

Scripture Text

Isaiah 40

Context

From Isaiah 40-55 the prophet is addressing the Jewish captives far away in Babylon in the 6th century, announcing that God is going to come with a world changing display of his glory (40.5). The entire section focuses on themes deeper than just their current exile, as they must look by faith for a greater liberator to come, the messianic servant of the Lord who will bring justice to the nations and save his people from their ultimate captivity, their sin. God promises that he alone will do this, for his glory.

Observation and Meaning

- V1-2: Noting that comfort means 'revive' or 'breathe new life into', what is the nature and cause of the good news in these verses? (Note that 'double' for all her sins means 'matching' or 'all her sins paid for exactly'.
- V3-5: How does the idea of this comfort get fleshed out in these verses? How does Matt 3.3 and Mark 1.3 help us understand the distant fulfillment of these promises?
- V6-8: You can imagine that God's people, discouraged as they were, might struggle to believe this word of comfort. How do verses 6-8 help to strengthen their faith in God's Word?
- V9-11: What are the ways that God is depicted in these verses? What do they teach us about God? How are they fulfilled in Jesus' ministry?
- V12-26: How do these verses help convince God's people that He has power to do what he promises?
- V27-31: What are God's people urged to do to strengthen themselves after all these years of exile?

Big Idea

God promises to come himself to revive his people and redeem them, for his glory. He urges us to believe his Word and rest in his promises.

Connecting to Bible Storyline

Sin leads us to be removed (exiled) from God's presence, place and purposes, but God promises to come himself and deal with our sins, delivering us for his glory.

Sermon Outline

1. The God who comes to comfort his people (v1-11)
 - a. He will forgive their sins and revive them (v1-2)
 - b. He will reveal his glory (v3-5)
 - c. He will keep his Word (v6-8)
 - d. He will shepherd his flock (v9-11)
2. The God who has the power to do what he promises (v12-26)
 - a. Beyond all measure (v12-17)
 - b. Beyond all comparison (v18-26)
3. The God who desires to strengthen the weary (v27-31)
4. The God whose promises are all "Yes" in Christ

Applications

- How does God's announcement of comfort (v1) and good news (v9) to the exiles encourage you in whatever circumstance you are in?
- How certain do you consider God's Word to be? Does your life reflect true faith in the certainty of his promises? What would your life look like if you trusted God's promises fully?
- List some of the ways God is described in v10-26. How do these attributes encourage you to look to God in the midst of difficulty?
- Where in your life do you need strength to follow God? What promises of God can you wait upon to gain strength in Him (v30)?

Guide for Study Leaders

Use the C.O.M.A. (Context, Observation, Meaning, Application) method to work through the biblical text.

Context

Pay attention to the surrounding verses, paragraphs, chapters, events, etc. to see how this passage fits within the context of this particular book of the Bible.

Note how this passage fits within the larger storyline of the whole Bible, i.e. how God is saving a people through Jesus Christ to live under his rule in his place.

Observation & Meaning

Make careful observations of the biblical text. Notice details such as linking words (eg. "for", "if", "therefore"), repetition, dialogue, narrative, OT quotations, etc.

To understand the meaning of the biblical text, we need to discern the author's purpose or intent: Why is the biblical author writing this?

Helpful questions to ask include:

Who is writing and to whom?

What is the situation of the author and of the readers?

Are we made aware of any problems that need to be addressed?

Are there any repeated themes, or a single idea that holds everything together?

Application

Apply God's word to the heart. Move beyond merely addressing circumstances and behaviour by asking good "heart" questions. For example: Why do we do what we do? What do we really desire?

Always connect the gospel to application. For example, what difference does knowing Christ make to our obedience to God?

Ask what the passage teaches us about God, ourselves, salvation in Christ, the church, the world, etc.