

# Isaiah Ch40v10-24 - The Sovereign, Wise Ruler Is Your Shepherd

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[ 0 : 00 ] And I'm going to read from verses 10 to 12 from Isaiah chapter 10. So, beginning at verse 10.

Isaiah 40. Sorry, did I say that? Yeah, pardon me. Isaiah 40, page 725. So I'm reading from verse 10 of chapter 40.

See, the sovereign Lord comes with power, and he rules with a mighty arm. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.

He tends his flock like a shepherd. He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart. He gently leads those that are young. Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand?

Or with the breath of his hand marked off the heavens? Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket? Or weighed the mountains on the scales? And the hills in a balance?

[ 1 : 08 ] Can fathom the spirit of the Lord? Or instruct the Lord as his counsellor? Who did the Lord consult to enlighten him? And who taught him the right way?

Who was it that taught him knowledge? Or showed him the path of understanding? Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket. They are regarded as dust on the scales.

He weighs the islands as though they were fine dust. Lebanon is not sufficient for altar fires, nor its animals enough for burnt offerings. Before him all the nations are as nothing.

They are regarded by him as worthless and less than nothing. With whom then will you compare God? To what image will you liken him?

As an idol, a metal worker casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold, and fashions it in silver, chains for it. A person too poor to present such an offering selects wood that will not rot.

[ 2 : 08 ] They look for a skilled worker to set up an idol that will not topple. 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? 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.

He brings princes to naught, and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing. No sooner are they planted, no sooner are they sold, 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.

Thanks, sir. Good morning, everybody. Happy New Year to you all. This text raises a question this morning.

God promises to be our shepherd and care for us in the coming year, but can he actually come through on that promise? Does he have what it takes to do it?

[ 3 : 21 ] It was a sunny June evening back in 2018, and I had just become a dad. My wife, Yelena, had a work thing on this particular evening, meaning I was left in charge, caring for our six-week-old daughter, on my own, for the very first time.

Now, I was pumped. I knew that I could handle this. I mean, I was the dad after all. I was made for this moment. So I got to wondering, what would I do on this evening with my daughter?

And in my great wisdom of being a dad for six weeks, I decided we would go for a nice long walk around the Crosshaven walkway, which I'd been looking forward to doing for some time.

I popped her in the buggy. She drifted off to sleep, and all was going great until Elodie woke up screaming 40 minutes down the Crosshaven walkway.

I had no bottle to feed her and no way to get home quickly. I knew I was in trouble. I knew that my only option was to ring my parents-in-law.

[ 4 : 43 ] Now, you can imagine, that was a very humbling phone call for me to make. But I had little time to worry about that, okay? Thankfully, Rob and Maria arrived within minutes, and they whisked the baby off home, safe and sound.

And I was left there, on the side of the road, with a buggy that wouldn't fit in their boot. And I got to wondering, how on earth did I think that was a good idea?

I was so foolish as to think that would be a good thing to do with my daughter that evening. You see, I had promised with all my heart to take care of this baby girl.

The problem was not a lack of desire on my part. Oh, that was all there. The problem was that I was a rookie dad, and I lacked the wisdom and the wherewithal to actually care for her on that evening. And sometimes we think about God and his promises in the same way. Okay? Okay? We read his promise in verse 11, to tend his flock like a shepherd.

[ 6 : 06 ] He promises to gather you in his arms, to carry you close to his heart, to gently lead you through this coming year. I mean, who doesn't want that?

What a wonderful promise. But is it all just platitudes? Is it all just empty words, empty promises? Just like I failed to come through on my promise to care for my daughter that evening, we doubt that God can really come through on his promise to care for us.

Does God have the power and wisdom to make it happen? That's the big question today. And Isaiah knows that the people of Judah in this context here, they are also doubting God's care for them.

See, in just the chapter before, God tells them that the Babylonian army are about to come and destroy Jerusalem, carrying them off as exiles.

[ 7 : 18 ] So, this promise of God's shepherding care over them does not come to these people at a time of peace and prosperity when everything's going hunky-dory.

No. It comes to them in the middle of their worst-case scenario when the outlook is bleak. And no doubt they were wondering, just like we would be, is God really caring for us in the middle of this? And how many of us on this first Sunday in the new year look out for the coming year and if we're honest it looks bleak. Maybe you go into it facing loneliness or illness or old age.

Maybe you are anxious about relationships, work, or school. Maybe you go into it knowing you're so far from where you want to be at this point in your life.

