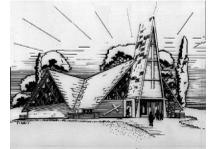




Free Evangelical Lutheran  
Synod in South Africa

## Sermon for New Year's Day 2016

As one whom his mother comforts,  
so I will comfort you!



Shelly Beach

### The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Isaiah 66, 5-14:

**ESV** 5 Hear the word of the LORD, you who tremble at his word: "Your brothers who hate you and cast you out for my name's sake have said, 'Let the LORD be glorified, that we may see your joy'; but it is they who shall be put to shame.

• 6 "The sound of an uproar from the city! A sound from the temple! The sound of the LORD, rendering recompense to his enemies!

• 7 "Before she was in labour she gave birth; before her pain came upon her she delivered a son.

• 8 Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall a land be born in one day? Shall a nation be brought forth in one moment? For as soon as Zion was in labour she brought forth her children.

• 9 Shall I bring to the point of birth and not cause to bring forth?" says the LORD; "shall I, who cause to bring forth, shut the womb?" says your God.

• 10 "Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice with her in joy, all you who mourn over her;

• 11 that you may nurse and be satisfied from her consoling breast; that you may drink deeply with delight from her glorious abundance."

• 12 For thus says the LORD: "Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream; and you shall nurse, you shall be carried upon her hip, and bounced upon her knees.

• 13 *As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.*

• 14 You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice; your bones shall flourish like the grass; and the hand of the LORD shall be known to his servants, and he shall show his indignation against his enemies.

• *Let us pray: Come Holy Spirit, open our ears, enlighten our minds so that we will take in the comfort You give to us today! Amen.*

• Dear Citizens of God's Israël!

• [13] *"As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem."* This is the watchword for 2016 taken from the last chapter of the prophet Isaiah. A word which is spoken as comfort for some who

are in conflict with others around them. [5] *"Your brothers who hate you and cast you out for my name's sake ..."*. Brothers, people close to them, were causing the tension, the affliction, which needed the comfort of God.

• We see something which is so common in the world, one of the worst enemies of humankind is of their own kind. Many people who get killed are killed by other people, through war's, by lawless driving, shooting, excessive partying etc. By liberal laws of abortion etc. Astonishing, that humans, who are all of the same species, still are their own worst enemies!

• Now the astonishing thing here in this word is, that the LORD takes sides! He does not say to these two factions, 'stop the fighting now, let me make peace between the two of you'. No. To be sure, the LORD is about giving His peace, but only to the side He has chosen to side with! The one side the Lord comforts, like a mother comforts her children, whilst the other side is condemned to shame. They are the Lord's enemies!

• This sounds like fodder for the post-modernist, who claims that no religion is an answer to the world at war. We cannot deny it, the LORD is clearly taking sides! As Christians we cannot run for cover, as in, *'this is only an OT text'*, either, because this Word clearly prophesied what was to come with the birth and ministry of Jesus, the Christ of God! This is most clearly seen from the context since the previous chapter where God describes the eternal heavenly Jerusalem! Also in our passage Jerusalem is called Zion who is the woman who will give birth to a nation without labour pains, as Paul refers to it [Gal 4, 22-27]: *"For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise. Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. For it is written, "Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labour! For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a*

## *husband."*

- This word is fundamental, is crucial, to understand and realise, what God has established in Christ! So, yes, God does take sides, in the OT times and *in Christ*, in the NT times, in which we still live!
- It is clear: The Lord delights in those who are humble and contrite in spirit. That is, those who tremble when they hear the Word of God. Those who fear the LORD are those, who get a guilty conscience when they sin against the Ten Commandments of God! Those who fear the LORD are those who, when they get sick, maybe even hospitalised, look back with fear on their own lives searching for all the wrongdoings they have done! In other words those are humble and contrite who, when they hear or experience the Law of God, feel accused and know that they are not worthy to pass God's Judgement on the Last Day!
- We can say the humble ones are those who, when they hear the Law of God apply it first and foremost to their own lives and in all honesty realise that the Law of God accuses them in such a way that there is no escape for themselves. Those who feel nailed by the Law of God, and justly so, those are the ones whom the Lord promises to comfort! This includes all those who fear that they are not one of the elect of God. This contrition or repentance cannot be made by ourselves. It is a work of God's Hammer, the Law, which crushes the soul.
- The Work of the Law of God is to let people realise that they are true sinners. Those who take God's Law seriously and therefore repent of their sins, who want to be removed from all their guilt and sins, those are the ones the Lord promises to comfort.
- It is with these that the Lord sides. Those on the other hand, who despise His Word, who mock His Law, who have chosen their own ways, who use the Law to showcase their own piety, to reveal that they are actually trying their best and are successful in it. Those are the ones who did not listen when the Lord called. They chose what God did not delight in, which He has not commanded. They were also the ones who cast out their brothers for the Lord's name sake. This fits so well to Christ's disciples who were expelled from the temple by the Pharisees and scribes,

because they believed in the Name of Jesus!

- It is to them that the Word of comfort is spoken. They are the ones who hear the Gospel! And they hear it as the only way out! They are the ones whom the Lord has gathered in Jerusalem above, in Zion. Those are the ones who are born from above by water and the Spirit. A nation is born by the Spirit, not by the flesh, nor by the will or decision of men.
- God comforts us in Jerusalem. Like little children drink deeply from the breasts of their mother, in the same way we may drink deeply with delight from Jerusalem's glorious abundance. It is in this Jerusalem from above that we find the abundance of true comfort, where we find forgiveness of all our sins, where our guilty conscience is set at peace and where our hearts start to rejoice because of this wonderful place where even our bodies are guaranteed to flourish eternally.
- The enemies who mock *"Let the LORD be glorified, that we may see your joy"* will be put to shame by God. By fire will the Lord enter into judgement with all flesh, with all those on the outside of the heavenly Jerusalem, who trust in their own ways and means of salvation!
- As the year of the Lord 2016 begins, as we hear the Word of God, we rejoice with God's Jerusalem, we love God's church, we gladly come to Jerusalem, God's holy mountain, because He promised to comfort us like a mother comforts her child, and this will happen in Jerusalem. **Amen.**

*"Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible!"*  
*Amen.*

*[<sup>ESV</sup> Heb 13,25]*