

Reflection

March 22, 2023,

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As we listened to today's first reading, we may have wondered if we were back in Advent. The language and themes presented were those we heard from Isaiah before Christmas: restoration of land, a highway through the mountains, freedom for prisoners, springs of water in the desert, no hunger or thirst, people coming home from all the corners of the earth... These words of hope and of a loving future are surprisingly presented to us again during these closing weeks of Lent.

Although we are past the middle of our Lenten journey on the road with Jesus to Jerusalem - and crucifixion - we are invited to recall this striking image: 'Does a woman forget the baby at her breast or the child of her womb?' ...Yet even if these forget, I will never forget you.'

The church likewise reminds us in today's Psalm that 'OUR GOD IS FULL OF LOVE AND COMPASSION' - in every season!

The Gospel acclamation goes to the heart of our Christian hope: God so loved the world that God sent the Son...

And who is this, Son? In the Gospel Jesus scandalizes and frustrates the religious leaders by going further than breaking the Sabbath laws. He openly says that he is equal to God, that he is equal to the source of life.

Life... the one thing that every human being in every time and place clings to and desires more than pleasure, power, family, money or anything else. Jesus offers his hearers life beyond the grave, eternal life. He says that God will show works that will astonish people. And nothing could astonish more than resurrection from death to eternal life.

We who walk with our Redeemer during these forty days are encouraged to let the Scriptures offer us hope and consolation no matter what crises or suffering we may face. Eternal life is the astonishing gift offered by the God who loves us.

