



Only Some Things Last Forever

1 Peter 1:23-25

1. Your New Birth (verse 23)

2. God's Eternal Word (verses 24-25)

I have often heard it said that there are only two things that exist now upon our planet that will last forever. The first is the souls of men. The second is the word of God. God has put within each of us a spark of eternity. Though our body may pass away, our souls will live on for eternity. In the same way, God has settled His word forever in heaven (Ps. 119:89). Though the physical pages and ink upon which His word is written will someday be burned or decayed, His word will live on for eternity.

It's God's word and the souls of men that will endure forever. Everything else that you see around us will be destroyed. In Peter's second epistle, he alludes to this. He writes, "The day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up" (2 Peter 3:10). Everything that you see around you will someday be destroyed. The chair upon which you are sitting will be destroyed someday. The clothes that you are wearing will be destroyed. The home in which you live will someday be destroyed. Your cars will someday be destroyed. Even this earth will someday be destroyed. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away" (Matt. 24:35).

There are only two things upon the earth right now that will never perish: our souls and the word of God. In our text today, Peter will allude to the first and focus upon the second. Our text this morning is 1 Peter 1:23-25. Everything in this text focusses on the temporary nature of life, and the eternal word of God. Let's read our text this morning.

1 Peter 1:23-25

For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, [that is,] through the living and abiding word of God. For, "All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the word of the Lord endures forever." And this is the word which was preached to you.

Let's begin by considering my first point.

1. Your New Birth (verse 23)

Your new birth is a lasting thing in your life. Notice how Peter describes our regeneration in verse 23, "For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God."

Peter describes our new birth as coming from a seed, which has been planted. "You have been born again ... of seed." At the end of the verse, he identifies this seed as "the ... word of God." The metaphor is simple to understand. Just as seeds are placed into the ground to generate plant life, so also the word of God acts like seed, which is planted in the souls of men to produce in us spiritual life.

It's easy to think of where Peter learned this concept (that the word of God is like a seed). He learned it from Jesus. Perhaps you recall the day in which large crowds were gathering around Jesus. And so, Jesus got into a boat and sat down and began teaching the crowds, saying, ...

Matthew 13:3-8

Behold, the sower went out to sow; and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. And others fell on the good soil and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear."

Jesus described this farmer who took seed in his pouch and went about scattering it in his field. In the process, some of the seed fell upon the road, where there was no depth of soil. It became bird food. Other seed fell upon soil that was not capable of bringing forth fruit. Either the soil was shallow, so there was no ability for a solid root structure to form, or, the soil was filled with weeds, which choked out the plants, not allowing the plants to get the proper nourishment. But, some seed fell upon the good soil. This seed yielded a crop. Later, the disciples asked Jesus for an explanation of this parable. Jesus explained with these words, ...

Matthew 13:19-23

When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. And the one

on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.

Jesus said that these four soils were like four different types of souls. There are some who are so hard that the spoken word can't penetrate into their hearts. There are others who receive the word with joy, but it takes no lasting effect in their life. There are a third category of people who receive the word and it begins to take effect in their life, but the concerns of the world choke it out. But, there is a fourth category of people, who receive the seed of the word into their souls. They understand the word. And the word has a great effect upon their lives. They don't sprout forth, only to wither away like the other plants. Rather, they grow big and strong to the point bringing forth much fruit. These are the true believers, which is demonstrated by their fruit.

This is what Peter is calling these scattered believers to be. He's calling them to endure and to bring forth fruit in their lives, even under the most difficult of circumstances. In their "various trials," Peter called them to rejoice (1:6). In their lives, Peter called them to "abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul" (2:11). He called them to submit to the governmental authorities by doing right (2:13). He called the slaves to submit to their masters, even those who were unreasonable (2:18-20). He called the wives to be submissive to their husbands, even toward those who were disobedient to the word (3:1). He called to follow the example of Christ in their sufferings (2:21). He called them to "Stand firm" in the grace of God (5:12).

