

## **Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family**

### **Title: Don't You Know? Have You Not Heard?**

#### **Lesson: Isaiah 40:21-31**

*<sup>21</sup> Do you not know?*

*Have you not heard?*

*Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood since the earth was founded?*

*<sup>22</sup> He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers.*

*He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in.*

*<sup>23</sup> He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.*

*<sup>24</sup> No sooner are they planted, no sooner are they sown, no sooner do they take root in the ground, than he blows on them and they wither, and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff.*

*<sup>25</sup> "To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?" says the Holy One.*

*<sup>26</sup> Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these?*

*He who brings out the starry host one by one and calls forth each of them by name.*

*Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.*

*<sup>27</sup> Why do you complain, Jacob?*

*Why do you say, Israel,*

*"My way is hidden from the LORD; my cause is disregarded by my God?"*

*<sup>28</sup> Do you not know?*

*Have you not heard?*

*The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.*

*He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.*

*<sup>29</sup> He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.*

*<sup>30</sup> Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall;*

*<sup>31</sup> but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength.*

*They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.*

**(Slide 1)** The Book of Isaiah is more complicated than we think because scholars believe it wasn't all written by the prophet Isaiah. They think Isaiah wrote chapters 1-39, but chapters 40-66 were likely written by others after him. So, they divide it into First, Second, and Third Isaiah. First Isaiah talks about God's judgment, Second Isaiah comforts Israelites in Babylonian captivity, and Third Isaiah looks forward to salvation.

Thus, Isaiah 40 is considered to be the first chapter in second Isaiah, as the prophet's words shift from addressing an Assyrian-dominated Jerusalem to a Jerusalem now dominated by Babylon.

**(Slide 2)** Back then, Israel lost to Babylon in a war. Judah's kingdom collapsed, the temple got destroyed, and Jerusalem turned into ruins. The Israelites were taken to Babylon as exiles, facing a tough life far from home. It's tough to understand their sadness for losing their country and the pain of losing loved ones in war. Now, as captives in Babylon, they had to work hard for Babylon's benefit.

The first and second generations of those exiled to Babylon hoped for God to save them from their suffering. They waited eagerly, but it felt like God wasn't listening. Years went by. Those who were young when they were exiled became grandparents and parents to their descendants. Time went by, but the situation remained unchanged.

In this tough situation, they got tired and started feeling like God wouldn't save them. As parents and grandparents hold on to an ancient promise that is fading over time, what are their children learning about God's strength and power? As time goes by, other gods seem more impressive, more relevant to their lives than the silent God of Abraham and Jacob amidst their suffering.

The people of God are getting farther from Him, feeling tired from constant attacks, first from Assyria and now Babylon. They've lost faith and hope in their old beliefs. Forced from their homes, they sit by Babylon's rivers crying for their lost land, Zion. It's no surprise they feel weak. It's no surprise even the young generations are tired, and it's no surprise they are interested in Babylon's fancy gods. Their suffering feels never-ending, and memories of their promised land are slipping away.

**(Slide 3)** When everyone feels defeated and hopeless, and when suffering seems never-ending, Isaiah loudly declares with confidence: God is alive. He's still our God. Don't you know? Have you not heard?

Isaiah is asking God's people to remember their history, to remember their covenant. He is asking them to recall how God delivered them from slavery in Egypt, how He performed miracles to open the Red Sea when their path

was blocked, how He provided and guided their ancestors for 40 years in the wilderness, and how they crossed the Jordan River into the promised land after their training in the wilderness. Even in very difficult and dark times, God's people are asked to remember God's presence.

Friends, Isaiah's words are important for everyone, no matter the time. Every generation gets tired and worn out from the pain and suffering in the world. We all experience events that make us question if God is there and if He keeps His promises. Wars, pandemics, poverty, natural disasters, suicide, racial injustice — and our own personal sorrows — plague every age.

When we are consumed by the circumstances and problems of our lives, we often forget about God and fail to seek Him. At times like that, we all need to respond to the invitation to look up at the sky and consider. We all must be reminded to remember who created this world and the amazing power and love with which we were all breathed into being. We all need to be prompted by the questions “Don't you know?” and “Have you not heard?” because life can certainly cause us to forget.

Our faith is built upon the faith of others who have come before us; therefore, generations to come will rely upon our faith stories and our willingness to hope in the Lord only to discover that our strength was in fact renewed. Therefore, our role is very important. Of course, as life's difficulties come upon us and we experience suffering, we see our friends pass away, and our faith may weaken in the face of church or denominational conflicts.

But, when life gets harder and we feel worn out, and hope slips away, it's important to look up at the sky, watch the stars and moon, and enjoy nature's beauty. It reminds us who made it all. We need to remind ourselves to look up and recall how God has protected and guided us on our journey.

Our weaknesses and limitations become opportunities to experience God's presence and opportunities for our faith to grow. The real threat to our lives and our hope isn't all the tragedies that happen in our lives. The real threat is forgetting about God, who is beyond all our understanding, and trusting and believing in Him, who revives us when we are tired and exhausted.

Even though our lives may be going through difficult times, we need to remember that God is with us and continue to tell our children about the promise of salvation through Jesus Christ. When our faith in God is strong and unwavering, and we make an effort to hold onto and remember God's word, the Lord will empower His people, giving them strength to rise up like eagles soaring powerfully on wings.

We must continue to tell our children and our neighbors about God's promise of salvation with the new strength God provides.

Today is a beautiful and good day to share God's stories with children, to share our own personal experiences of the everlasting God, and to invite others to join us. We must continue to spread God's word. Amen.