What does God want these people to know?
3. Why is a road being prepared? Who will walk on this road? How are we "making straight a highway for the Lord" in our community?
4. In verses 6-8, Isaiah contrasts the frailty of people with the power of God. How does Isaiah describe this? In what ways have you found this to be true?

**Isaiah 61:1-4**

1. Read the text. Do these verses sound familiar? Read Luke 4:16-19.
2. In what ways might these verses have been fulfilled for Isaiah's congregation?
3. In what ways did Jesus fulfill these verses? As we *Continue the work of Jesus*, how might we work in these areas?

### Isaiah 64:1-9

1. Read the text.
2. There is an interesting interplay between God's power and our sin in these verses:
  - a. Verses 1-4: Isaiah calls on the power of God.
  - b. Verses 5-7: A recognition of sin which caused separation.
  - c. Verses 8-9: Calling on a different aspect of God's character: that God would forget our sins and welcome us back.
3. On week one, we made a list of things we see that are "wrong" with the world. That list is (hopefully) still on the chalkboard in our class room. It is always easier to see things that are wrong in other places and people. But Isaiah 64 forces us to look at ourselves. In what ways are we the ones who *transgressed* (v. 5); in what ways are *our righteous deeds like a filthy cloth* (v. 6)?