In other words, Peter called them to persevere in their faith, as they brought forth the fruit of godliness. Their lives of godliness were not to be a flash in the pan, which is here today and gone tomorrow, but, it should continue on. The reason is simple. The seed that had regenerated them was imperishable. And thus, your new life in Christ ought to have lasting impact upon your life. "For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God" (verse 23).

Throughout Peter's epistle, he has been contrasting the perishable with the imperishable. Peter said that our inheritance in heaven is imperishable (1:4). It will never be destroyed. It's never going to fade away. Peter said that our faith is more precious than gold, which is perishable (1:7). On that final day, all the gold in the world will be useless, as it will melt away. But, our faith will continue on. It will be more valuable to us than gold, because it will result in the salvation of our souls. Peter said that our redemption wasn't with perishable things like silver or gold (1:18). Rather, our redemption was accomplished with the precious blood of Jesus Christ, that will forever be able to save those who draw near to Him (see also Heb. 7:25). And now, here again in verse 23, Peter brings up something else that is imperishable. This time, Peter's talking about imperishable seed.

It's right here at this point that you can clearly see the connection with this verse and the context. In verse 22, Peter spoke about our need to have a sincere, fervent, and authentic love. As the seed within us that produced the ability to have such a love for one another is an eternal, imperishable seed, so also ought our love for one another continue on forever as well. In other words, our love for one another ought not to fade. It ought to continue forever. Why? Because we have been forever changed by the word of God!

If you would think about this for a moment, you would realize that this metaphor is strange for a seed. When you put a seed into the ground, it dies. But, in dying, it yields fruit. Jesus knew this. "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John 12:24). And yet, Peter here is telling us that the seed within us that gives us spiritual life is such that it never dies! It isn't perishable. Rather, it is imperishable. Somehow, in some way, that seed of the word of God that sinks into our souls doesn't die when it germinates. Rather, it keeps on producing, "some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty." But, it's always this seed that produces the effect. This points to the lasting effect of God's word upon our lives.

Now, notice, when Peter points out how you were regenerated, he points to this imperishable seed as the means of your new birth. He defines the seed in verse 23, "You have been born again ... **through** the living and enduring word of God." When we come into this world physically, we come through our two parents. When we enter into spiritual life, we come through the word of God. The word of God is the means of our faith. Paul says in Romans 10:17, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." The only way that any of us are born again is through the word of God being communicated to us in.

Now, this might come in various forms. Some are converted when attending church and a pastor, such as myself, is preaching the Scriptures to people. Others are converted when attending a special meeting of some type where they have a special speaker who communicates the word of God in a way that hits them where they have never been hit before. Others are converted when they hear the word of God preached on the radio. Some are converted when they were watching a preacher on television. I know of some people who have been converted when they simply read the Bible on their own. They read God's word, believed it, and followed it. Many children have been converted in their bedroom as their parents tucked them into beds late at night and prayed with them. I'm sure that people have embraced Christ when they heard a Christian song playing on the radio. People become Christians when a friend shares with them about Jesus. Some have been converted when reading a gospel tract. I heard of one man being converted in a deacon's meeting! He was a leader in the church, but unsaved, until a meeting one night when God opened his eyes to his sin and he submitted himself to the savior.

Some people are converted in some of the most miraculous ways. Mark Dever tells the story of what took place when George Whitefield was "hounded by a group of detractors who called themselves the Hell-fire Club. [This group of men] derided his work and mocked him. On one occasion, one of them, a man named Thorpe, preached a sermon in which he mimicked Whitefield to his cronies with brilliant accuracy, perfectly imitating Whitefield's tone and facial expressions. When Thorpe himself was so pierced that he sat down and was converted on the spot." ^[1]

The circumstances surrounding the miracle of regeneration varies greatly. I believe that this is the point of Jesus when He was talking to Nicodemus, "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). The point that Jesus is making is that you can't manufacture the work of the Spirit of God upon

the lives of people.

Circumstances are always different. God works in many different ways. However, the means of conversion is always the same. **People are converted through the means of the word of God.** That word may come in various forms. It may come in song. It may come through the radio. It may come through the printed page. It may come through a mother's teaching years ago, that through some series of circumstances is brought to remembrance. The forms may vary, but the means of conversion are always the same. God always converts through the word of God.