The outlook in lots of different ways might be bleak. And in this context we, like the people of Judah, we naturally begin to wonder, can God actually come through on his promise to care for us this year?

[ 8 : 39 ] And the answer that this text gives us is a resounding yes, he can. The reason why is first given to us in verse 10. Have a look down at it.

See, the sovereign Lord comes with power and he rules with a mighty arm. God can shepherd us this year because he is in sovereign control over all things.

here's a definition for God's sovereignty by a famous author. He says, God's sovereignty is his right and power to do all that he decides to do.

And if you have believed in Jesus, if you're in Christ this day, then remember this one thing. the sovereign wise ruler of the universe is your shepherd.

That is why he is able to care for you. If he has all the power and all the wisdom, put those two together, he is more than able to care for you, to lead you and guide you through 2025.

[ 10 : 06 ] We're going to see all of this in the text, but first let's just pray and ask God for his help. Lord, give us new eyes today to see your sovereignty over all.

Give us that fresh vision of how strong and wise you are so that we can trust in your promise to care for us this year. We need you now.

Amen. First thing we're going to do is see God's sovereignty in this text and then his wisdom and we'll finish then with one big implication for our lives.

So first, your shepherd is the sovereign ruler over all. And the first thing we see is that he's sovereign over creation. Just look down at verse 12 there.

It says, who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand or with the breath of his hand marked off the heavens? Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket or weighed the mountains on the scales and the hills in a balance?

[11:16] You know, God is that just a tender shepherd. He's bigger than our wildest imaginations, so big that he measures the whole universe with a hand span.

Look at verse 25. He says, to whom will you compare me? Who is my equal? Says the Holy One. 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. It couldn't be clearer. God is sovereign over his creation. The billions of planets spin at his command.

So we might look at our struggles that we face this year and think they're too big for God, but we need to correct that misunderstanding. Your shepherd is the ruler of the universe.

[12:27] Don't underestimate what his great power can do. Secondly, God's sovereign over the nations. He's bigger than all the world's superpowers.

In fact, they only exist because of his ultimate purpose. Look at verse 15. Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket.

They are regarded as dust on the scales. He weighs the islands as though they were fine dust.

Verse 17. Before him all the nations are as nothing.

They are regarded by him as worthless and less than nothing. Don't look at China or Russia or the EU or USA.

Don't look at them and say, oh, who could stand against their power? They're invincible. No, we shouldn't say that in light of this text. Despite all their military and financial wealth, to God they are less than nothing.

[13:31] That's how small they are. That's how weak they are. I think that's a wonderful reassurance. They can only act within the bounds of God's ultimate purposes.

God's love. And we might think that their leaders are the ones who rule the world. But actually, if you look down on verse 21, we find something different.

Verse 21, God is the true king, reigning on the only throne that matters this morning.

all other kings and presidents sit in their tiny worthless thrones. And look at verse 23. He says, God brings princes to naught. He reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.

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 the whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff.

[14:53] That's an amazing image, isn't it? Like little saplings planted in the ground, God plants the kings and governments of this world, and with a puff of his breath, they're brought down, swept away.

God is in control. Whether it's Putin or Trump or Mihoi Martin, the leaders of the world make their decisions for good or ill, God's love, but none of them outside the bounds of God's ultimate control. Now that all leads us to a really difficult question. Is God sovereign over evil? Because how can we say God's in control over those who are in power when they often abuse that power, causing great harm to people?

And whether it's Putin or your boss at work or the principal of your school or a manager of your football team, we just read that God plants all leaders in their positions of power.

But does that mean that God is morally responsible for the evil choices that they make? The Bible's answer is no.

[16:21] God is not morally responsible for people's evil. God is holy. There is no darkness or evil in him. And think about Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon.

He was on his way to defeat the people of Judah. We know from the history books he burned Jerusalem to the ground and he deported most of those who weren't killed.

He was violent and greedy and God would hold him to account for that. In some mysterious way, the king's evil choices ultimately fulfilled God's good plan for his people.

And this is seen many places in scripture but I want to read out one other place. And this is when Peter, after Jesus' death and resurrection, was speaking to the crowd in Jerusalem.

Just listen to what he says in Acts chapter 2. This is what he says. Fellow Israelites, listen to this. Jesus of Nazareth was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge.

[17:39] And you, with the help of wicked man, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. Notice there that Peter clearly implies that the people of Jerusalem, they freely chose to put Jesus to death.

