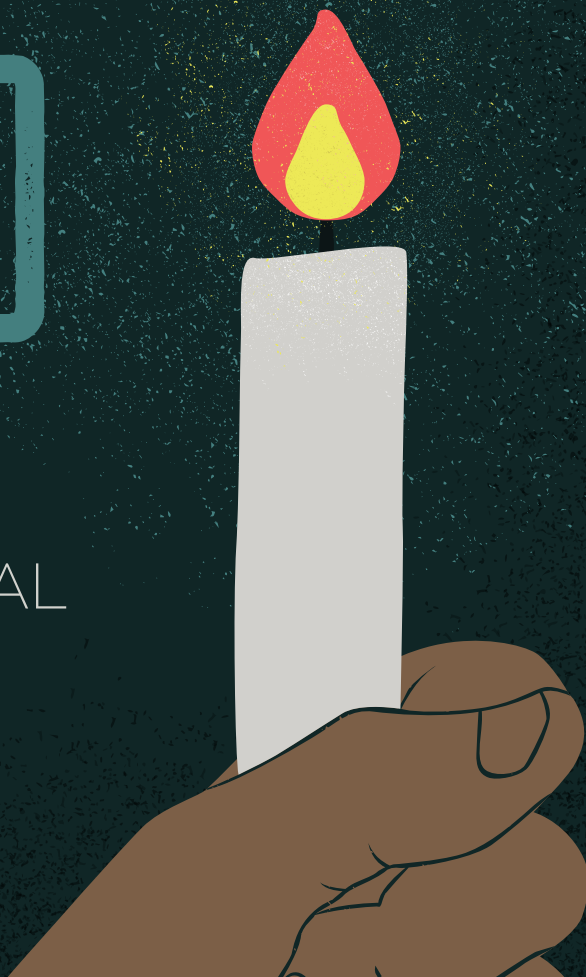


PREPARE  
THE WAY  
OF THE LORD

2nd Week of Advent  
DEVOTIONAL



# ISAIAH 40:6-8

<sup>6</sup> A voice says, "Cry!"

And I said, "What shall I cry?"

All flesh is grass,

and all its beauty is like the flower of the field.

<sup>7</sup> The grass withers, the flower fades

when the breath of the Lord blows on it;

surely the people are grass.

<sup>8</sup> The grass withers, the flower fades,

but the word of our God will stand forever.

# DAY 1

ISAIAH 40:6a

A voice says, “Cry!” And I said, “What shall I cry?”

Here we see Isaiah’s response to his recommissioning as a prophet for the second part of his ministry. Notice how immediately Isaiah responds to the call to “Cry” with “What shall I cry?”. The immediacy of the response reminds us a little of the military mantra, I say, “Jump” and you say, “How High”. Or the way that parents sometimes talk about obedience with their kids being immediate, complete and cheerful.

- How responsive is your heart to the call of the Lord? Can you identify areas of obedience that you are holding back?

Notice also that Isaiah is dependent on God for the message. In his first commission he was summoned to a ministry of judgment; here he is summoned to one of comfort. Isaiah doesn’t know what to say unless God gives him the message. Similarly we must be attuned to the word of God for direction in our life. We remember how Jesus responded to temptation by saying “Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4).

- Do you find yourself hungry for the word of God; desperate for it knowing that if you don’t have it you will be lacking? What would it look like for you to adopt Isaiah’s attitude of eagerness for the word of God so that you could pass it on?

## PRAYER

*Father, help our response to your call in our lives to be filled with the same eagerness as Isaiah. May our response be complete, not holding back anything. Fill us at our point of need. Teach us what to say. May we come to rely on you for the words to speak. May our eyes always be on you and our ears attuned to your voice. Thank you, Jesus, that you are God’s final word to a hurting world. May hope and healing follow us as we keep our ears attuned to your message. We pray these things in Jesus’s name. Amen.*

# DAY 2

ISAIAH 40:6b-8a

All flesh is grass,  
and all its beauty is like the flower of the field.

<sup>7</sup> The grass withers, the flower fades  
when the breath of the LORD blows on it;  
surely the people are grass.

<sup>8</sup> The grass withers, the flower fades,

Isaiah 40 begins with Israel coming out of judgment: “Her iniquity is pardoned.” A significant reason for the judgment against Israel was that the nation trusted people instead of God. Prior to Isaiah 40 the Lord reminds Israel again and again not to place their hope in men.

*Stop regarding man in whose nostrils is breath,  
or of what account is he?*      Isaiah 2:22

*Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses, who trust in  
chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong,  
but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the Lord!*      Isaiah 31:1

*Behold, their heroes cry in the streets;  
the envoys of peace weep bitterly.*      Isaiah 33:7

Whether it was kings, armies, heroes, or their own strength, Israel again and again trusted in human strength and failed to trust in the God who raised up mankind by his own breath. Isaiah is reminding them here not to trust in flesh because all their might and beauty is transient like the grass and flower.

This is a good word for us today in a time of political and cultural upheaval as people place their trust in rulers, celebrities, and anyone that gives them the appearance of hope. All of these people, their machinations, and their plans, will fade away. They are all transient in comparison to the glory of the Lord that has been revealed in Jesus Christ.

