

Together, We Wait: Part 2—We Cry

Text: **Isaiah 40:1-11**

Warming Up

Questions:

1. *Tell us about a memorable gift you received as a child.*
2. *If Jesus were to speak audibly to you today, what do you imagine he would say?*

Digging In

Read **Isaiah 6:1-12**.

Questions:

1. *Why do you think God chose to use a human being like Isaiah to proclaim bad news?*
2. *Why do you think God wanted to bring bad news to his people?*
3. *What bad news do you think God might speak to His church in the 21st Century?*

Isaiah 40 is a turning point in the prophet's book. After 39 chapters of bad news, chapter 40 brings good news to God's people.

Read **Isaiah 40:1-11**.

Questions:

1. *What good news do you hear in this passage?*
2. *In verses 6 and 7 there is a dissenting voice. Why is this voice skeptical about this good news?*
3. *What comeback does Isaiah have for the skeptic in verses 8 through 11?*
4. *Why do you think God as shepherd would be heard as good news for God's people?*
5. *What good news might God speak to His church in the 21st Century?*

Verse 8 tells us that God's *word* endures forever. It is meant to be a comfort to God's people who don't trust their own faithfulness to God. "Word" in the Hebrew Scriptures can refer to Scripture, or a dream, or a prophetic utterance, or a sacred event. There are many ways God brings a "word". "Word" is any way God seeks to communicate Himself and His message to people. In the Greek Scriptures—the New Testament—Jesus is called "The Word", God's ultimate communication of Himself and what He values.

Questions:

1. *What "Word" does Jesus' life communicate to us about God?*
2. *Why might it be important to elevate the person of Jesus as the ultimate Word of God, even over Scripture?*
3. *What dangers might there be in elevating Scripture as the ultimate Word of God over Jesus?*

Sending Out

Read **Isaiah 55:6-11**.

Many times we hear about God's thoughts not being our own. Sometimes this is used to explain God's judgment or apparent violence. But in Isaiah, God's thoughts not being our own is used to explain God's *mercy*. It is God's *mercy* that we have trouble wrapping our minds around, and God's *mercy* that is the word that won't return empty without accomplishing its purpose.

Questions:

1. *Why do you think mercy is so important to God?*
2. *How is Jesus the ultimate Word of mercy from God?*
3. *In what ways do you need God's mercy today?*
4. *In what ways can you actively demonstrate God's mercy to others?*
5. *Based on Isaiah 40, what do you think God would want you to share with others about Himself?*

Closing

Take a moment in silence to come before God and ask the question, "What word or phrase or idea or moment does God want me to remember from this morning and carry with me this week?"

Close with prayer.