

Comfort Food  
Isaiah 40:1-11

What's your comfort food? Is it something sweet? Is it something chocolate? Whatever it is, I hope some of it is on that big table behind us. When times are tough, or you are feeling down, a little comfort food makes everyone feel better.

Well, God offers us some spiritual comfort food in today's passage. He gives us some much needed good news, news which verse 9 says we should lift up our voices and proclaim.

But why do we need to hear and to speak these words of comfort? Well, that's a silly question, isn't it? We live in a world of frustration and disappointment, of hurricanes and pandemics, of wars overseas and gridlock in the halls of Congress. Our future is uncertain and the foundations of our most cherished institutions are trembling.

Yes, we know all about change going on all around us, about the impermanence and fragility of human life. But as verses 6-8 remind us, the good news is that God's Word stands in stark contrast to all of this uncertainty – the grass may wither and the flowers may fade, but the Word of our God will stand forever.

And what does God's Word promise us? Verses 3-5 tell us that the Lord will come and make all things right. Yes, powerful storms and vengeful, brutal rulers can cause great damage today. And yes, we might feel completely helpless in the face of our most urgent problems. But on that day, on the day when Jesus comes again, the low – those who are humble, who are meek – will be lifted up, and the high and mighty will be brought low. The things that are now rough and ragged, the things that are crooked and twisted will be smoothed out. All those problems that are so knotted up, all those relationships that are so warped and strained will be healed. Instead of our sin which messes everything up, God's glory will be revealed.

That's what Isaiah told us would happen. And to a great extent, this promise has already come true. For Matthew's gospel tells us that John the Baptist was the one who cried out in the wilderness, preparing the way of the Lord by preaching a gospel of repentance. And just as Isaiah had said, and just as John had said, Jesus did in fact come to reveal the glory of the Lord.

And how did He do this? He broke through so many of our problems by showing us how to live, how to reach out to those who have hurt us in forgiveness, how to untangle our most difficult relationships by living lives focused on the needs of others. He came thus to reveal the character of the God Who is love.

But everything that Isaiah and John predicted about Jesus hasn't come true, at least not yet. We are, after all, all too aware that the proud and the puffed up are still making life miserable for the humble and meek. But verses 10-11 remind us that Jesus is coming again, not this time as a servant, but as a sovereign. And when He comes, the glory of the Lord will be fully revealed. In fact, verse ten says that He will come with might, with His arm ruling for Him. On that day, He will display His holiness and His justice by giving the wicked exactly what they deserve.

But on that day, He will also tend His flock like a shepherd. All those who trust in Him will be gathered in His arms, as a shepherd gathers His lambs. On that day He will carry us and hold us close to Himself.

For Jesus didn't just come to show us how to live, for we have always been unable to keep His commandments. And He didn't just come to punish the wicked, for if that were the case, everyone on earth would experience His wrath. No, just as verse 2 says, Jesus came to pardon all our iniquities.

But how do we know that the coming of Christ will be good news for us? How do we know we will be recipients of His grace instead of His judgment? Because of the great event that we remember whenever we take the Lord's Supper. By offering Himself up as the perfect sacrifice for all His people, by dying for all those who trust in Him, Jesus perfectly satisfies God's justice and allows God's people to be saved.

And so, before we gather around that table to enjoy some comfort food, and before we gather around these tables to encourage one another with fellowship, all baptized believers are welcome to gather around the Lord's table. For as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

Yes, it is here, at the Lord's table, that we find our true comfort. It is here that our warfare is ended, and that our iniquity is pardoned. For this is the table of Christ – He is spiritually present here. It is at this table that Christ and all His benefits are applied to and sealed upon us. For here, Christ invites us to partake of nothing less than Himself.