**Fear Not:** Fear God, Not Man

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| 10.04.15 | Grace | Is. 2, 4:9-11 | Come home and find hope. | 37 min. |

**Shooting in Oregon**

I quote: ***"Somehow this has become routine. The reporting is routine. My response here at this podium ends up being routine, the conversation in the aftermath of it ... We have become numb to this."*** End Quote.

President Obama said this statement Thursday night after the shooting in Oregon. Once again lives of innocent students were taken from us—all of which where young people professing their faith in Jesus Christ. The gunman demanded the people to stand if they were Christians and at that point the victims had a choice: Deny Christ and live or chose Christ and die. It was that simple.

Most of us will make decisions today about where we will eat, what route we will take to get home, what chore we will accomplish…if we will take a nap or watch the game. It is rare that we ever have to make a decision on which the fate of our life rests. Yet for nine people on Thursday, this life or death decision was forced upon them. For hundreds of other people, the pull of the trigger started a storm of life filled with blasts of confusion, grief, sorrow and pain.

I’ve been there, standing on the grassy fields of a new battle ground as the world around spins into a whirlwind of chaos and a vacuum of hope is created. I was a Junior in High School when the Columbine shootings happened. I was attending Arapahoe High School, five miles away as the crow flies, and leading a student led ministry that started prayer groups and bible clubs on campuses. The Columbine Bible Club was one of the largest Bible Clubs in our network. I will never forget the day after the shooting, with yellow tap still hung and bodies not yet removed, we met in the park next to the school and cried out to God for hope, help and clarity.

**Why does this keep happening?**

There have been 31 mass shootings like the one in Oregon this week since the Columbine shooting in 1999. That is 31 shootings with more than three victims. There have been 142 shootings on school campus just since the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Newtown since December of 2012. With every pull of a trigger a new storm starts in someone’s life. Sadly, Obama is right, “Somehow this has become routine.”

This week’s shooting stands out above all the rest as a clear challenge against Christians. Mental illness or not, the shooter was all about taking out those who claimed Christ, and the power of darkness was on his side.

**What is a Storm of Life?**

Listen: storms don’t always come in the form of shooting. We face life’s storms all the time. **A storm of life is a set of unexpected circumstances or a change of events that challenges our faith.** For the most part, these are first world problems, things that affect our “quality of life” and send us into a whirlwind. It is in these moments where we are either pushed from God or pushed to God; our faith is strained or strengthened.

**Here is The Forecast of Common Storm**

**First there are storms of calamity**—these involve the loss of someone or something we love. This can we the of our dog being hit by a car or a loved one dying in a car accident. Most loss comes without notice; the furious squall comes up over our life when we least expect it and all things that were considered “normal” are now meaningless to us.

**Second there is the storms of change**—these storms are particularly hard for those who long for safety and security in their circumstances. The loss of a job, the change of a friendship, the ebbs and flows of the financial market are examples of storms that are found in the category of change.

**Third are the storms of confinement**—these are the storms that have us backed up against a wall with no way out. I think of the Israelites with the Red Sea in front of them and Pharaoh and his army behind them. With no way out, they find themselves in a storm of confinement; trapped by circumstances that would take a miracle to breakout of. Medical debt, a roommate gone bad, kids that stole from you – these are examples of things that confine a person and only take time and a miracle to reconcile.

**Finally, there are the storms of consequence**—these storms come as a result of bad or sinful decisions. God promised our eternal forgiveness, but He never promised us complete freedom from all consequences of our actions. We get this wrong as Christians; we assume that there are hall passes and pink slips that excuse us from the mistakes we’ve made. That is not true. The grace of God does forgive us eternally, but we still have to walk through the outplay of our bad decision. All the while we can trust that God will give us grace if we walk humbly and with thanksgiving.

Today we are starting our study on selected passages from the book if Isaiah. You will soon learn that Isaiah has a few key themes, but one of them is judgment. Isaiah is clear that though God is holy, and loving, hopeful and faithful, He is also just. He will bring judgment to those who sin against Him—consequences. Yet this is what makes the Gospel so sweet.

So as you open your Bibles with me to Isaiah 1, let me be clear about something: Isaiah has a clear point here at the onset of this book, and that is:

**There is a storm that envelops all storms**

No matter the crisis we find ourselves in, God has His eyes on us. He has wrath toward us because of our own disobedience and sin. Yet, he is also compassionate and hope. He will uphold His grace and mercy as He upholds his justice and wrath.

