

ULC Sermon Study Resource
As We Wait // Waiting for Comfort
Pastor Marcus
December 11, 2022

Prayer: Pause for a few moments to go to the Lord in prayer. Ask that He would draw near to you in this time, and open your heart and mind to hear His Word.

Icebreaker: What is the best Christmas gift you've received?

Reading: Isaiah 40:1-8

Outline:

- I. God's Pardon (v. 1-2)
 - A. At the end of chapter 39, Isaiah spoke to Hezekiah the promise that exile was coming upon Judah and Jerusalem, which was meant to be a comfort to Israel. The hope of this comfort is that the exile and God's judgment will come to an end, that his pardon outweighs his wrath.
 - B. We see here in Isaiah the underlying purpose of God's judgment in Scripture: He is working to lead us to his pardon. God's judgment of sin exists that we might be led to repentance through the kindness of God's pardon that has been poured out in Jesus.
Q: *When has God's judgment led you to repentance?*
- II. God's Presence (v. 3-5)
 - A. Isaiah's words in these verses echo the image of a herald going before a king who is entering into a city: "Prepare the way, remove the obstacles." Israel's hope is not in something God will bring; it is in the very promise of God's presence.
 - B. "You stir us so that praising you may bring us joy, because you have made us and drawn us to yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you." -St. Augustine.
Q: *How do you find rest in God's presence?*
- III. God's Power (v. 6-8)
 - A. Everything that is not the Word of God will pass away. As Judah faces exile, they can have confidence that the only thing that lasts will be the words and promises of their God.
 - B. It is easy to become a prisoner of the moment when we see things going from bad to worse or when we see immense prosperity. These will pass away, but the one thing that will endure is the pardon and salvation that Jesus gives us.
Q: *How can we remind ourselves during this holiday season that everything but the Word of God will pass away?*

Reflection/Application Questions:

- 1) Why does God use exile to express His judgment on sin?
- 2) How do we find hope in God's presence?
- 3) When does praising God bring you the most joy?
- 4) How do we preserve our confidence and hope in God in the midst of our exile?

Suggestions for further study:

- Romans 2:3-4 Q: How do these verses help us better understand God's judgment?
- James 1:10-11 Q: How do these verses better remind us that everything but God's Word passes away?

Closing Prayer:

Dear God, we thank you for leading us to pardons for our sins. Please remind us that you and your Word are the only things that don't pass away. Teach us to find rest in your presence, and to discern when we need your presence most. Amen.