

Isaiah 40:6-9

Dear Friends in Christ,

The prophet Isaiah heard voices. He wasn't crazy. He wasn't hearing the voices of dead people. He was hearing the voice of God. God had called him to be his prophet, his spokesman. When God appeared to his people on Mt. Sinai and spoke to them directly they said, "Don't do that, it's too frightening." From then on he promised that he would speak to humans through a human, a prophet, like Moses and Isaiah.

Isaiah heard a voice from heaven command him to speak, to cry out. But, the voice stopped, almost as if it had been interrupted. It commanded him to speak but it didn't tell him what he was to say. So Isaiah asked, "what shall I cry?" "What's the message you want me to deliver?"

The answer he received is what has always been the message that God wants proclaimed to all people of all time. You are grass. Here is your God.

God wants all people to come to realize that they are **like grass and all their glory is like the flowers of the field**. By nature we want to brag about ourselves and our accomplishments. We say, "look what man has accomplished!" We have invented airplanes and rockets. We have sent men to the moon and brought them back safely. We have conquered diseases like polio and measles. We are making great strides in the fight against many kinds of cancers and against AIDS. We started with computers that filled a room and now our cell phones have more power than those first computers did. We might like to talk about how many acres we can plant and harvest and how bushels per acre our crops yield. We might like to talk about how big or nice our house is or our latest time saving convenience. But God says, "remind them that **they are grass and all their glory**, all their accomplishments, all their scientific and medical advances are **like the flowers of the field**."

We don't like to admit it, but we know it's true. What's new and modern and state of the art today will probably be laughed at by the next generation. Our son took our grandchildren with him to a garage sale. They found something that they just couldn't figure out. They ask, "What is this thing? What do you do with it? It was a typewriter. All our glory, all our great inventions soon go out of date. They are like the flowers of the field.

We don't like to admit it, but we know it's true. There will be a next generation. We aren't going to be around forever. Just like the things we make, we wear out and become obsolete, sometimes even unable to care for ourselves. Sooner or later we will have to face death.

God says, cry out, tell them, remind them "**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.**" That's what God told Adam and Eve would happen when they sinned and he has been true to his word.

Sometimes the reason that we want to brag about ourselves and our accomplishments is that it distracts us from what we see around us. We see the grass withering and the flowers falling. We see crime and war and violence and corruption. The furnace or the fridge or the car breaks down. We get sick, we need glasses and hearing aids. Maybe we can handle these things but then we face some kind of persecution because of our faith and it hits home that even **the people are grass**; even believers are not immune to the effects of sin, we might begin to despair. As we realize these things we might be tempted to join the unbelievers around us and ask, "Where is God? I don't seem to see him. It doesn't seem like he is doing anything." Or at the very least we might be tempted to cry out, "**How Long Lord!** How long will you let this go

on? How long will you let us suffer? How long will you let this wicked world continue? When is that last day, that judgment you talked about, going to come?"

As strange as it might seem, that's just where God wants us to be. He wants us to realize that we are grass, that even **our righteous acts are filthy rags** in his sight. He wants us to realize that we don't have the power to save ourselves and that we need him. He wants us to realize that although the grass withers and the flowers fall, there is something that doesn't wither and fall, **the word of our God stands forever**.

Are you looking for God? Are you looking for answers to the important questions of life? Where did I come from? Why am I here? Are you looking for the meaning of life? You won't find the answers in astrology. The God who made the stars calls astrologers **stubble**. Are you looking for answers by using mediums or spiritists, or by trying to connect with angels or spirit guides through some form of meditation? God says these are **detestable practices** that will lead you down the path to eternal destruction. Do you throw yourself into work and taking care of your family and going to church and doing community service projects because you think that's what God wants and he will surely notice and bless you? God says those good things are flowers, they are good things to do, but they fall, they don't endure, they don't provide comfort or salvation.

It is only **the word of our God that stands forever**. Isaiah is to proclaim that word. He is to shout it. He is to proclaim it from the mountain tops. He is to say without fear or equivocation, **here is your God**.

If you want to find God, if you want to find answers to life's most important questions, there's only one place to go, to that **word of God that stands forever**. God has chosen to reveal himself to us in his word. And are there ever wonderful things to be found in his word!

It is in his word that he reveals to us who he is. It is only in the word that you will learn that he is one divine being who is at the same time, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is only in his word that you will learn that, yes, he is a just God who must punish sin, but he is at the same time a loving and gracious God who, as soon as sin entered the world, promised to send a savior. It is only in the word that you will see history as HIS story. You will see him keeping his promise despite the sins and unfaithfulness of those who carried the promise. It is only in the word that you will see that when the **time had fully come he sent his son** into this world. It is only in the word that you will hear Jesus proclaim that he is God's son; that he is the one and **only way** to the father; that he is the **resurrection and the life, the bread of life**, the one who has purchased eternal life with his own blood and now offers it as a free gift to all.

Here is your God. He reveals himself to you and tells you everything you need to know for this life and the next, right here in the word of God that stands forever.

Here is your God. He has chosen to attach his living and enduring word to some visible, earthly things; to water and to bread and wine. He promises that because his word is attached to the water of baptism it becomes a **washing of rebirth and renewal of by the Holy Spirit**. He promises that because his word is attached to bread and wine in the Lord's Supper, we receive our Savior's body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins.

It is only in the word that we can learn to know **the true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent**. It is only in the word that we can learn the solution to the problem of sin. It is only in the word that we can find comfort when the truth sinks in that we are grass and all our accomplishments, all our glory is like the flowers of the field. It is only in the word that we are

assured by God himself that **whoever believes in Jesus** and what he has done for them **has eternal life**.

In a world that loves to brag about its accomplishments and act as if they can control everything, including the climate, God calls on us to cry out, **“You are grass and all your glory is like the flowers of the field.”** Only when people come to realize their mortality will they even think about looking for God. Then, God calls on us to cry out, **“Here is your God.”** He exists and he has graciously revealed himself and the way of salvation right here, in the word and sacraments.

What a blessing it is that God has led us to see him in his word and trust his promise of salvation in Jesus! May we be moved to proclaim these good tidings, without fear, from the mountain tops!