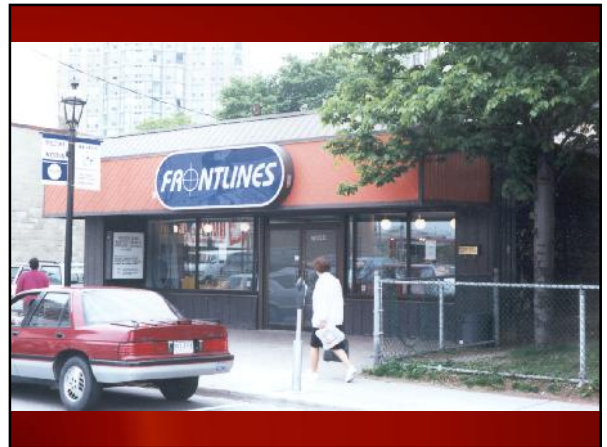


*A Homecoming*  
Isaiah 40:1-11



*An Incarnational Journey*



*A Regathering/A Homecoming*

- ★ A sister church (Pelmo Park Baptist) re-uniting with Weston Baptist
- ★ Enables us to expand ministries through Frontlines



- ★ Isaiah 40:1-11 also represents a regathering and a homecoming
- ★ Israel in exile coming home to their own land, a homecoming to Jerusalem



Comfort, O comfort my people,  
says your God. Speak tenderly  
to Jerusalem, and cry to her that  
she has served her term, that  
her penalty is paid, that she has  
received from the Lord's hand  
double for all her sins.

Isaiah 40:1-2

### *Isaiah's Overture*

- ★ The image of a divine council is presented – angels and messengers in discussion with God

### *First Voice*

- ★ Announcing a word of comfort – “comfort / comfort my people” (used twice for emphasis)
- ★ Their punishment has been served

“Speak tenderly” = speak to the heart / persuade

A voice cries out: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Isaiah 40:3

### *Second Voice*

- ★ An announcement – “Prepare the way of the Lord”
- ★ Build a highway in the desert for the people to return home

It speaks of a homecoming for the exiles

- ★ Through this procession the glory of God will be seen (v5)
- ★ God leading his people home
- ★ A focus on the Shekinah glory of God (as seen on Sinai/Moses)

## *The Symbol of Exile*

- ★ A reality for Israel but also a symbol for us
- ★ Speaks to our own tension of resisting and seeking God



No matter how much the world shatters us to pieces, we carry inside us a vision of wholeness that we sense is our true home and that beckons us.



Frederick Buechner

A voice says, 'Cry out!' And I said, 'What shall I cry?' All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field.



Isaiah 40:6

## *Third Voice*

- ★ Contrasts human fragility and divine eternity (v6-8)
- ★ Speaks to the temporal nature of humanity – fading like grass (v6)



## *The Symbol of Babylon*

- ★ Even the great nations/ oppressors are fading in nature
- ★ Addresses the arrogance of the strong nations and personalities



- ★ The fragile nature of the nations is contrasted with the eternal nature of God's word (v8b)
- ★ Marked with an emphatic "but the word of our God will stand for ever."



## *A Call for Spiritual Insight*

- ★ To see into the reality of our existence
- ★ We are fragile and called to live in relationship with a “God who is for us”



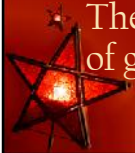
Get you up to a high mountain,  
O Zion, herald of good tidings;  
lift up your voice with  
strength, O Jerusalem, herald of  
good tidings, lift it up, do not  
fear; say to the cities of Judah,  
‘Here is your God!’



Isaiah 40:9

## *The Prophet’s Voice*

- ★ A message of ‘good tidings’ - actually the word for ‘good news’ used for the first time in the O.T.
- ★ The prophet is called the herald of good news (2x in verse 9)



## *‘Here is Your God!’*

- ★ A command to ‘not fear’ (9b) for ‘here is your God!’
- ★ This is the message of Advent – ‘here is your God’
- ★ God coming in glory to lead his people home – a homecoming



- ★ A God characterized by might/strength (v10)
- ★ He has the ability to act even over Babylon
- ★ ‘his arm rules for him’



- ★ Also a God of compassion as the Gentle Shepherd (v11)
- ★ Gently carrying the little child home (see Deuteronomy 1:30-31)



A compassionate king

## *Homecoming*

- ★ The final symbol of homecoming – God regathering us and bringing us home
- ★ Radically portrayed in the Gospels as John the Baptist preparing the way for Jesus

As it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, ‘The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”’

Luke 3:4-6

## *Jesus; the Touchstone*

- ★ Lifting us up from despair or out of arrogance to a place of homecoming with God through Jesus
- ★ Jesus becomes the touchstone between heaven and earth: “all flesh shall see the salvation of God” (Luke 3:6)