God has so ordained the universe to use His word in the souls of men to accomplish His purposes. When people hear it, it will accomplish its work. The promise of Isaiah is that God's word "will not return ... without accomplishing what [the LORD] desire[s]" (Is. 55:11). That's why we, at Rock Valley Bible Church, would place so much emphasis upon the Bible. Because, we know that it's the living and abiding word that will have its effect upon our lives.

Here in 1 Peter, we see that God's word is the agent of conversion. Parents, this is why it's necessary for you to make the word of God central in your home. Do you want your children to believe? Then, saturate them in the Bible. They will only come to believe through the truth of God's word. This is why it's necessary to send out missionaries to go to distant lands to those who have never heard the gospel. People won't be saved unless they hear the word of God somehow and in some way. But, what's true across the world is also true across your fence and in your neighborhoods. We need to be about spreading the word, that others might hear and believe. We need to be talking with our fellow workers. We need to be talking with those we rub shoulders with. This is why it's necessary for us to be bold with the gospel. For people to be converted, they need to hear the word.

This is why children's programs, like AWANA are so effective. ^[2] When the word gets into the hearts of our children, it does something to them. Years ago, I was in a discipling relationship with a man who had gone through AWANA as a child, but had not really grown very much after that. When I began to bring up verses with him and talk with him, he would often reflect upon how he had learned those verses as a child. They were a great help to him in his Christian walk.

Also, if your children do rebel someday, it will only be with great difficulty will they be able to shed the influence of these verses hidden in their hearts later in life. A great example of this is the life of John Newton. He was the wicked slave trader, who was converted and went on to bring the Lord much glory through his life as a hymn writer and pastor. When he was a child, he was taught the word by his mother. In God's providence, she died when John Newton was less than seven years of age. As John Newton grew up, he was influenced greatly by his father, who was not a godly man. Eventually, Newton lived a very sinful life. But, in order to do so, he had to overcome the influence of the word of God that his mother had etched upon his soul. He wrote, "in the process of time I sinned away all the advantages of these early impressions, yet they were for a great while a restraint upon me. They returned again and again, and it was very long before I could wholly shake them off." ^[3]

John Newton pictured his mother's influence in the Scriptures as something that had restrained his sin, which he was finally able to brush off, so as to live a life of unrestrained wickedness. Would the entire truth be known, I doubt whether he was able to shake off all the word that had been sown in his soul by his mother before he turned seven years old. And so, when in that storm on a ship in the middle of the sea, John Newton cried out to the Lord for mercy, it may very well have been the influence of the word that was sown in his soul at a young age, that gave him hope in crying out to the Lord.

John Newton was even surprised that he had cried out to God for mercy. in the midst of the raging storm, in which he saw almost now hope for survival, he said, "If this will not do, the Lord have mercy on us!" And then, John Newton writes, "This (though spoken with little reflection) was the first desire I had breathed for mercy for many years. I was instantly struck with my own words." ^[4] Where did John Newton's cry for mercy come from? I believe that it came from the word that had been implanted in his soul as a young boy, of five or six years of age.

But, the Scriptures are far more than the agent of conversion. **The Scriptures are also the agent of our growth.** Notice what else Peter says about the word of God. He says that it is "the living and enduring word." There is a life in this word. There is a vitality in this word. It lives. It endures. And when it gets into our souls, it lives and has its effect.

Perhaps you are familiar with Hebrews 4:12, "The word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart." This passage here in Hebrews tells us that the word of God lives and works in the hearts of men. The word convicts and judges the thoughts and intentions of our hearts. Do you want to have a passion for God? Saturate your mind with the Bible. It will do its work in your life.

The Bible will ...

