

Isaiah 40:6-8 -- Reading covers vs.1-11 -- 2nd Sunday of Advent

⁶ A voice says, "Cry out." And I said, "What shall I cry?" "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. ⁷ The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the LORD blows on them. Surely the people are grass. ⁸ The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever."

Just close your eyes, and visualize for a moment the unseen reality... our God is here – His voice is clear – He calls to you, "My people... you are my people."

Now, we pray: "Lord, we your people humbly ask – enable us to hear your voice – silence all the other 'voices' clamoring for our attention – let your truth ring clearly and remain in our hearts. Amen."

The Voice – at the opening of vs.6 – calls to the Old Testament prophet Isaiah. Isaiah – quietly – fades to the background, and shines the spotlight on the One Voice behind all of Scripture. God, down through the ages, comes to converse with people. He speaks with us through the Word – this Word, right here – the Bible.

Wave after wave of human voices have challenged this single Voice. Centuries have come and gone. Each has brought with it people who viciously attack God's Word.

What has happened to each of those voices? One by one, those voices have been silenced by the grave. "*The grass withers... surely the people are grass.*" One after another. Gone are all those who have attacked the God-breathed Word. Gone is their voice. While the solid, living Voice of God goes right on speaking. "*The Word of God stands forever.*"

The truth we have in our hands - from God's own mouth – conflicts with human pride. This truth conflicts with the overinflated value our world places on human achievement and accomplishments. Many people sadly remain in conflict with this truth of God right up to their death.

The one thing all people cannot deny is the fact that death is coming. The Voice which speaks with unsurpassible clarity and accuracy tells: sin deserves this consequence.

You may complain... You may fret, as it approaches... or, as one poet wrote, you may "Rage, Rage, against the dying of the light." But, deny God all you will, ignore His Voice, death remains to stare you in the face. What to do?

Listen to the Voice which speaks in the Bible. He has never lied to you. Study God's message to you, take it to heart, and you have comfort like no other. For, all the other voices pass away. The grave claims each one. And with their departure, so departs any ability for them to help you through life and out of death. But this Voice, and the One who issues it, goes on. Always. Living. Powerful. He is able to help you. He desires to carry you through life and eventually out of your own grave. He wants you as his own, to keep you among his people through life, and to bring you to eternal life with him.

And so we come to the key truth today: God is so eager for you to know His truth. Why? This is the way our God chose to communicate with you: through His Word. This is His own message to you; everything

you need to know about. . . the relationship between man and God, sin and grace, the depth of our own depravity and the height of God's love to seek and save lost sinners.

A voice says, "Cry out." And I said, "What shall I cry?" "All men are like grass, and all their glory 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."

There is a picture that would undoubtedly have come to mind for Old Testament Israelites who heard: *"The breath of the Lord – the Spirit of the Lord – blows on them, and they wither and fade."* You see, when May arrived in the land of Israel, a notorious East wind often arose and would sweep across the land. In a few hours it completely destroyed the growing grass and blooming flowers.

Now God's clear voice tells a spiritual parallel. The Spirit of the Lord blows upon us – blows upon us with the blast of His law.

With brutal honesty, God tells us ... All our talents, virtues, accomplishments – all the goodness we have or those achievements we glory in – have no lasting benefit. In unblinking directness, he pinpoints the simple truth: we fail to measure up. The total power of humanity can offer nothing to God; we can contribute nothing to our salvation.

"All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field."

God speaks His Word and knocks all the inflated pride and false, fleeting glory out of our lungs. *"Whatever the law says, it says ... so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God"* – Romans 3:19.

When we listen, we are emptied of every excuse for our sin. We are rid every opposing view point that would challenge God's just condemnation for sin.

But the Spirit of the Lord is not done.

Once He has brought you and me to know that we have no life, no hope on our own... then, the Spirit of the Lord gently breathes life into us via His Gospel Word.

"The Word of our God stands forever." Did you hear the basis for hope? *"The Word of **OUR** God stands forever."* In that statement God describes His connection to you. God describes the stability and enduring peace He brings you as a believer.

If you ever doubt your forgiveness, if you ever begin to feel your sin is too great – you only need to turn to the Word where God's promises of forgiveness are imprinted forever.

"Comfort, Comfort, my people, says your God. ... proclaim to her... that her sin has been paid for." – Isaiah 40:1-2

If you fear death, if you ever begin to fear hell. . . printed on these pages forever is the news that God gives eternal life to those who cling to Jesus.

Isaiah foretold the glory of the Lord being revealed. See the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus. In Jesus, see our Lord clothed in grace. He - the Holy One – lived with sinners, cried with them, healed them, endured the scorn of those who rejected Him - and saved sinners, died for sinners. He saves us! And this right here (the Bible) captures it all in words – in the Word of God.

Hold this truth tight, let nothing tempt you to let it go. Rest your hope in Christ's saving work revealed here... and you have real love, real joy, real peace – that will last forever.

This is an especially timely and applicable truth that we hold our Bibles open to today. Why do I say “timely”? There is a growing trend. Many people today think they don't need this source to get God's truth. Oh, they still claim to have it. They'll suggest they hear enough / know enough from their surroundings (nature) or from their own feelings, intuition or inner insight. They claim to have answers without reading – without first listening where God's Voice is heard.

These errors aren't new. They are repackaged lies of the devil, which have been around since the time of the early Christian church. You'll hear Peter, Paul and John all give urgent warnings against such godless voices.

Understand God has not promised to work faith in any other way than in the Gospel, in the Word and the Sacraments. His truth, forgiveness of sins and salvation are found here (Holding up Bible) and here (pointing to the baptism font) and here (directing attention to the Lord's Supper elements on the altar).

We're told in 1 Peter: *“You have been born again ... through the living, enduring Word of God. For, 'All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever.' And this is the word that was preached to you”* - 1 Peter 1:22-25.

Peter shines a spotlight on the same Voice as Isaiah. The single Voice that speaks from Genesis to Revelation is the Lord's voice. Our God speaks through the simple clarity of Law and Gospel/good news.

Crave this Word of God, which our God is eager for us to go on hearing.

Might it help you to visualize the unseen reality that is taking place each time you pull the cover open on this book? As you sit there reading, picture the Lord seated in front of you. Envision our Lord Jesus – *leaning forward and sharing with you His truth and His love.*

The reality is: our God is so eager for us to hear His Voice. His voice has not faded, or tired, with the passing of the years. His voice calls to you – His voice clear, strong — still breathing hopelessness out of us, and breathing life into us. His Word is the calming, comforting voice in which you and I place our trust. We find rest in His Voice – for we know from His own Word: He is our God. We are His people through faith in Jesus our Savior. Amen.