

Behold our God!

Isaiah 40:1-11

How dark is it?

What helps you keep going?

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



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

The discipline from God is now sufficient

God is bringing comfort and restoration

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

All people "see" = observe and experience

God's spoken will cannot fail to come

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: 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 than God with us.

Not a message and not a messenger: God Himself!
He comes in power, with blessing, and in gentleness

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**

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!

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!

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!

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*

“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!

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

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*

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!

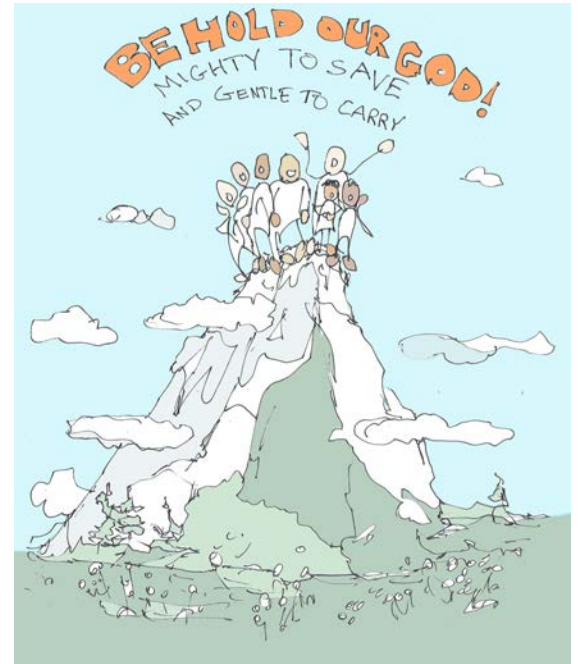
Conclusion

“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



Reflection Questions

1. In what parts of life are you most likely to live with little or no hope? Why is that?
2. What might it look like to be hope-filled through the presence of God with us in that area of life?
3. What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit of God (see Ephesians 5:18-20)?
4. How are we to “live under the influence” of the Spirit?
5. How are you bringing this Good News to others? What might it look like for you to “go up on a high mountain” and “lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, and do not be afraid”? What might we be tempted to be afraid of? How might we overcome those fears?