

Date: October 26, 2025

Texts: Isaiah 40. 9 - 11 / John 10. 7 - 15

Title: "He Shall Feed His Flock"

Intro -

re: repetition in Hebrew (as per the language of the prophet Isaiah...)

as a means of emphasis

(a la *italics*...)

also - a la repetition - as used in our own settings

("how many times do I have to say this...!?)

(but - without the exasperation...)

cf. - in Hebrew: a three-fold repetition is especially significant

as here - where "Behold" is repeated an attention-getting

three times:

vs. 9 - Behold!

vs 10a - Behold / might...

vs. 10b - Behold / recompense (reward...)

(which reward is - tenderness...)

note - for a people who were searching for something

and - they were...

having discovered that temples could be destroyed...

kingdoms could collapse...

and covenants could be broken...

having discovered that any and everything in which they had placed

their trust... sought to find their security...

just did not cut it

and so - they were searching.... they were looking...

for something... anything...

to these people - Isaiah brings a message... a prophetic word

when all else fails, look to God's ever faithful word as your

theological / spiritual "terra firma"

- Behold...!
relate - in this week leading up to Halloween
 (not that I think the darker side of witches, black magic, or
 the occult are going to lure us in...)
but... - this week is a reminder that there is a spiritual void
 in many lives -
 and - people are searching...
 people are looking to fill it
cf. - what about us...?
 where are our sights set...?

I) Searching

cf. - the good news is (per the Economist earlier this summer) -
 there is a measurable increase in interest in Christianity
 among young people...
 some of this increase might be attributed to
 the fruits of misguided efforts in what they had sought
 earlier in their lives...
or - as per one young man:
 "I've tried alcohol... I've tried parties...
 I've tried sex..."
 "None of these work (in terms of overcoming a prevalent
 sense of depression, ennui, and loneliness"
 which explains why people are searching -
 (because who wants any of that to be the
 "prevalent sense of their lives..."?)
as with the people in Isaiah's day -
 we are *cracked* vessels - looking to *empty* vessels -
 to try and fill the void that marks too many lives
Isaiah's message is:
 Behold!

at a time when other tangible and intangible ways of relating to God
have collapsed...

- the prophetic word is our anchor
- a prophetic word that draws our attention to the *unchangeable nature of the God who comes to us* -
where and how we are -
and leads us home

this is the terra firmer we should be seeking...

this is the terra firmer that will never fail.

II) Strength

the prophet celebrates that the Lord God comes with might...

that his arm rules for him...

which is good news -

because - even if we don't want to admit it -

we have a hard time managing on our own...

we need help in the daily grind that is our lives...

cf. - per Kathleen Norris:

People talk about the daily grind, where one day folds into another, and there doesn't seem to be much purpose in life. The daily can get quite oppressive. I think everybody goes in and out of that state where it seems intolerable, especially since our culture encourages us to devalue it.

Watch television and you'll see that the daily is the realm of the boring stuff, while the important stuff happens when we are partying or on vacation or doing something out of the ordinary.

But it's a self-defeating way to look at things because the daily is where we live most of the time. We have to do the dishes. We have to do the laundry. We can either regard these things as a terrible burden, or we can cultivate a sense that the daily can be more than it seems.

Sometimes it is going to seem like a grind, but we should try to be receptive to the times when something else, maybe something sacred, breaks through. ...

In *Orthodoxy*, G.K. Chesterton said that though God makes daisies every day, he never gets tired of making them. That is God's strength — to exult in the daily rather than to despair over it.

that is the might God brings to us...

as we find his strength appearing in the “barely thinkable
power of gentleness...

in tender and caring presence...

in intimacy such as a shepherd expresses when gathering
the wounded, scattered flock...”

... as we find his strength daily -

in all the mundane matters that occupy us -

like eating...

and getting lost (and - needing to be found...)

and falling down (and needing to be lifted up...)

and hurting (and in need of healing...)

this is a strength we need...

a strength for which we search...

a strength we find - in its paradoxical completeness -
in Jesus

cf. - *Jesus is the one* that Isaiah was talking about when he said,

“lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,

lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah,

‘Here is your God!’”

Jesus is Isaiah’s dream come true, the one who fulfills the prophecy:

“See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him. ...

He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms,
and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep”

- that's Jesus, the one who possesses God's might...
but also feeds his flock like a shepherd.
- He is the One who has the power to straighten us out,
but also the grace and love to restore us.

III) Tenderness

relate -

- the juxtaposition of God's mighty arm , and -
his gentle guidance and provision
may seem to conflict
(and - many people draw distinctions between God's
attributes of power, omnipotence, and so forth...
and God's relational attributes of love and care for the world...
- as if they are unrelated or somehow opposed to
one another...)

we need to remember and rejoice that -

- God's mighty arm is not the arm of an arbitrary tyrant...
but that of a gentle shepherd
- in whose arms, his sheep can find complete rest:
the security that is found in strength...
the comfort that is found in tenderness
because...

- this is no ordinary shepherd...

and unlike Wilbur the pig - he does not need Charlotte spinning
a PR campaign in a web above him...
(as if "Some Shepherd..." or - "Terrific..." or - Radiant"
is needed to make sure we understand and embrace
who Jesus is and what Jesus does)

he is:

God come to us, in power...

he is:

God come to us, with compassion...

he is:

what we are searching for...

when we finally realize

- he is the one who feeds us...
- he is the one who lifts us up...
- he is the one who cares for us