

## **Bible Study for December 7 - 13, 2020**

For the season of Advent and Christmas, we continue looking at Bible Studies provided through Lutheran World Relief, one of the largest, yet relatively unknown, relief agencies in the world. While their work takes place in most countries around the globe, this study will give us some perspective on what they are doing in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America. The full study, including videos, is available at: [https://lwr.org/ai\\_file\\_subscribe/file/4638](https://lwr.org/ai_file_subscribe/file/4638)

### **ASIA | INDIA**

**Read:** Isaiah 40:1-11

LEARN How your love helps neighbors in India, a country of approximately 1.3 billion people, which is located in southern Asia and bordered by China, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar (Burma) and Bangladesh. The Himalayan mountains in northern India contain some of the highest mountains in the world. The official languages of India are Hindi and English, though it is reported that nearly 20,000 native languages are spoken throughout the country. Lutheran World Relief has been working in India since the 1950s, and today operates in two of India's poorest states, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, where farming is a primary means of income for families. Your congregation's love makes solutions possible and reaches those with the very least, including Dalits, who are members of the lowest social class in the traditional Indian caste system. In India, your love is at work alongside communities to help farmers replace decades-old farming methods with climate smart sustainable solutions, so they can grow nutritious foods — such as vegetables and pulses (lentils) — and improve yields and quality to ultimately generate higher income. Your commitment to loving your neighbor also helps rural communities better protect themselves from deadly natural disasters by helping communities develop lifesaving disaster risk management plans.

### **DISCUSS or Ponder**

1. What kind of weather warning systems do you have in place in your community? How do these systems bring you comfort?
2. Before Lutheran World Relief, Rajendra's community received no warning when the floodwaters were coming. In what ways can you imagine an early warning system has changed lives?
3. If you and/or your family lost everything in a flood, where would you turn for comfort and support?

## **BIBLE STUDY**

Today's Bible reading from Isaiah 40:1-11 is bookended with words that offer a vision of a caring and compassionate God. Read together v1 and v11.

*1 Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. 11[The Lord God] will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.*

1. Theologian Walter Bruegemann describes God's comfort not simply as an offer of solace, but as a "powerful intervention that creates new possibilities." Does this description of God's comfort resonate with you? Why or why not? If possible, use examples from life when God's comfort has created new possibilities for you.

2. Isaiah 40:11 describes four ways that God comforts God's people. Identify each of the four ways. Which image of God brings you the most comfort? Why?

## **PRAYER**

God of all creation, you draw near to us like that of a shepherd feeding his flock. Gather all people into your arms, especially our neighbors at risk along the border of India and Nepal. Create new possibilities that promise a hope-filled future. Provide safety through early warning systems, feed the hungry with bountiful harvests and comfort all who fear natural disasters in our world. We pray all this in the name of Jesus, the One we long for in this season of hope. Amen.