

## “The Way to the Empty Tomb” Isaiah 40:1-11

**Context:** The first eleven verses of Isaiah 40 are a prologue to a significant transition from the prophecies of Isaiah that emphasized the Assyrian invasion to a focus on the return of a remnant following the Babylonian exile. The prediction of the remnant’s deliverance from Babylon, their expiation of sin by God’s servant, and their promised return to Jerusalem serve as “real symbol” for a deeper spiritual reality. The redeemed remnant symbolizes the Church, Babylon represents the paradigm of good and evil, God’s servant depicts Jesus Christ, and the New Jerusalem is symbolic of the paradigm of eternal life. Strands of thought that are woven into Isaiah’s eternal braid include: (1) the Remnant, (2) the Servant, (3) the nations, (4) Babylon, (5) the Holy One of Israel, (6) Jerusalem, (7) and the return.

**Life Principle:** God’s discipline understood through God’s word works God’s comfort in God’s way (cf. Isaiah 40:1-2).

### 1. Way of the double cure – Isaiah 40:1-2

In the face of Jerusalem’s destruction and the Babylonian captivity, God appeals to the heart of the Remnant in order that they keep the consolation of repentance continually before themselves. Consolation is to be taken in God’s promise that the Remnant’s struggle with sin and self, symbolized by the Babylonian captivity, has been doubly recompensed by her discipline and ultimately by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

### 2. Way of the word – Isaiah 40:3-8

Repentance prepares the heart to find the way to the empty tomb. That way is symbolized by recognizing the lack of satisfaction in wandering through the spiritual wilderness of life, by facing the Lord’s way out, and by opening the heart to His direction. God promises the uncovering of His visible presence to all. The dependability of God’s word, unlike the short-lived nature of flesh, bears His unchanging nature. Here, comfort is found.

### 3. Way of the resurrection – Isaiah 40:9-11

The Remnant, identified again as Jerusalem, is called to announce the Good News of the triumphant revelation of the Lord their God. God comes face to face with all people with His payment in hand. The news provides the comfort of the good Shepherd to His flock. He promises to gather them to Himself through resurrection and provide for them the nourishment of life.

## Study questions:

- Symbols like Jerusalem in Isaiah 40:2 are used in Scripture to disclose a meaning in spiritual existence through the meaning of a reality in material existence. As a **Bible study method**, look up Jerusalem in TWOT #912. What spiritual meaning is found in the root meaning of the word? What spiritual meaning is found in God’s permission of the repeated destruction of Jerusalem? Why is the Remnant called Jerusalem in Isaiah 40:2?
- The incarnation of God as Jesus Christ is a major doctrine that distinguishes Christianity from other monotheistic faith communities such as Islam and Judaism (see footnotes 1-8 ‘**On Jesus Christ** in our **doctrinal statement** under **what we believe** at [www.gracepointfellowship.org](http://www.gracepointfellowship.org)). For whom does Isaiah 40:3 declare that a way be cleared in the wilderness? Compare this passage with John 1:23ff. Who is John identifying as the Lord? How do these passages connect the identity of Jesus as Lord with His identity as God?
- Compare Isaiah 40:8 with Matthew 5:18, Malachi 3:6 Hebrews 13:8, John 1:1, 1:18, and James 1:17. Why must the nature of God’s Word be unchanging?

## Transformation exercise:

Bring Isaiah 40:9 before God each morning in prayer. Ask God to make you sensitive to those He would bring across your path this week in order that you might proclaim the Good News of His comfort. Pray for His power to share the message of His atonement, resurrection, and comfort without fear. “Lift up your voice!”