## PRAYER

*Lord, may that I not place my hope in people or in the things that they produce. Keep me rooted in your Word and trusting in the work of your Son. May your Spirit strengthen me and give me hope in these tumultuous times. Amen.*

# DAY 3

ISAIAH 40:7a

<sup>7</sup> The grass withers, the flower fades  
when the breath of the LORD blows on it;

Isaiah 40 is another example in Scripture of God's activity in the life of mankind. For those of us studying and reading God's word, this idea is not wholly new. What is remarkable about this truth though is how challenging it is. When the breath of the LORD blows on it. Two important notes. First the breath of God and the Word of God are two sides to the same activity. Just as my breath produces words when it travels over my larynx, the breath of God produces God's word. This should remind us of Genesis, when the Spirit of God spoke the world into existence, and more aptly "breathed life into man" (Gen. 2:7). The breath of God, the Spirit of God, gives life. Often we talk about how being in nature or a good meal or fellowship with other Christians gives us life. These are simply reminders of what Isaiah is reminding us of, the core truth that life comes from God alone.

- In what areas should you praise God for his life-giving activity in your life? What are ways that God reminds you of his life-giving nature?

The second note is probably a bit more challenging. While the Spirit of God is normally talked about in Scripture and the creeds as the giver of life (just see the Nicene Creed), in Isaiah 40 we are reminded of the Spirit's role in death. The grass withers, the flower fades...surely man is the grass. When the breath of the LORD blows on it (it being the very life of mankind), it passes away. Perhaps we recognize this truth. Perhaps not. It's challenging. It's uncomfortable. God is in total control. Take Job as an example. As God is allowing Satan to test Job, by His word he limits what Satan can do. He may take from him everything, but he may not "reach out his hand towards Job" (Job 1:12). He may send sickness and ailment upon Job, "He is in [Satan's] hand, but spare his life" says God (Job 2:6). Isaiah is reminding us that God is sovereign over life and death.

- How does this truth challenge you? What is at the core of why this is uncomfortable? How does the gospel impact how you think about death? Is death something to be feared?

The gospel shifts our perspective on life and death. Through our union with Jesus the Messiah we get life through death. Death has lost its sting, death should not be feared. May that be our prayer today.

## PRAYER

*Father in heaven, Creator and sustainer of life, we recognize that our lives are in your hands. The breath that gives us life also takes it away. Our lives are but in your hands. Yet we know that through your love you have provided for us a paradigm shift. That life and death are not as they seem, beginning and end. Help us, O Lord, to recognize this truth as good news. That through Jesus Christ life comes from death. Death to ourselves means life in you. Death of our bodies means life with you. Comfort our hearts, O Lord, with these truths. Prepare our way in these days, as the way of the Lord is prepared for the final days. It's in Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

# DAY 4

ISAIAH 40:8b

but the word of our God will stand forever.

What God says always happens. When Adam and Eve chose for themselves, the natural world and all its functions became abnormal; the death God had warned them of touched everything. The human race became sinners who “fall short of the glory of God.” Included in the meaning of glory, is the idea of substantially, weightiness, permanence...what will not wither or fade. The touch of death meant nothing here will last. Nothing will totally satisfy.

Where do you most experience the frustration of a world where everything is impermanent?

Is there an anchor, a rock to stand on in a churning, changing world? Isaiah has the answer: “the word of our God will stand forever.” God spoke the world into being. He spoke to His people through His prophets. And finally He spoke through His Son. The Word materialized, became flesh, lived and spoke among us. We saw His glory; He was full of grace and truth. Can you feel the hope? The Jesus we celebrate this Christmas has restored what we forfeited when He was victorious over death. All God’s promises are made real through Him. He is the Word that endures forever!

Think about specific times and ways God has kept His word throughout history.

What promises have sustained you in the uncertainties of your life?

## PRAYER

*God of Glory, We praise you today for your faithfulness to do what you promise. We sing about the thrill of hope that comes to a weary world when we think about your coming. Lord, we are weary! We are weary of division and destruction. We are weary of broken relationships in the world and in our own families. We are weary of broken, painful bodies. We are weary of our stubborn, self-centered ways. Come, Lord Jesus! Our hope is in you! Amen.*



# DAY 5

ISAIAH 40:6b-8

All flesh is grass,  
and all its beauty is like the flower of the field.

<sup>7</sup> The grass withers, the flower fades  
when the breath of the LORD blows on it;  
surely the people are grass.

<sup>8</sup> The grass withers, the flower fades,  
but the word of our God will stand forever.

I'm not one for roller-coaster rides, but they do make a great analogy for life. There is much anticipation at the beginning, the heights seem to take forever to reach, and quickly they vanish as we descend into the depths before we know it. There are even times when life just has you hanging upside down, wondering how you got there. Life has this uncanny ability to whip us around. In other words, there are ebbs and flows in our lives. Isaiah points to this truth in general. The analogy of grass withering and flower fading is meant to conjure up thoughts of the seasons. With seasons there comes change. The rain may bring about flowers, but the wind and/or the cool of night will take them away. 2020 has put this truth into a new perspective. We have been yanked to and fro, whipped around, experiencing highs and lows, all in the span of a few months. Yet Isaiah gives us the foundation we need to press on through this roller-coaster of a life, "the word of our God will stand forever." Jesus made this plainly clear for us in the Gospel of Matthew when he said "heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words will last forever." In a life that seems topsy-turvy we must place our confidence in the word of God. It is the only thing that has proven to stand the test of time.

- How do you treat items in your possession that you hope to stand the test of time? With what care can we treat God's word? How does God's word give you comfort when experiencing the highs and lows of life? How can you make God's word a more regular part of your life?

## PRAYER

*Our Father in heaven. Thank you for your consistency amidst a life of ups and downs. Thank you that you never change, that you are the same today as you were yesterday and will be tomorrow: gracious, loving, compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. Just as you are, your word is also: unchanging and life-giving. Lord, lead us to your word as the foundation of our lives. That through it we may not only see you for who you are, but that we may experience the love you have given us in the life and death of our King Jesus. It is in his exalted name we pray, Amen.*