



## WHAT SHALL I CRY? (Sermon)

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**Text Reference:** Isaiah 40:3-6

### **Introduction:**

The first verse of Isaiah chapter 40 is considered a page-turning element in this prophetic book. It promises comfort to the people. It promises hope. But immediately following that, an order is given.

Isaiah 40:3-6 presents a clear prophetic mandate to cry out, calling people's attention back to the Lord. *"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord.'"* The text then touches on the way: *"Make straight in the desert a highway for our God."* *"Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth."*

Finally, the text suggests the result of this cry: *"The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."* The narrative now pauses, and in an imperative form, says: *"The voice said, 'Cry out!' And he said, 'What shall I cry?'"*

The immediate application of this passage was to the precursor of our Lord, His cousin John the Baptist. Mark 1:2-4 categorically affirms: *"As it is written in the Prophets: . . . John came baptizing in the wilderness"* and his message of repentance was linked to the first advent of the Messiah, the beginning of the ministry of Jesus Christ in this world.

That mission to cry out belongs to you and me today:

“Let us consecrate ourselves to the proclamation of the message, ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God’ ” (Ellen G. White, *Christian Service*, p. 169.1).

Our mission as a church is to cry out and announce that Jesus is coming again. This message must align with our conduct as individuals and as a church and must be our priority. This morning, I would like to make three considerations regarding this clamor: 1. Our Message, 2. Our Conduct regarding the message, and 3. The Priority that we give to this message in our lives.

### **I. Our Message - The Message We Must Preach**

The “Voice of one crying” is different from the common voice heard out there. When “the word of God came to John the son of Zachariah in the wilderness” (Luke 3:2), he was not preaching about common things; he was not repeating soft sermons like those in the synagogue. He was preaching a radical change of behavior. “With the spirit and power of Elijah, he denounced the national corruption, and rebuked the prevailing sins” (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 104.3)

Today, as the Church of God, we are surrounded by corruption, immorality, and sin. The abominable things to the Lord are considered common today and sometimes praised as open-minded behavior. Our message should remain the same: A call for repentance.

Altar calls are generally soft and appealing; we don’t force people to accept God’s invitation. But John the Baptist had a different approach. Luke 3:7, 8 says, “*Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, ‘Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore, bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.’*”

Repentance is not merely accepting facts or feeling remorse for the evil committed; it denotes a transformation in the way we live. And how is this transformation put into practice? Luke 3:10 continues, “*So the people asked him, saying, ‘What shall we do then?’ He answered and said to them, ‘He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise.’*” The point made by the Baptist is that sin is selfish. The multitudes were not asking what they had to do to be saved, they were asking what the signs were to show they have repented.

The true message of repentance is one that makes a person stop looking to self and start looking at the needs of his family, his neighbor, his community. Ellen White proposes this situation:

“The father who has died in the faith, resting upon the eternal promise of God, left his loved ones in full trust that the Lord would care for them. And how does the Lord provide for these bereaved ones? He does not work a miracle in sending manna from heaven; He does not send ravens to bring them food; but He works a miracle upon human hearts, expelling selfishness from the soul, unsealing the fountain of benevolence. He tests the love of His professed followers by committing to their tender mercies the afflicted and bereaved ones, the poor and the orphan.” (*Welfare Service*, p. 214.2)

Here, the miracle of God in the human heart is the true sign of conversion that allows us to bear the real fruits of repentance. To care for the needs of the ones around us.

## **II. Our Conduct in Regard to This Message**

Our church was prophetically appointed to carry a special message. We have a special responsibility, and we are not supposed to discount Christianity! Our responsibility is to cry out that Jesus is Coming Again and Soon. We are to cry out the Three Angels Messages, and the forgotten truths of the Bible, and this should be reflected in our lives. But this responsibility does not remove us from acting with compassion, love, and kindness as any Christian should.

I like to tell this story wherever I go: When my father was a pastor in the Amazon, the church was preparing an evangelistic plan. It was very simple: start a small preaching point in your neighborhood. One of the leaders was refusing to accept starting in his street, he wanted to do it on the other side of the city. Later on, it was understood why. Everyone knew him as a person that lived a life different from what he preached.

Our conduct must be aligned with our message. We cannot simply preach that Jesus is coming soon when we forget the true fruits of conversion and repentance by which we will be judged upon His second coming!

Let's look at the most important message preached by Jesus about his return in Matthew 24. That message continues on Matthew 25! Matthew 25:35-40 says, "For I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' . . . And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'" As we work to hasten the second coming of Jesus, we must work to care for the ones in need.

### **III. The Priority We Give to This Message in Our Lives**

There's a short Bible story that I believe illustrates a lot what we are saying here. It talks about the priorities of our calling and our work as we follow Jesus: Acts 12:1-14 shows a few characters:

Herod - Ordered to arrest and kill disciples of Jesus.

James - Killed by Herod.

Peter - Arrested and awaiting the politically correct moment to be executed.

Rhoda - Servant in the house of John Mark's mother, Mary.

As we read this account, we realize that Peter, after being miraculously spared and freed from prison, upon reaching the house of Mary, he knocked at the door and expected to get in immediately. But Rhoda was so happy to hear that Peter was at the door, she prioritized to

tell the people about their answered prayer, and she forgot to do her immediate job—which was to open the door that would finally protect Peter, the subject of their prayer.

As a prophetic movement, we are called to preach and announce and cry out that Jesus is coming again. And we do it with the joy of Rhoda. But as a church, too many times we forget to do what we are also called to do as a basic Christian responsibility: care for the ones suffering, to love and show mercy to the excluded, and to share with the ones in immediate need. Our mission is practical! Our cry must bring also hope through the bread.

“Read 2 Corinthians 9. You see, not only is our work to preach, but as we see suffering humanity in the world, we are to help them in their temporal necessities. Thus, we will be instruments in the hands of God...” (Ellen G. White, *WS* this needs to be spelled out and italicized, p. 332.1)

Isaiah 40:6 says: “The voice said, ‘Cry out!’ And he said, ‘What shall I cry?’”

What is the message that we should give to the world? A practical message of hope. A message that shows a God of love who will give in the future mansions and an eternal life free of scarcities, hunger, and pain. Our message today is that Jesus extends His hand through your hands. We should shout out that a day is coming when there will be no more crying, no more hunger, and no more suffering.

The day is coming when eyes that cry will be dried, eyes that don't see will be opened, eyes that are in need of glasses will be healed to see the face of our Lord Jesus Christ. The backs that hurt will be healed, and the consciences that burn will be forgiven; life will be plentiful and eternal.

Cry out today the message that the day is coming when girls will not be again molested, children will not go to bed hungry or will go on in life with the insecurities of war, or families that need to leave their homes and land to seek refuge in places that don't want them. They will live in homes built by the hands of the Father.

It will come the day that this church will not preach the message of a coming hope, but this church will live the eternity that we hoped for.

I want to be there on that day, joined by the thousands that experienced the blessings of our Lord through the hands of people like you and me, when we extended compassion beyond theory in favor of the ones that needed it the most. God bless your decision to Cry out God's Message today.