**The Book of Isaiah IV**

**Comfort for God’s People**

Last week: A Tale of Two Kings

**Isaiah 7 Unfaithful Ahaz.**

Three choices: Submit to Ephraim/Syria Ally with Assyria Trust God.

The question for today: In who or what do you trust? Who do you depend on when the going gets tough?

Your mother? Your education? Your religious leader? Your bank account?

v.9 A great quote. But… If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all.

Isaiah 7:10-12. Ahaz refuses to ask for a sign—a miracle from God.

I plan on relying on Assyria.

Isaiah 7:13-17 God says, “I will give you a sign,” alright… But you, Ahaz, will not see that sign.

v. 14 The sign? The virgin (young maiden) will give birth to a son who will be God-with-us. Jesus is called God-with-us in Matthew 1:22 and Matthew 28:20.

**Isaiah 36-38 Faithful Hezekiah.**

Like Ahaz, Hezekiah(and we) has 3 choices: 1. Submit to Assyria, 2. seek an alliance with Egypt or 3. rely on God.

We saw Satan/Sennacherib throwing all the tricks in the book at Hezekiah.

You can’t trust God.

He doesn’t love you.

Let’s compromise. Let’s bargain.

God told me to tell you this.

Isaiah 37 Hezekiah’s faithful response.

Read Is 37:1-4 Hezekiah sets a great example of how to trust in Jehovah:

v. 1 Hezekiah humbles himself before God at the temple.

v. 2 He seeks the advice of his spiritual mentor, Isaiah.

v. 3 Hezekiah repents and decides to rely on Jehovah, not on Egypt.

v. 35 God: I will defend this city!!! I will save it for my sake.

Isaiah 37:36-37 God vindicates the faith of Hezekiah. Sennacherib’s army destroyed.

This week: **Comfort for God’s People**

The background to our sermon from Isaiah 40 is Isaiah 39. First, let us remember the outline of Isaiah:

Isaiah 1-39 Messiah the King Assyria

Isaiah 40-55 Messiah the Servant Babylon and Persia

Isaiah 56-66 Messiah the Conqueror The whole world

**Isaiah 39 Hezekiah’s fatal error.** Transition to Isaiah 40 Part II of Isaiah and to Babylon/Persia.

Isaiah 39:1-8

v. 1-2 Marduk-Baladan of Babylon sends envoys to Hezekiah. At this time, Babylon was not a major independent power, but it was a possible rival of Assyria.

Babylon appeals to the pride of Hezekiah. You are one of the great leaders. You are my equal.

Foolishly, Hezekiah, after not relying on Egypt or Assyria, considers an alliance with Babylon. We should not form alliances with “the world.”

Hezekiah shows the envoys all the wealth of the temple.

Q: Have you sought an alliance with the world?

The Devil and Daniel Webster (to win the presidency)

The Year the Yankees Lost the Pennant

Faust A Faustian bargain

A Faustian bargain is to rely on the world in order to achieve something in this world you really treasure.

What might be your Faustian bargain?

v. 3-7 Isaiah confronts Hezekiah. Lack of trust in God is the ultimate sin in Isaiah.

“What did these men say?” = “Where is your brother Abel?”

If you are trying to help your brother or sister see their sin or their error, ask them questions and let them discover for themselves.

v. 6 All the things you boastfully showed to the Babylonian envoys will be carried of as plunder to Babylon.

Truly, this was a fatal error!!

This is exactly what happens in The Devil and Daniel Webster, The Year the Yankees Lost the Penant, and Faust.

It is exactly what will happen in your life.

v. 7 Some of your (royal) descendants will be made eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.

This is exactly what happened about 90 years later when Daniel, Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael became eunuchs in Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar when Judah submitted to Babylon and the items of the temple were carried to Babylon.

v. 8 Selfishly: Phew! At least there will be peace in my lifetime!

Now, Isaiah 40

This is a prophecy for the Jews who were take into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar.

Isaiah 40:1-2 Comfort, Comfort my people… Her hard service has been completed. Her sin has been paid for.

This is about the judgment of being sent into Babylon and, later, the return of a remnant from captivity in 536 BC, after 70 years. This is a prophecy.

But God is coming to save and to restore.

It is not unlike Jeremiah 29:10-14 After 70 years “I will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I banished you. This passage is about us who were banished from the presence of God and were held in captivity by Satan, but whom God will restore to himself through Christ.

The message? Comfort! Do you need comfort right now?

With the resurgence of Covid 19.

With the disastrous earthquake in Haiti.

With Afghanistan falling into Taliban hands.

With…

I need comfort right now.

Isaiah 41:9-10 Another great passage on this topic.

