# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

 **“Your God is Coming!”**

**Isaiah 40:1-11**

 **November 15, 2020**

When my mother died, suddenly and unexpectedly, I was devastated. I felt an emptiness inside that even the most well meaning and sincere words of comfort were unable to fill. I found that my only true source of comfort was my faith in God. Only through my belief that he had brought my mom home safely to be with him was the hurt beginning to heal. While death had taken her from me, God had taken her to be with him. That was my comfort. Our Scripture text this morning is from the prophet Isaiah where he gives us God’s word of comfort. I invite you to turn with me to Isaiah 40:1-11

“Comfort, comfort my people,” says your God. “Speak tenderly to Jerusalem. Tell her that her sad days are gone and her sins are pardoned. Yes, the Lord has punished her twice over for all her sins.”

Listen! It’s the voice of someone shouting, “Clear the way through the wilderness for the Lord! Make a straight highway through the wasteland for our God! Fill in the valleys, and level the mountains and hills. Straighten the curves, and smooth out the rough places. Then the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together. The Lord has spoken!”

A voice said, “Shout!” I asked, “What should I shout?” “Shout that people are like the grass. Their beauty fades as quickly as the flowers in a field. The grass withers and the flowers fade beneath the breath of the Lord. And so it is with people. The grass withers and the flowers fade, but the word of our God stands forever.”

O Zion, messenger of good news, shout from the mountaintops! Shout it louder, O Jerusalem. Shout, and do not be afraid. Tell the towns of Judah, “Your God is coming!” Yes, the Sovereign Lord is coming in power. He will rule with a powerful arm. See, he brings his reward with him as he comes. He will feed his flock like a shepherd. He will carry the lambs in his arms, holding them close to his heart. He will gently lead the mother sheep with their young.

All of us have experienced times in our lives when we needed comfort. Given the turbulent times in which we live, perhaps we need a word of comfort today. As many have noted, 2020 will not be a year that they will look back upon with fondness. In the midst of turmoil, whether that of the Israelites some 700 years before Christ or that of our modern day, God comes to us with words of comfort. This morning we will briefly look at four sources of comfort from our passage.

The first source of comfort is the word of God himself found in verses one and two. “Comfort, comfort my people. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem.” The Hebrew word translated “tenderly” literally means “to the heart.” God is speaking to our hearts today, to the source of our worries and fears and uncertainties, and he is saying, “Be comforted.” From his heart to our heart, from the depth of his being to the depth of ours, he offers his comfort.

The second source of comfort, in verses three through five, begins to unpack for us how God brings us comfort. He does so by coming to us. He will leave heaven and descend to earth to be with us; having spoken words of comfort he will come to be our comfort. A little boy tells his dad that he is afraid of the dark. His dad responds that he doesn’t need to be afraid because God is with him. The boy responds, “I know he is. I just wish I could see him.” While it is good that we believe his words of comfort, God knows that we also need to see him. So, God sent his Son, his one and only Son, into the world. And, “The word of God became flesh and lived among us.”

The third source of comfort is in verses six through eight which assures us that while the world we live in will eventually fade away, and while our lives are relatively short, the word of God stands forever. Like my mother, we are here today and gone tomorrow. She was beautiful to me in every way, but I was unable to hold on to that beauty. Yes, I have her in my heart, but I would much rather have her in my life. You and I are incapable of holding on to the things that matter the most to us, but whatever we place in God’s hands will not be lost. The sorrows we experience in this uncertain and temporary world are healed by God’s certain and eternal word of comfort.

The fourth source of comfort in verses nine through eleven completes our passage. Here we find the wonderful combination of God’s power and God’s gentleness. Your God is coming with power and there is nothing in heaven or on earth that can stop him from accomplishing his plan for us through his Son, Jesus Christ. Neither the powers of darkness that exist in the spiritual realms, nor the unbelief of those living in the earthly realm, will be able to keep us from the strong and conquering love of God which has defeated sin and death. And, Your God is coming with gentleness toward those who have placed their trust in him, who have received Jesus as their good shepherd. He holds us close to his heart, his heart that speaks words of comfort in our time of distress. Although we like sheep have gone astray, he comes looking for us; and, when he finds us and leads us safely home, we will be comforted.