- ... expose your sin that you need to confess (Heb. 4:12-13).
- ... comfort your heart that you need for the moment (Ps. 119:76).
- ... give you strength in difficulties (Psalm 119:116).
- ... calm your fears (Is. 41:10).
- ... give you wisdom for situations in life (Prov. 4:7).
- ... help you interpret life around you (2 Tim. 3).
- ... stir your heart to worship (Ps. 27:4).
- ... guide you in your decisions (Ps. 119:105).
- ... protect you from Satan's attacks (Eph. 6:17).
- ... keep you from the evil one (2 Thess. 3:3).
- ... give you God's perspective on life (Ps. 139).
- ... provide you with great insight into life (Ps. 119:99).

God's word is "living and active." When you read it and study it and meditate upon it and believe it, God will work great things in your life. As Peter says, it is "the living and enduring word of God." This leads us perfectly into our next point. We have seen that (1) Your New Birth (verse 23) comes from an eternal seed that is implanted into our souls. Now, we turn our attention to ...

2. God's Eternal Word (verses 24-25)

This comes in verses 24-25, where Peter writes, "All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the word of the Lord endures forever."

These words aren't original with Peter. He is quoting Isaiah, from what we know of as the 40th chapter, which marks the turning point of Isaiah's prophecy. For the first 39 chapters, the message has been mostly one of judgment upon evil doers. But, Isaiah turns the corner here in chapter 40. Words of "Comfort" (40:1) begin to flow from his mouth. He first prophesies of John the Baptist coming to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord (40:3-4). And then, Isaiah foretells of how "the glory of the LORD will be revealed" (Is. 40:5). And then, Isaiah is instructed to preach this message: "All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the word of the Lord endures forever."

Isaiah would continue on to tell of how the Lord would come as the sovereign ruler who would tenderly care for His children. I believe that Peter quoted from Isaiah, because these words address many of the same themes that Peter brought up in verse 23. (It was probably the other way around: Peter had this verse in his mind when he was writing verse 23). Notice the similarities. In these words we see the contrast of the perishable with the imperishable. Our flesh and grass and flowers are compared with the abiding, eternal word of God. Our flesh fails, but the word of God stands. These words also bring in the idea of vegetation. He mentions grass and flowers, the seeds that produce such things were mentioned in verse 23.

His message again is crystal clear. The things of this earth are perishable. The grass withers away. The flowers fade away. But, God's word endures forever. Now, before we get to Peter's main point in verse 25, let's spend a few moments thinking about Peter's illustration about how temporary we are. For these verses bring a contrast to the enduring nature of God's word.

Peter writes, "All flesh is like grass." I have brought in this morning a clump of grass from our back yard. This is what we are like. Then, Peter goes on, "And all its glory like the flower of grass." I have brought in this morning, some flowers for you to see. This is man at is best. This is what the most beautiful among us looks like. These are the strong football players. These are the tall basketball players. These are the beautiful women who appear on the front of all of those magazines. Now, none of us in this room are particularly strong or tall or beautiful. None of us in this room are "the rich and famous." And so, we all are like grass. You may think that you are pretty good stuff. You may think that you are beautiful. But you are like this clump of grass.

Peter then continues on to speak about what happens to the grass and what happens to the flower. He says, "The grass withers." Seeing that it is November, this grass is a great example of "withering grass." This summer this grass would have looked a bit different. It would have looked green and healthy and strong and tall. But, being the fall, the grass looks as we all will look someday, brown and wilted and old and frail. At this point, it's merely taking up space. Peter also says, "The flower falls off." Now, I do have some faded flowers. I picked these this morning from our front sidewalk. This summer, they looked just like this beautiful flower. But, right now, seeing that winter is coming fast, they look like this.

Now, catch this. These old, wilted, brittle flowers represent the end of the brightest, strongest, and most beautiful among us. This is the end of "the rich and famous." "The flower falls off." Old, faded flowers aren't pretty at all. My wife usually pounces on removing all of these things once the frost hits and kills all of our flowers, because she thinks that they are so ugly. It's only because we recently had a baby that I can use these as an example for you in mid-November.

So, what do you think? Peter puts forth a glamorous picture, huh? This is who we are. And we need to grasp it. We need to grasp our frailty. We need to grasp that we will only be here on earth for a short time.

