

Title: THE VOICE, ISAIAH 40:1 – 11
(Chatham, NJ; 12/10/17, AM) [Pc – Topical]

Theme: Isaiah predicts the voice that will proclaim God's coming, and we later learn that the voice was John the Baptist.

Purpose: To remind us that the voice still calls us to prepare for Jesus to come into our hearts.

Introduction:

1. The first Earth Day celebration was accompanied by numerous false doomsday scenarios, and none of them came true.
2. By contrast Isaiah's message is one of hope.
3. He speaks of the voice proclaiming God's coming.
4. Of course, John the Baptist assumes this role of a voice in the wilderness, and his birth along with Jesus' testimony about him prove that his authority has come from God.
5. Isaiah provides salvation and hope in the voice's message.

God Is Coming

- A. Prepare the way, 3
 1. In the wilderness – reminiscent of the Exodus
 2. God doesn't come in worldly splendor or in the halls of worldly governments
 3. Make a straight road, lift up the valleys, bring down the mountains, level the ground, and even out the rough places
 4. Get rid of every obstacle
- B. Prepare your hearts
 1. In the wilderness of Sinai, God disciplined Israel to put complete trust in him
 2. John preached a baptism of repentance
 3. Preparation for God's coming was to get your spiritual house in order
 4. More importantly, John spoke of the one coming after him
 5. John was not worthy to untie his sandal: this is honor attributed to the presence of God
 6. We search our hearts as we think about God's coming in Christ
 7. Let not God come in judgment as in Amos 4:12
 8. God will never reject a humble, contrite heart

Humans Are Mortal

- A. The doomsday human condition
 1. All flesh is grass
 2. Humanity withers like the grass and fading flowers
 3. God sweeps it away with a mere breath
 4. We are mere creatures destined to die: James reminds us that we are like the morning mist
 5. Death is a true doomsday reality
 6. Important to deal with our mortality; Ps. 90 asks for wisdom to number our days
- B. But God – the upside to his message
 1. God's word stands forever
 2. Unlike the words of mere mortals (including their doomsday prophets)
 3. God becomes our anchor in a sea of human turmoil
 4. Listen to some of the promises in Hebrews 13:5-9

The Voice Brings Good News

- A. Hopeful images
 - 1. Comfort my people, 1
 - 2. Your warfare is ended, 2
 - 3. Your iniquity is pardoned, 2
 - 4. God's coming accompanied by mercy and relief
 - 5. The time of grief and shame is over
 - 6. God, the shepherd tends the flock with great care, 11

- B. The world will be set right, 10
 - 1. He comes with power to rule
 - 2. He comes with his reward (for the righteous)
 - 3. He comes with recompense (justice and judgment against the unrighteous)
 - 4. John told us that Jesus was to have a winnowing fork in his hand to separate the wheat from the chaff

Conclusions:

- 1. The voice comes from God (1), and more importantly the message is about God (12-28).
- 2. This is the real key to understanding the hope we gain from Isaiah's message.
- 3. These verses remind us where these words come from: note some of the details of how God is described.
- 4. It is this God who inspired John and who sent Jesus to become human.
- 5. The voice from God brings hope, a hope we can claim and cling to even today.