

Text: Isaiah 40:1-11

Theme: Searching For Comfort

December 10, 2017

How many of you have ever looked for something, but couldn't find it? You thought you knew where it was, but, no matter how much looking you did, it wasn't there? It's like it up and walked away. Regardless of age, occupation, or our abundance of technology, we all find ourselves searching, often searching for what we cannot find. As Isaiah pens the words of our text, we're reminded that we need comfort, that we are searching for comfort.

I. Our God is a God of comfort. A. His purpose for sending His Son was to comfort us. 1. We need comfort because we are fragile. Isaiah writes, "All flesh is grass; the grass withers and the flower fades." If you take a handful of grass and lay it on your sidewalk in the heat of summer, what will it look like by tomorrow afternoon? Like that grass, our lives are fragile. A finger in the wrong place at the wrong time, a health event and we're immediately reminded that life is fragile. We may think we are tough, invincible, that nothing can stop us. But it only takes a moment, one emotional, physical, mental, or spiritual event to remind us life is fragile. Handle with care.

2. We need comfort because we are broken. What does broken imply? When your washer is broken or your arm is broken, something is wrong, right? Broken means that it needs to be fixed, but, as we already know, we can't fix everything that's broken. When we are broken, can we fix ourselves? When someone or some event breaks our heart, can we repair it in five minutes or less? Whether it's you or me, we all face times when we can't ignore the fact that we are broken. In those moments, we realize that we are helpless, that Someone else needs to fix our broken lives. To find comfort, we need to first find the One who fixes what's broken.

3. We need comfort because we can't fix ourselves. Some of you may be thinking, "That's not true. I can fix anything," but you can't. You can try; I can try, but no matter how long we try, we can't fix ourselves. The longer we think we can do it all by ourselves, the longer we find ourselves searching for comfort. If we could fix ourselves, would we need other people? Would we need God? From the very beginning, God created people who couldn't fix themselves, people who were dependent on God. We may think we can find anything we need on the internet, but, truth be told, we're broken and we need comfort because we can't fix ourselves.

B. Fortunately, our Savior came to comfort us. 1. He comforts us with His Word. In verse eight, Isaiah writes, "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever." No matter how many world wide disasters occur, how many natural disasters occur in other countries or close to home, or how many unexplainable health issues or personal issues occur, His Word never changes. It's always there to comfort us, to encourage us, to assure us that God is still in charge of this world and our lives. When God promises comfort through His Word, we know with absolute confidence that, in that Word, is the comfort we need to carry on.

2. He comforts us by functioning as our Shepherd. "He will tend His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs in His arms." The picture language is so incredibly comforting. We are the sheep, fragile, easily lost, easily in trouble, easily frightened. Yet we have a wonderful Shepherd who loves His sheep, cares for them,

protects them, and leads them to those green pastures and those quiet waters. As you picture the imagery, isn't it comforting? Doesn't it relieve our fears and reduce our anxieties? Wherever we may wander, whatever situations we may face, our hero, our Good Shepherd, stands beside us and says, "I will make all things new."

3. He comforts us by coming among us. John in our Gospel cries out, "Prepare the way for the Lord." This Lord is Immanuel - God with us. Why did God come among us? Why didn't He simply make a declaration of forgiveness and salvation and call it good? Immanuel came among us because He knew we needed Him to walk in our shoes so that, in our minds at least, He would understand what life was like for us. Suppose you had a friend who lived in Germany. No matter what they said or did from a distance, would it ever be the same as if they stood next to you? Comfort by presence; comfort by location. We need it and Immanuel offers it.

4. He comforts us with His forgiveness. "Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her sin is pardoned." Suppose God kept a running list of every sin, every mistake you made each day and at the end of the day, you had to pay for each mistake before the next day could occur. How many of us would ever see day two? You can debate, argue, disagree all you want, but not one person here or anywhere else in this world would see day two if we had to settle accounts with God at the end of day one. Our comfort comes in knowing that God settled our account once and for all through the death of Jesus on the cross.

5. He comforts us with His justice. Injustice is everywhere! We hear about it on the news; we watch it occur on TV and we witness it in person. Where is justice? It's not here; it's not in our world. It never has been and never will be. But, as people who know their Savior, we also know justice does exist and justice will always prevail because that justice comes from God. Not only is God just and the One who declares justice, He's also the One who has the power to do what He declares. When God declares justice, there will be justice. Maybe not our idea of justice, but justice that supersedes any justice this world can claim to offer.

6. He comforts us with His tenderness. Isaiah writes, "Speak tenderly to Jerusalem." Why tenderly? Because our God knows how broken we are, how fragile our lives are, how weak and frail we are mentally, emotionally, spiritually. Tenderly evokes the imagery of a mother caring for her infant child. We are that little child and God is our caregiver, the One who speaks tenderly, lovingly, with great care and concern, as He says, "I created you because I love you. Whatever moments you may face, I will be the One who speaks and acts tenderly on your behalf." For people searching for comfort, for people like us, His tenderness brings us unexplainable comfort.

7. Whether it's today, tomorrow, or next week that you find yourself searching for something that isn't where you thought it was, remember this: God's comfort is always available to you right here, right now. Amen.