This is especially true of **young men**, who are strong and think that they can capture the world and run with the wind! I have news for you. You won't be able to do that forever. Your days are numbered. There will be a day when you are no longer as strong and flexible and as swift and as smart as you used to be. I'm playing in a basketball league at a local church. I'm having a great time. But, I'm playing with these 20 year olds who can run and jump and dunk. They are tall and big. This past week when the game was on the line. We were down by four with a minute to play. Do you know where I was? I wasn't on the court. I was watching from the bench. I'm barely holding on to any glory that I might have had in days gone by. For you young men, it's much the same. And it's coming sooner than you think.

Listen to the counsel of J. C. Ryle. He says to young men, ...

Think for a moment what you were sent into the world for. Not merely to eat and drink, and indulge the desires of the flesh,--Not merely to dress out your body, and follow its lusts whithersoever they may lead you,--Not merely to work, and sleep, and laugh, and talk, and enjoy yourselves, and think of nothing but time. No! you were meant for something higher and better than this. You were placed here to train for eternity. Your body was only intended to be a house for your immortal spirit. It is flying in the face of God's purposes to do as many do,--to make the soul a servant to the body, and not the body a servant to the soul." [\[5\]](#)

But, it's not just the young men who need to remember these things. This counsel is equally important for the **young women** among us. You can spend your time making yourself pretty, thinking that your own beauty is where it is at. You can spend your thoughts on making yourself

attractive. And in some measure, you may succeed. You may be a beautiful flower now, but the days are coming when you will be a wilted flower. And this time comes sooner than you think, just ask (or perhaps merely look at) your mother.

Listen to the counsel of Carolyn Mahaney. She writes to young women, ...

You know the promises: If you're beautiful, you will be happy and successful. You will be popular among the girls, and you will be desirable to the boys. You will achieve lasting intimacy and true love. You will be confident and secure. You will be important and significant. Yet the message is a lie. [\[6\]](#)

It's not the flesh that ought to be our focus. Peter also directed the young women in this direction. He wrote, "Your adornment must not be merely external--braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God" (1 Peter 3:3-4).

Our flesh will fail us. Our focus ought to be on the part of us that will live forever. We have need to focus our attention off of our physical bodies. We need to focus our attention upon those things that are eternal. As Asaph said, "My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever" (Ps. 73:26). This is where Peter is leading us to in verse 25. "The word of the Lord endures forever." Our flesh fails, but God's word endures forever. God's word has been, and God's word will forever be.

Over and over the Bible testifies to the enduring nature of God's word. "Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven" (Psalm 119:89). "You have founded [Your testimonies] forever" (Psalm 119:152). When Jesus came on the scene, His message was the same, "I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished" (Matt. 5:18). At one point, Jesus said, "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail" (Luke 16:17). Later in His ministry, He said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away" (Matthew 24:35).

The implication of these things are that God's word can be trusted. Long after the theories of Marx are done and gone, God's word will still endure. Long after Darwin is finally placed on the bookshelf as old and irrelevant, God's word will still stand. When the books of Skinner and Freud and Pavlov and Rogers all come to an end, God's word will still be around. When the Book of Mormon ceases to be, God's word will always be. When the Koran is finally cast into the sea, God's word will be high and dry. The implication is this: Trust God's word. It's the only reliable thing in this universe. It's the only thing that will last.

We have a map in our car of Northern Illinois. It is very detailed and seemingly shows every back country road that exists near where we live. It has become a very reliable guide to my wife and I on many occasions as we have travelled through the northern part of Illinois. This map is torn and beaten and tattered because it used. So also is the Bible. I have heard an old saying, "A Bible that's falling apart belongs to a life that is not."

At this point, I simply ask you, "How much have you valued the Bible this week?" I'm not asking you about three weeks ago or four years ago when you received some special training. I'm asking you about this past week. Have you read it? Perhaps you have listened to it on your mp3 player? Have you read books about it? Have you listened to others teach the Bible? Have you read it in your family? At this point, I have to admit that though we are usually pretty consistent in reading it together as a family, due to the busyness of life recently, we have neglected reading together as a family for the past two or three weeks. We can even detect some things in the life of our family that have come about because we have lacked in our reading in recent days. By God's grace, I pledge that this will change in upcoming weeks.