**Isaiah is what we call a “Prophetic book”**

In Isaiah you will see that God, through the power of prophecy "prepares" his people, which is also an act of profound grace. God is not obligated to tell anyone what He is about to do, yet He still does. Though Isaiah, He gives the original audience a clear word of warning to turn from their wicked ways and return to Him. God was preparing the Israelites (ancient Judah) by exposing to them to who He was and how He would fulfill His divine plan for them.

He warned and instructed them and He does the same for us.

**Here is the Storm Warning**

In some ways, God is the storm itself in Isaiah..."Woe to me for I am undone!" We are warned*, stand at His perimeter and you will be destroyed but enter into the eye of the hurricane that God is and you find grace, peace, and salvation there!*

You see, God prepares His people for the "storm" that is himself through prophecy. Prophecy speaks of His eminent judgment to come and that salvation that is to follow. As we enter into intimacy with God, we must face His judgment first. We endure it through repentance—on our face before God. In the same way that we get low to the ground and covering our head when huge storm passes, so we also get low and hide in His grace.

Think of it this way: When a hurricane continued to grow with power, it becomes so strong that any other storm it runs into is absorbed and essentially swallowed up. In the same way, when we see our storms of life in light of the greatness of God, all storms seem to fade.

First because your calamity, confinement or circumstance on this earth are nothing in comparison to what has happened to your relationship with God because of your sin. His wrath against you should make all things pale in their comparison to having God burn against you.

But the good news is that He did not keep His wrath against you, and Isaiah is extremely clear about this. He has mad everything right through a Messiah. This hope sets us in the middle of God and gives us safety, forgiveness, protection and love. Every struggle, every heartache, every threat holds no power when found in intimacy with God.

Isaiah not only acts as a spiritual weather man telling of the storms to come but he also speaks of our shelter in his foretelling of Jesus and His sacrifice. Through Christ we have intimacy with God. Through Christ we enter safely into the eye of the hurricane and are enveloped by His grace.

Like the song says that we sing often, “Loves like a hurricane, I am a tree,

Bending beneath the weight of His wind and mercy.” (David Crowder)

**Why should I listen to Isaiah message?**

Because He was a prophet who spoke on behalf of God. He didn’t make this stuff up on his own. God used people all throughout the Old Testament to speak on His behalf. These people are called “Prophets” and when they spoke they were giving “Prophecy.”

A prophet, by definition, **is a person who spoke to God’s people about what was on God’s heart.** This is not unlike the preachers in Acts or even the preachers of today. I don’t want to go too deep here, but let me explain that the Holy Spirit did not dwell in the lives of people like He does today. Because he was not living in each person’s life and directing them as He has for people post-Pentecost, He would instruct them in other ways: pillars of fire, clouds, miracles, audible voices, and prophets.

So we listen o the words of the prophets – in this case Isaiah – because he is literally speaking the words of God. Verse 2 of Chapter one, the very onset of this book stars by saying, ***“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord has spoken:”*** (1.2).

We also listen because we are like the original Judean audience. These were people chose by God in the Old Testament and they lived in special relationship with God. He had promised Himself and many other things to Him, and though they were not always faithful to Him, He remained faithful to them. They were taken back and forth out of their land and no matter where they went, God was with them and speaking to them.

**We are like ancient Judah in a few ways…**

They were conquered, exiled, bought back to their land and fought with time and again. **They faced trails of many kinds.** So we too are people that are always in crisis of some kind. This is life. Though we many not have enemies encroaching all around us, we do have a battle with darkness and we live in a world where thing like Oregon, car accidents, sickness and sin occur.

On a positive note, **I think we are like Judah in that we really do want to be faithful to God, despite our weaknesses and shortcomings**. Like my son chandler wants to please me as His dad, so we too want to please our heavenly father. Yet chandler is young, immature and impulsive. He does disappointment me, though that is not always his intention, and guess what, I never stop loving Him. Judah was the same way with God; immature, impulsive and sinful. They, like us, want to please God but failed time and again. But God never stopped loving them.

God is not looking for religious people; He is looking for faithful people. Look at some of the passages in Chapter 1:

 **[11] “What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices?**

 **says the LORD;**

 **I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams**

 **and the fat of well-fed beasts;**

 **I do not delight in the blood of bulls,**

 **or of lambs, or of goats.**

Making the point clear, that, (verse 13):

**[13] Bring no more vain offerings;**

 **incense is an abomination to me.**

We try to please God as Judah did. We come to church, we repent of our sins, we strive to live in godliness but we make many mistakes. We want so badly for this plague of sin to be away from us, but this side of heaven we are still imperfect. Yet, God’ is faithful to forgive and grow us into maturity, just like a faithful and loving father.

