**Isaiah 40:3-11 The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the Lord; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God. 4Every valley shall be exalted And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough places smooth; 5The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, And all flesh shall see *it* together; For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.” 6The voice said, “Cry out!” And he said, “What shall I cry?” “All flesh *is* grass, And all its loveliness *is* like the flower of the field. 7The grass withers, the flower fades, Because the breath of the Lord blows upon it; Surely the people *are* grass. 8The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.” 9O Zion, You who bring good tidings, Get up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, You who bring good tidings, Lift up your voice with strength, Lift *it* up, be not afraid; Say to the cities of Judah, “Behold your God!” 10Behold, the Lord God shall come with a strong *hand,* And His arm shall rule for Him; Behold, His reward *is* with Him, And His work before Him. 11He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, And carry them in His bosom, *And* gently lead those who are with young.**

Again tonight we’ll be looking at Isaiah and his prophecy concerning the coming Messiah. I hope that this has been as eye opening for you as it has been for me. For many years, I’ve read Isaiah, but to study him in depth has been a true blessing. Some interesting facts about Isaiah – the name Isaiah means Yahweh is Salvation in Hebrew. In Isaiah 14:23, he prophesied that Babylon would be overthrown and become swampland - “I will also make it a possession for the porcupine, And marshes of muddy water; I will sweep it with the broom of destruction,” says the Lord of hosts. In the 1853, an archaeologist named Austen Layard excavated parts of the Babylonian empire and found that the embankments of the river had collapsed, covering much of the empire with muddy water and silt… making it a swampland. Isaiah prophesied at the same time as Amos and Hosea and Micah. He prophesied for 60 years or more during the time that the Assyrians conquered the Northern Kingdom. Finally, he was killed by his enemies over his prophecies. Two ancient texts tell the story of King Manasseh condemning Isaiah to death and he hid in a tree, refusing to come out, so the tree was sawed in two with him inside. Hebrews 11:37 may confirm this where it says - They were stoned, **they were sawn in two**, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented. God is to be trusted! All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness – as 2 Timothy 3:16 reminds us.

Let’s pick up in verse 3 - **The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the Lord; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God.** We know that this refers to John the Baptist. Matthew 3:1-3 In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 2 and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” 3 For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; Make His paths straight.’ ” All four Gospels carefully note that John the Baptist is a fulfillment of Isaiah.

Verse 4 **4Every valley shall be exalted And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough places smooth;** in ancient times, people went ahead of the king to straighten and smooth desert roads. This was done only for the greatest of the kings. In Christ, through His work, we are brought up from the low of our sin filled life, but we must not become proud and think this our accomplishment. Every valley of suffering is raised and every mountain of pride brought low and, through the easy yoke of Jesus, our lives are made peaceful when we rest in Him.

Verse 5 **5The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, And all flesh shall see *it* together; For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”** We know that the Glory of the Lord was revealed in Jesus Christ. John 1:14 says And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. All people throughout time are being given the opportunity to see Jesus, through the disciples He sends – that’s us – Matthew 24:14 says And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Verse 6-8 **6The voice said, “Cry out!” And he said, “What shall I cry?” “All flesh *is* grass, And all its loveliness *is* like the flower of the field. 7The grass withers, the flower fades, Because the breath of the Lord blows upon it; Surely the people *are* grass. 8The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.”** Listen to Peter as he quotes this in 1 Peter 1:24-25 because “All flesh *is* as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, **25**But the word of the Lord endures forever.” Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you. Our faith must be in Christ and Christ alone. As King Solomon reminds us, vanity of vanities, all is vanity. Life is as a vapor. Our only focus must be to build Christ’s Kingdom for the coming end! To focus on land or cars or money or houses is foolishness! Our thought must be – how do I build today so Christ is preached long after I’m gone?

Verse 9**9O Zion, You who bring good tidings, Get up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, You who bring good tidings, Lift up your voice with strength, Lift *it* up, be not afraid; Say to the cities of Judah, “Behold your God!”** Zion is on a mountain, so Isaiah seems to be telling us to get to where we can be seen. He’s telling believers to not be hesitant in the Gospel message. As the shepherds went into Bethlehem sharing the glad tidings, so we are to share them with a loud and strong voice. Be not afraid! The Gospel requires boldness.

Verses 10-11 **10Behold, the Lord God shall come with a strong *hand,* And His arm shall rule for Him; Behold, His reward *is* with Him, And His work before Him. 11He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, And carry them in His bosom, *And* gently lead those who are with young.** We’re assured that our God is coming in strength and that His hand is strong and His arm shall rule. He will protect us as we spread His Gospel – He will protect us spiritually. This in no way means we will not endure persecution. It goes on to say that His reward is with Him – 2 Corinthians 5:10 says For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Daniel 12:2 says And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt. The point is that God will bring the just reward for each person. He will feed His flock like a shepherd. He will gently care for those who place faith in Him. John 10:11 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.

In Isaiah tonight, we again find evidence of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He leads us, but we must follow. He makes our way straight, but we must be willing to cry out and bring others to know Him. In time, we too will fade and our flower will fail, but the Truth of Jesus endures forever. Will our impact end with our last breath? Or are we working to bring others to Jesus, build the Kingdom, and make sure our ministry continues after we’re gone? Isaiah asks many questions – it’s up to us to answer Jesus in a loud voice.