One of the biggest aims that I have as a pastor is to do everything that I can to prepare all of you for the final day when you stand before the Lord. On the one hand, it's a simple task, because I merely need to direct you in one direction: toward the word of God. In this way, I want to provide you with resources, that you might grow in your knowledge of and love for God's word, because that's what directs you to the truth. On the other hand, it's a very difficult task. There are so many things in life pulling for your attention, that it's always a challenge to direct you toward the things of the spiritual life. But, that's what you need to hear. You need to hear from God, so that you might continually put things in perspective.

Peter said at the end of verse 25, "And this is the word which was preached to you." This eternal word of God entirely changed their perspective on life. These were Gentiles, who were going their own way. They had previously indulged in gross sin. They were involved in sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries (1 Peter 4:3). But now, they have come to embrace Christ. They had repented and turned from these things. Why? Because someone came and preached to them.

Peter says, "And this is the word which was preached to you" (verse 25). Peter was referring to Isaiah's words that he quoted in the previous verses, "All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the word of the Lord endures forever" (Isaiah 40:6-8). It's quite certain that when the traveling evangelists of the early Christian church placed their feet in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, they quoted from this passage of Isaiah as they preached to the people. Early evangelists were always trying to demonstrate from the Scripture that Jesus was indeed the Messiah who was prophesied to come. Isaiah 40 is a powerful passage that demonstrates this. Consider the following passage:

Isaiah 40:1-11

"Comfort, O comfort My people," says your God. "Speak kindly to Jerusalem; And call out to her, that her warfare has ended, That her iniquity has been removed, That she has received of the LORD's hand double for all her sins."

A voice is calling, "Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God. Let every valley be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; And let the rough ground become a plain, and the rugged terrain a broad valley; Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all flesh will see it together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

A voice says, "Call out."

Then he answered, "What shall I call out?"

All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; Surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.

Get yourself up on a high mountain, Zion, bearer of good news. Lift up your voice mightily, O Jerusalem, bearer of good news. Lift it up, do not fear say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!"

Behold, the Lord GOD will come with might, with His arm ruling for Him. Behold, His reward is with Him and His recompense before Him. Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, in His arm He will gather the lambs and carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes.

This is a perfect text for a travelling evangelist to use. It begins by speaking of the comfort that God would bring at the coming of the Messiah. This is nicely contrasted with the 39 previous chapters that were filled with mainly with judgment. Isaiah then prophesied of a messenger that would come and prepare the way before the Messiah came. Every gospel writer affirms that John the Baptist fulfilled this role (Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:2-3; Luke 3:4-6; John 1:23). [1] Then, Isaiah says, "the glory of the LORD will be revealed." What's the message that comes afterwards? "All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field, ..." (Isaiah 40:6ff). The proclamation of the gospel comes next in verse 9, "Say to the cities of Judah, 'Here is your God!'" When the Lord comes, he will come with strength. He will rule over those who fail to repent (verse 10) and he will care gently for those who come to Him, like a shepherd carries the lambs in his bosom (verse 11).

This is the gospel! This is what was preached to us! This is what we believe! Do you believe it?

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on November 11, 2007 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] Mark Dever, The Gospel and Personal Evangelism, p. 110.

[2] In case you are not interested in this organization, you can read about them here: <http://www.awana.org/>. They do an excellent job of encouraging children to memorize the Bible.

[3] John Newton, Out of the Depths, p. 22.

[4] Ibid., p. 71.

[5] J. C. Ryle, Thoughts for Young Men, pp. 34-35.

[6] Carolyn Mahaney, Girl Talk, p. 132.

[7] Perhaps all of the gospel writers referred to John the Baptist as fulfilling Isaiah 40:6-8 because of the number of times in which the early evangelists used this text to preach Jesus. This is pure speculation on my part and not provable. But, it does point to the possibility of Isaiah 40 being a key text for early evangelists to use in their spreading of the news of the Messiah.