

How dark is it?

2 polls...

How are you doing?

- Politics
- Relationships challenged by politics
- Virus & all the secondary effects: isolation, conflicts, economic hardship, loneliness, misunderstandings, ...
- The “normal” challenges of life!

What helps you keep going?

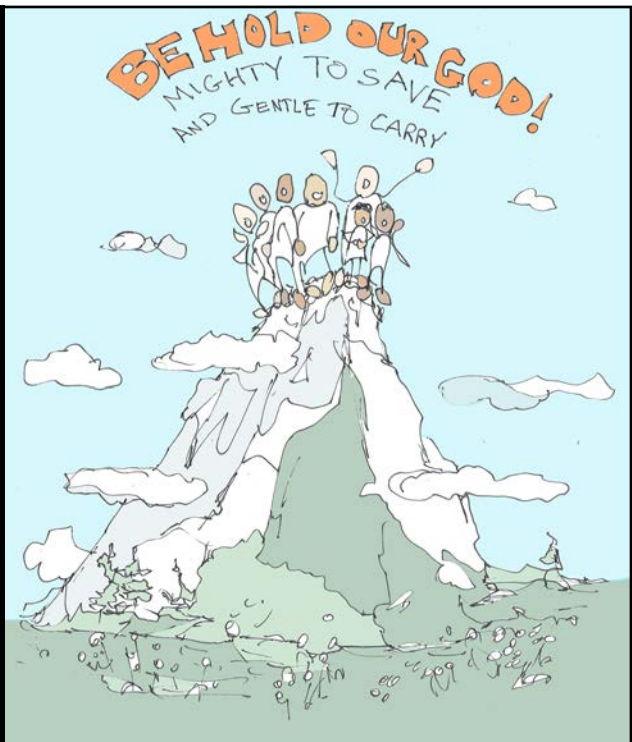
What hope do you have that tomorrow will be any better?

1

Behold our God!

Isaiah 40:1-11

bib.ly/Isa40.NIV
tiny.cc/cmchandouts



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Isaiah 40:1-2

Comfort, comfort my people,
 says your God.
 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
 and proclaim to her
 that her hard service has been completed,
 that her sin has been paid for,
 that she has received from the Lord's hand
 double for all her sins.

sin = immorality and disloyalty to God

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*Isaiah 40:1-11***1-2: Comfort & restoration for those deserving punishment**

- The main message: comfort & restoration!
 - “My people”: God claims the ones who have been disloyal to Him as His own
- Message
 - “Dark days” of discipline were from God
 - “from the Lord’s hand” = they deserved it
 - “Dark days” of exile are over
 - Their sin has now been forgiven

3-5:

- The discipline from God is now sufficient

6-8:

- **God is bringing comfort and restoration**

9-11:

5

Isaiah 40:3-5

A voice of one calling:

“In the wilderness

prepare **the way for the Lord;**

make straight in the desert

a highway for our God.

Every valley shall be raised up,

every mountain and hill made low;

the rough ground shall become level,

the rugged places a plain.

And the glory of the Lord will be revealed,

and all people will see it together.

For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

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Isaiah 40:1-11

1-2: Comfort & restoration for those deserving punishment

3-5: God is coming personally to rescue, so prepare

- Voice announcing God's arrival
 - Surprise: God is the one on the move!
 - People are to prepare for His grace-filled arrival
- Call to prepare for God's arrival in our desert
 - Humility: Sorry and ashamed by our sin
 - Longing for change (weak as we are)
 - Hopeful for God's deliverance
- Glory = God's powerful presence: mercy & justice

6-8: • All people "see" = observe and experience

9-11: • God's spoken will cannot fail to come

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Isaiah 40:6-8

A voice says, "Cry out."

And I said, "What shall I cry?"

"All people are like grass,

and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field.

The grass withers and the flowers **fall**,

because the breath of the Lord blows on them.

Surely the people are grass.

The grass withers and the flowers **fall**,

but the word of our God endures forever."

withers = dries out and dies

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Isaiah 40:1-11

1-2: Comfort & restoration for those deserving punishment

3-5: God is coming personally to rescue, so prepare

6-8: God's promises always come & all people are frail

- The best qualities of the best people will fade away quickly
 - Whether working for God or against God
 - Hope in better people doing a better job will always lead to failure (often bitterly)
- God's purposes and promises are unstoppable!
 - Especially: His plan to comfort & restore

9-11:

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Isaiah 40:9-11

You who bring good news to Zion,
go up on a high mountain.

Zion = Jerusalem's location

You who bring good news to Jerusalem,
lift up your voice with a shout,
lift it up, do not be afraid;
say to the towns of Judah,

"Here is your God!"

See, the Sovereign Lord **comes with power,**
and he rules with **a mighty arm.**

See, his reward is with him,
and his recompense accompanies him.

recompense = compensation
for harms experienced

He tends his flock like **a shepherd:**

He gathers the **lambs in his arms**
and carries them **close to his heart;**
he **gently leads** those that have young.