God says to us (and to Judah). I chose you to be my servant.

“Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand (Jesus/Messiah)

Does anyone need strength today? What about in your life on a regular basis?

Isaiah 40:3-5 But it is also about the formation of the Church as a remnant. A kingdom prophecy.

Quoted in Matthew 3:3 Mark 1:1-4 John the Baptist is the one spoken of by the prophet Isaiah.

A straight way in the desert. Valleys raised, mountains flattened. God is clearing the way for us to come into the kingdom.

Last weekend I climbed Mt Baldy. It was hard work. But God is creating a level and smooth path for us to be restored to him.

The path may seem rocky, rutted, pitfalls, huge mountains, unpassable canyons and rivers.

God says to you: Every canyon will be raised up, and every mountain will be laid low for those who are in My kingdom!

v. 5 The glory of the Lord will be revealed. John 1:14 We have beheld his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father full of grace and truth.

That you were my child will be made fully known when the truth comes out.

40:6-20 I am the Lord. I am great. I am sovereign. I rule the nations.

I am awesome, the New York Yankees are not. I am awesome, the US military is not. I am awesome, Drake is not. Ariana Grande is like a grasshopper. I am great, the Raiders are pipsqueaks.

v. 6-8 Cry out! All people are like grass… but the word of the Lord endures forever. Do you agree with God that you are like grass compared to the Word of the Lord?

Let’s do it. Let’s cry it out: All people are like grass!

By ourselves we are like grass on the side of the canyon compared to the canyon itself (10s of millions of years old)

But with God we are like the Canyon, only greater.

v. 8 So, what can I count on? The Word of the Lord.

 And v. 10 The “mighty arm” here is Jesus (Isaiah 53:1-3)

This tells us a lot about Jesus.

v.9 He is God,

v. 10-11 Jesus has: 1. Power 2. Reward 3. Gentle shepherd

How does this make you feel?

40:12-14 Q: Again, what do we see about God here? What Bible book does this sound like? (I think of Job). God is greater than all of those smart people.

Does this make you feel awesome and protected or does this make you feel scared? How does God want you to feel from this passage?

v. 14 Whom did the Lord consult to enlighten him? Q: Has God ever consulted you?

40:15-17 God is comparing himself to the nations. (context: Assyria, Egypt, Babylon) Do you agree with God here? How might we trust in the nations?

The forests of Lebanon are not enough for the Lord

The US government can construct the Federal Highway System, but can they create the Grand Canyon or build the Sierra Nevada?

Are you trusting in politics, in human organizations, in corporations for your strength. In Nike we trust! These things will fall!

v. 17 God regards these things as worthless and less than nothing compared to him. China is powerful. Amazon has a lot of power, but they are less than nothing compared to God.

 Whom and what are you trusting in for your strength?

This is the message of the last sermon and of this sermon.

40:18-20 God is comparing himself to the idols here. Isaiah is being sarcastic. Are you serious about worshipping idols?

a metalworker casts it.

A person too poor to present such an offering selects wood that will not rot (at least not right away!) Q: What is his point here? The irrationality of trusting in idols.

They hope it won’t fall over.

But we are too sophisticated to trust in idols. Not!

Our idols are our in-shape bodies, our degrees, our pop stars, our boyfriends, our social media, our video games…

Q: Where do you put God in relation to these things?

Isaiah 40:21-27 How awesome is God?

v. 21 Have you somehow forgotten? Have you lost your perspective? Have you lost your eyeglasses?

v. 22 A great memory verse How great is Jehovah?

He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth.

All its people are like grasshoppers. Like looking down from Mt. Baldy at the cars in the parking lot.

He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in. To him, creating the universe is like you or me setting up an easy-up.

v. 23-24 Compared to him, Putin, Trump, Biden, Xi Jinping are nothing. They will blow away like chaff.

And so will you without the Lord!

v. 26 Look out at this canyon. Who created this?

v. 27 But God did not answer my prayer yesterday. God is not hearing my prayer. My life is not going the way I had hoped it right now.

40:28-31. Have you felt tired, worn out, weary lately? Have you felt used up?

Did you need an increase of power?

Did you stumble and fall?

v. 31 The key to making it out of the low places is hoping in the Lord. It is like a shot of spiritual Gatorade. It will renew your strength.

What or whom do you put your hope in?

Q: When you hear about soaring on wings like eagles, what can you see God doing through you?

In the Lord, you can run up the Grand Canyon walls of your life.

Or if you want, you can walk, but you still will not faint.

The Lord is the everlasting God. The Creator of the Grand Canyon, and the entire universe. Do you think you can trust in him? Can you get your strength from him?