Sermon: **“Prepare in the wilderness a road for the Lord!”** (Isaiah 40.3)

New roads and bypasses are often built to avoid hills or bottlenecks. TEXT.

Context – Israel was separated: some had been left behind in Jerusalem and some had gone into Exile. Both groups felt God had left them. But Isaiah declares TEXT.

God was returning with the Exiled to look after them all, the punishment & time of sadness were over.

TEXT. So this is all about God coming to sort out that separation we have with God, and with each other.

Today we see plenty of separation due to Covid 19; geography and thus widespread families and networks; cultural and racial discrimination/prejudice; human exploitation; and within the natural world. Then there is a separation within ourselves: how often are we torn between two competing actions or ideas? We might feel the call of God on our lives, yet resist it, and this can result in separation from God. Our TEXT means that all this separation will be over!

Where are our wildernesses? What are our hills? What are our bottlenecks?

Wildernesses are where we feel desolate, uncertain, frustrated, lonely – where are these in our life?

Hills are problems we know are there but struggle to overcome, persistent sin, reality we do not want to face, situations we are reluctant to deal with – where are these in our life?

Bottlenecks are where there are competing demands, and we have to choose, knowing that any choice may let someone down, or end in closing a door on something we see as valuable – where are these in our life?

TEXT. If God is to come into these situations what preparations are we meant to make? Since many of these situations are ones we find hard to resolve, we need [1] Clarity, [2] Decision, and [3] Energy.

The Clarity we find in talking over things with God, the Decision is something we then need to make following that Clarity, and the Energy will come from the God who will then have come into our lives.