

Yateley Baptist Church, Sunday 22 November 2020

Opening Prayer

Hymn: Praise! 779

My hope is built on nothing less
than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
no merit of my own I claim,
but wholly trust in Jesus' name.

*On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand,
all other ground is sinking sand.*

2 When darkness veils his lovely face,
I rest on his unchanging grace;
in every high and stormy gale,
my anchor holds and will not fail.

3 His oath, his covenant and his blood
support me in the rising flood;
when all around my soul gives way,
he then is all my hope and stay.

4 I trust his righteous character,
his counsel, promises and power;
his name and honour are at stake
to save me from the burning lake.

5 When the last trumpet's voice shall sound,
O may I then in him be found,
clothed in his righteousness alone,
faultless to stand before the throne!

Edward Mote (1797-1874)

Reading: Isaiah 40:1-11, ESV

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.

² Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her
that her warfare is ended,
that her iniquity is pardoned,

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that she has received from the LORD's hand
double for all her sins.

³ A voice cries:

“In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

⁴ Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.

⁵ And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all flesh shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

⁶ A voice says, “Cry!”

And I said, “What shall I cry?”

All flesh is grass,
and all its beauty is like the flower of the field.

⁷ The grass withers, the flower fades
when the breath of the LORD blows on it;
surely the people are grass.

⁸ The grass withers, the flower fades,
but the word of our God will stand for ever.

⁹ Get you up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good news;
lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of good news;
lift it up, fear not;

say to the cities of Judah,
“Behold your God!”

¹⁰ Behold, the Lord GOD comes with might,
and his arm rules for him;
behold, his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him.

¹¹ He will tend his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms;
he will carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead those that are with young.

Hymn: Praise! 768

Through all the changing scenes of life,
in trouble and in joy,
the praises of my God shall still
my heart and tongue employ.

2 O magnify the Lord with me,
with me exalt his name;
when in distress to him I called,
he to my rescue came.

3 Of his deliverance I will boast
till all that are distressed
take comfort from God's help to me
and find in him their rest.

4 The hosts of God encamp around
the dwellings of the just;
deliverance he provides for all
who in his mercy trust.

5 O taste his goodness, prove his love!
Experience will decide
how blessed are they, and only they,
who in his truth confide.

6 Fear him, you saints, and you will then
have nothing else to fear;
his service shall be your delight,
your needs shall be his care.

Nahum Tate & Nicholas Brady

Sermon: Isaiah 40:1-11 – The Promise of Comfort

“Comfort, comfort my people, says your God” (v1)

“To whom will you liken me and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be alike? Those who lavish gold from the purse, and weigh out silver in scales, hire a goldsmith, and he makes it into a god; then they fall down and worship! They lift it to their shoulders, they carry it, they set it in its place, and it stands there; it cannot move from its place. If one cries to it, it does not answer or save him from his trouble.” (Isaiah 46:5-7)

1. Why God gives this promise

“Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her, for her servitude is ended, for her iniquity is pardoned, for she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.”

“No one will ever reverence God but he who is confident that God is favourable to him” (John Calvin)

“It’s as if Isaiah had fallen asleep at the end of chapter 39. While he slept, Judah was taken into exile. And it’s as if, in a prophetic dream, Isaiah was lifted into God’s heavenly court to hear Judah’s predicament being discussed. But now in chapter 40, Rip Van Winkle-like, Isaiah wakes up in (to him) a new historical situation. He reveals to the Jews what he heard in the heavenly throne room. God has summoned his prophets to take a message of hope to his demoralised people” (Ray Ortlund)

2. What God promises

“A voice cries: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.’”

“Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.”

“The appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire” (Exodus 24:17)

“For the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb” (Rev. 21:33)

1 John 3:2: “Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.”

3. We can be certain of this promise

4. We are to share this promise

“I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings” (1 Corinthians 9:23)

“The world rings with praise – lovers praising their mistresses, readers their favourite poet, walkers praising the countryside, players praising their favourite game – praise of weather, wines, dishes, actors, motors, horses, colleges, countries, historical personages, children, flowers, mountains, rare stamps, rare beetles, even sometimes politicians and scholars.... Just as men spontaneously praise whatever they value, so they spontaneously urge us to join them in praising it: ‘Isn’t she lovely? Wasn’t it glorious? Don’t you think that magnificent? I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment it is appointed consummation.”

Prayer

Hymn: Praise! 877

How firm a foundation, you saints of the Lord,
is laid for your faith in his excellent word!
What more can he say than to you he has said,
to all who for refuge to Jesus have fled?

2. In every condition-in sickness, in health,
in poverty's grip or abounding in wealth,
at home or abroad, on the land, on the sea-
as days may demand shall your strength ever
be.

3. Since Jesus is with you, do not be afraid;
since he is your God, you need not be
dismayed:
he'll strengthen you, guard you, and help you to
stand,
upheld by his righteous, omnipotent hand.

4. When through the deep waters he calls you
to go,
you will not be drowned in the rivers of woe;
for he will be with you in trouble, to bless
and work for your good through your deepest
distress.

5. When through fiery trials your pathway shall
lie,
his grace all-sufficient shall be your supply;
the flames shall not harm you: his only design
your dross to consume and your gold to refine.

6. The soul that in Jesus has found its repose,
he will not, he cannot, desert to its foes;
that soul, though all hell should endeavour to
shake,
he'll never, no never, no never forsake!

'K' in Rippon's Selection, 1787

Closing Prayer