And that is the third area we are so much like, Judah – just as they needed God to send them a Savior, so do we. Whether is the the late 8th century when Isaiah lived, or the 21st century when we live, we all need a Savior.

Look at the promise he gives them after rebuking them for the sin and religiosity:

 **[18] “Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD:**

 **though your sins are like scarlet,**

 **they shall be as white as snow;**

 **though they are red like crimson,**

 **they shall become like wool.**

 **[19] If you are willing and obedient,**

 **you shall eat the good of the land;**

 **[20] but if you refuse and rebel,**

 **you shall be eaten by the sword;**

 **for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”**

Look the balance here between judgment and grace. He will stand true to His promise of wrath, but if we are obedient and faithful, He will freely give grace.

Here is a principle we need to remember right up front in this series:

**God Always Keeps His Promises**

God never forgets to do what He said He will do. God never is caught saying, *oh, did I say that?*  Or *that must have been a weak moment… I didn’t mean that when I said…”*

Every promise He has ever spoken is always remember and will always be fulfilled. Many of His promises have been fulfilled, and for those that are yet to come—based on wrath or grace—will still be fulfilled. God never forgets. He never waivers. He is always true to His word.

This reminded me story I head about D.L. Moody, a preacher in the 1800’s and the man my alma mater was started by and named after. He signed his name in His Bible next to the verse Isaiah 50:7, as if to claim it for himself, which reads:

**“But the Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame.”**

The fact that God always keeps his Word means that our faces can be fixed like stone when facing the storms of life. If God is for us, who can be against us! Look at this promise of God in Isaiah 2:2:

**“It shall come to pass in the latter days**

 **that the mountain of the house of the LORD**

 **shall be established as the highest of the mountains,**

 **and shall be lifted up above the hills;”**

**It shall come to pass (2:2)**

Isaiah gives His first of many illusions of the hope of a Messiah. When he states, ‘I later days” he is using a biblical phrased used in both the Old and New Testament that usually is tied to the time the Messiah will come. The messiah was God’s appointed one to reconcile people with God—which we know now what ancient Judah didn’t know, and that is that would be Jesus Christ.

What a glorious promise— “It shall come to pass.” The storm of God’s judgment, His wrath against you and the trials of this life, they will pass. Some storms feel like they will never end and it is just devastation upon devastation without end. But God is promising to them and it can also be applied to us that “This is not your end. You will not die here; my grace is sufficient for you.

When he says “the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established,” most commentators believe that this is speaking of the Temple that would be set up on a mountain in Jerusalem to be a meeting place for God and man. A temple was set up, and it was “Lifted up above all the hills,” meaning that this was the most honored relationship in all the earth that man should be able to know and commune with God. The temple in Jerusalem was a mere physical manifestation of a greater truth to come.

Jesus was going to be the true temple; destroyed and rebuilt in three days. The meeting place for God and man to come together. The only place that we can be reconciled with God. “This too shall pass” he says, giving us the promise of a right relationship with God that allows for:

1. The storm of God’s wrath to blow over us as we are protected under the Grace of Jesus.
2. The storms of life to blow over us as we are provided for with the safety and sovereignty of God.

The idea of **“Going to the mountain of the Hose of God”** is an invitation for us to…

**Go Home to Find Hope (2:3-5)**

Think about this: When a bad storm comes to Colorado, where do you go? Home. King Soopers first, but then home.

It is safe at home. There is warmth, protection and comfort at home. You don’t lay in the street and say “bring it on” and get covered by feet of snow. You go home.

In the same way, we are invited to come home to God and find all the hope we need. Our sins are forgiven, our worries subsided and His majesty exalted.

Look at verse 3-5 with me:

 **[3] and many peoples shall come, and say:**

 **“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,**

 **to the house of the God of Jacob,**

 **that he may teach us his ways**

 **and that we may walk in his paths.”**

 **For out of Zion shall go the law,**

 **and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.**

 **[4] He shall judge between the nations,**

 **and shall decide disputes for many peoples;**

 **and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,**

 **and their spears into pruning hooks;**

 **nation shall not lift up sword against nation,**

 **neither shall they learn war anymore.**

 **[5] O house of Jacob,**

 **come, let us walk**

 **in the light of the LORD.**

At home we are instructed (verse 3). God teaches us the way that we are live, proceed and believe. He **“Teaches us his ways”** through the Holy Spirit and the message of the Gospel.