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Isaiah 40:1-11

1-2: Comfort & restoration for those deserving punishment

3-5: God is coming personally to rescue, so prepare

6-8: God's promises always come & all people are frail

9-11: Proclaim God's presence: Mighty and Gentle

- God's punished people again proclaim His glory
- The message: God's saving presence!
 - **Salvation is neither more nor less God with us**
 - Not a message and not a messenger: God Himself!
- He comes in power, with blessing, and in gentleness

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Isaiah 40:1-11

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9-11: Proclaim God's presence: Mighty and Gentle

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The Big Idea

**God the Son has come
mighty to save and gentle to carry
like no one else and like nothing else can
for all who will trust in Him**

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Christian hope is not in...

- Trying harder
- Better teaching or better discipleship
- Loving people more
- Loving God more
- A new technique
- A new vision
- Better leaders
- Better followers
- More comfort
- Lower expectations

“Functional Christian deism”
Believing that God exists and has saved us
And now He leaves it up to us

This is not Christian hope!

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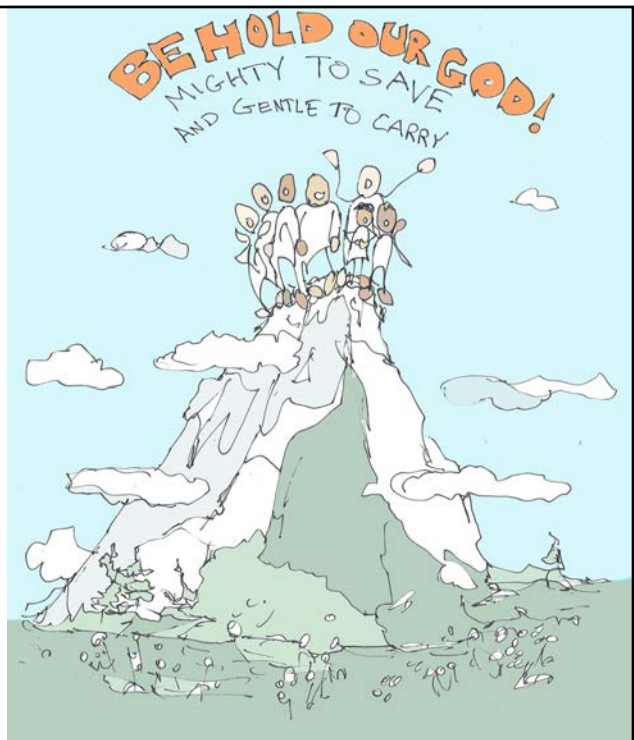
Christian hope is ...

- the living presence of God with us = Emmanuel
- The **Son of God** came and gave **His** life to give **us** life
- The **Holy Spirit** lives within us

Mighty to save!

Gentle to carry!

So make it known!



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The Big Idea

**God the Son has come
mighty to save and gentle to carry
like no one else and like nothing else can
for all who will trust in Him**

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Application

Be hope-filled through the presence of God with us

- **A messenger of hope who doesn't have hope is not very convincing!**
- **Salvation is neither more nor less than the living presence of God in and among us**
 - The Son of God personally came to purchase salvation
 - The Holy Spirit has come to live within each child of God
 - God is life and light!
- Deeply trust the presence of God with us
 - Sometimes His work isn't what we thought it would be
 - **Yet where God is, there is always life and hope!**
 - What He is doing is ***way better*** than we ever hoped for!

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Application

Be hope-filled through the presence of God with us

Be filled with the presence of God

- The glory of God is His life-giving and joy-giving presence
 - Jesus said to the Father: “**I have given them the glory that you gave me**, that they may be one as we are one—**I in them and you in me**—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” *John 17:22-23*

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Application

Be hope-filled through the presence of God with us

Be filled with the presence of God

- The glory of God is His life-giving and joy-giving presence
 - “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, **be filled with the Spirit**, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” *Ephesians 5:18-20*
 - **“Live under the influence” of the Spirit of God!**

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How to “live under the influence” of the Spirit

- Ask God for it in prayer, and really mean it
- Prepare for His gracious presence
 - Like preparing for a housecleaner when greatly needed
 - Greatest need is not pre-cleaning the house but...
 - Be humble: Sorry and ashamed by our sin
 - Long for change (weak as we are)
 - Be hopeful for God’s good work
- Be conscious of the will, words, and presence of God
- Trust what He says, and obey what He reveals
- Together

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And He will work!

“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and **where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom**. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are **being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord**, who is the Spirit.”

2 Corinthians 3:17-18

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Application

Be hope-filled through the presence of God with us

Be filled with the presence of God

Join God's work by bringing this Good News to others

- A voice crying: "God **has come** to rescue us!"
 - Shout this good news from the mountaintops!
- With other Christians: keep en-couraging each other!
 - "If God is for us, who can be against us?"
 - Where the Spirit is, there is life, light, and freedom!
- With not-yet-Christians: keep pointing to the Source
 - Hope is not in people, including us!
 - There is real and wonderful hope in the presence of God!

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The Big Idea

**God the Son has come
mighty to save and gentle to carry
like no one else and like nothing else can
for all who will trust in Him**

"We do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord!"

Where the Lord is, there is life and freedom

We have Christ in us, the hope of glory!

Always have courage in Christ → make Him known

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