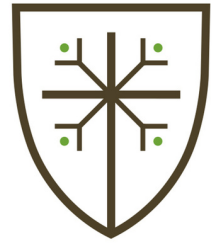


SERMON NOTES



New Creations

An Eastertide Sermon Series

artwork by Ty Nathan Clark

April 7, 2024

SERMON INFO

TITLE

"Comfort and Affliction"

PREACHER

Rev. Brent Baker

TEXTS

Isaiah 40:1-5

2 Corinthians 1:1-11

John 20:26-29

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When have you shared the comfort of God that you have experienced with someone who is undergoing the same affliction? When has someone shared comfort with you that spoke to your situation? How did you feel?
2. How do we pass on this hope in the resurrection to our children in a useful and meaningful way? Where do we find the courage to be open about persecution and suffering?

SERMON IN SUMMARY

Is it better to know the end of the story before you read the book? Isaiah 40:1-11 and 2 Corinthians 1:1-11 jump straight to the end result: comfort and union with God. Brent explores the value of knowing the end from the beginning, as the end determines the narrative, skipping over the question of "what?" and going straight to "how?" Thus, the ending becomes determinative rather than consequential, offering the benediction at the start of the story to frame the narrative and to give hope and comfort.

1. Comfort in Affliction

The repetition of the word "comfort" in the 2 Corinthians passage reminds the Corinthians that it was uncomfortable to be a Christian in their city. Paul addresses the temptation to syncretism and moral plurality in that highly secular culture and acknowledges the scant return in the short term for their faithfulness to God's ways—so much sacrifice for so little immediate gain. Yet, comfort is contagious and can overcome present afflictions. In fact, God's comfort is greater than any affliction and grows when experienced in community. Isaiah 40:1-2 remind us that as we share His comfort with others, we remember the benediction and find strength to resist conforming to the world's standards and behaviors.

Brent cites Viktor Frankel, who described the four responses to affliction (transference and brutality, detachment, concession, and meaning and purpose). Our response should be to find meaning in the greater end that Jesus knew, as expressed in Hebrews 12:2: "For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, disregarding the shame."

2. A Word on Resurrection

Our reliance is on God, who raises the dead. Paul closes by speaking of resurrection as a means of overcoming affliction. Affliction focuses us on God, who raises us from the dead—not just Jesus in the past, but us in the present. There can be no comparison between our suffering and the resurrected life. May we experience resurrection comfort and share it with our brothers and sisters.