At home we are protected. God **Judges between the nations**, meaning that He keeps true to His promises to His people. The enemies of God are done away with. Look at the imagery here:

* He turns their swords into the curved front hook of a plow.
* He turns their spears into pruning hooks.

If you read this with a warrior mindset and understanding, as Judah would have, you would be like, *now that is awesome… he bends over the weapons of His enemy. No more war. Just peace.*

That is exactly it, at home with the Lord, we find hope but we also find peace.

Look at verse 10 with me:

**“Enter into the rock**

 **and hide in the dust**

 **from before the terror of the LORD,**

 **and from the splendor of his majesty.”**

Isaiah sends a dig at one of His contemporary Assyrian Kings, Senna-cher-ib, who claimed to have “terror-inspiring splendor.” That his ways and his possessions made people tremble. Isaiah is like, *oh king and people, hear me clearly – there is only one truly majestic and when you see Him as He really is, you will run into Him, not away from Him for safety.*

**We Find Safety in His Sovereignty (2:10)**

**“Enter into the rock and hide it the dust.”** This is a sweet invitation to be safe at home with Christ. Our call here is not be afraid of God, but to fear Him—have a right respect for Him and who He is, knowing that in His sovereign reign He has everything under control.

There is no circumstance of your life that takes Him by surprise. Every storm on the horizon He saw coming and He will keep you safe in the clef of His hand if you will simple place your full faith in Him.

**Strive for Humility and Receive Grace (2:11-19)**

In verse 11-19, Isaiah is saying, “Don’t get proud, but be humble.” Grasp for yourself the grace of God given to you, not because of anything you did, but because of His loving-kindness and mercy. He states several times (verse 17):

**And the haughtiness of man shall be humbled,**

 **and the lofty pride of men shall be brought low,**

 **and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day.**

I won’t go deep into this now because we will hit it again in the future, but Isaiah’s point here is this: don’t fortify yourself in your own strength. Don’t say when life’s storms come:

* I’ll button up my own windows.
* I’ll protect my own life.
* I’ll dig myself out.

Rather, rest fully on the grace of God, increasing your dependence on Him. How haughty of us to say in our storms, “I got this one God, you can have a break…” and try to go on in our own strength.

The Bible says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Be humble. Realize that the only way through to make it through the storms of life alive spiritually is to hide in the safety of His sovereignty.

Now, I know one of the things that paralyzes us the most in our faith is the fear of man. Faith is dealing with the unseen, while the fear of man is based in what we do see or experience. Our experiences are often more tangible than our faith. Yet, God says, through Isaiah, pay no attention to your circumstances brought on by other people. Pay attention to me. Look at the last verse in chapter 2 (22):

**[22] Stop regarding man**

 **in whose nostrils is breath,**

 **for of what account is he?**

His point here:

**Fear God, Not Man (2:20-22)**

This is easier said than done, I understand. I am a recovering people-pleaser that has relapses often in wanting the approval of others.

Fear God: It is only His approval you should worry about. Stay right with God and he will direct you through the storms of life.

Not man: who is man that you should be afraid!? If God is on your side, there is no one (everyone say “no one”) that can come against you.

It is as if God is saying,

**“In his nostrils is breath”** – that is just hot air. Who are you going to be moved by? The sovereign power and majestic splendor of God or the weak breath of man? Remember who gave man that breath in His nostrils – ME! Trust me!

*You want the approval from your boss, what is that compared to my approval?*

*You want your spouse to value you and stop nagging you, what is that compared to forgiveness and plan for you?*

*You dream of the day of no more physical pain, what is that compared to my eternal grace and healing for you spiritually?*

Trust me! I always keep my promises. Have no fear.

**Remember, God Keeps His Promises. Fear Not.**

The message of God to us in the midst of our storm is clear. “Fear Not.” I will say the five main messages from today’s passage, and I finish each one, let’s just say aloud, “so fear not.”

* It shall come to pass – so fear not.
* We have hope at home with Jesus Christ – so fear not.
* We are safe in His sovereignty – so fear not.
* God gives grace to the humble – so fear not.
* Man cannot undo us – so fear not.

 Let’s pray. (transition to communion)