It wasn't like someone forced them to do it. No, they wanted to kill Jesus out of the evil desires of their hearts. And they were responsible for that. God's and yet equally true.

It was that this was somehow part of God's deliberate plan for all time, which accomplished our salvation. You see, people are responsible for their free choices.

choices. And yet God somehow is still sovereign over all of those choices, carrying out his deliberate plan.

How those two realities work together in practice, well, that's a mystery, isn't it? We cannot fully comprehend it. And for the people of Judah, it was extremely difficult to trust God with the evil he allowed to happen to them in the face of King Nebuchadnezzar.

[ 19 : 04 ] But this text doesn't just teach us that God is a sovereign ruler. He can do whatever he pleases. If that were all, it would only be some comfort, but not enough.

See, this passage also shows that God is the wise ruler. And that is doubly good news for Judah and for you and I.

Just look at verse 13 with me. It says this, Who can fathom the spirit of the Lord or instruct the Lord as his counselor?

Whom did the Lord consult to enlighten him? And who taught him the right way? Who was it that taught him knowledge or showed him the path of understanding?

The answer is no one. No one taught God. God does not need any advice on how to run his universe because he knows all things.

[ 20 : 08 ] He has full understanding. He sees the end of time from the beginning. All his judgments are perfect. he doesn't get it wrong.

Now the people of Judah, you and I included, at many times thought that he was getting it wrong. But who were they to advise God?

Could they see everything from his eternal perspective? He alone knows what is best. comfort that is for us today.

Not just to know that God has the sovereign power to do whatever he pleases, but that every single action that he takes is always right, always just, always wise, and we can hold on to that this year.

The people of Judah could trust their sovereign, wise shepherd to care for them, because every single action was ultimately right and always fulfilling his good plan for them.

[ 21 : 27 ] So all this leads to one final implication for us today. God is the sovereign wise ruler over creation, over the nations and their rulers, then God must also be the sovereign and wise ruler over all of my life and all of yours.

And that I think is the most compelling reason to trust in God's shepherding care for you and I this year. He's sovereign over your situation, where you live, work or go to school.

None of these are random. The family that you are in, the friends that you have, God has placed you there for a good reason, even if you don't want to be there.

David says in Psalm 139, all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

That's true. And if he has ordained everything that will happen in your days in 2025, then that means he's also sovereign over the pain and struggle that you will face in those days.

[ 22 : 58 ] God and that's why it's really important to know that he is also wise. If he allows it in your life, it is ultimately for your good and his glory.

When you suffer with illness, you can turn to him and say, this illness is not what I wanted, and I asked that you would take it away, but Lord, you have allowed it in my life for a good reason, and you will help me through this.

When you suffer under the sin that other people commit against you, you can turn to your shepherd and say, Lord, this was wrong. It should never have happened, but I believe you allowed it for a good reason.

And Father, you will give me the grace to get through. When you suffer under the burden of stress, you can turn to him and say, Lord, this is too much for me to bear, but you are sovereign even over this, and you will help me to find a way through.

Now, you may wonder, how can I trust God to shepherd me if he allows such pain into my life?

[ 24 : 35 ] And God's answer is, yes, you can trust me to shepherd you because everything is within my ultimate control. So hear God's words to you today.

your pain or suffering is not out of control. That's what it's saying to us. No joy or pain can happen to us in the coming year unless our sovereign shepherd allows it in his wisdom.

We do not serve a weak God who is unable to stop the wrong things that happen in our lives. No, our God is sovereign over all and wise in everything he does and that's a rock solid foundation as we move out into this new year.

So as we finish, let's go back to the question we started with today. God has promised us his tender shepherding care this year.

but does he have the power and the wisdom to make it happen? Well Isaiah's answer is yes, isn't it? Because your shepherd is the sovereign and wise ruler of the universe.

[ 25 : 59 ] The shepherd who cares for you has written all of history for the good of his sheep and the glory of his name. So how should we respond?

Rest. We rest in our shepherd's sovereign wise rule over us in this coming year. Trust him to guide you on the right path, to comfort you in the dark valleys, to provide everything that you need.

He's more than strong enough. He is more than wise enough to care for you. He is more than able to keep his promise to shepherd you.

We're going to sing a song now and it's Psalm 23, the Lord's my shepherd. I think this is a good song for us to finish with because hearing about how God is sovereign over everything and control of this whole universe, but he's all powerful and all wise.

Now we need to sing about how he is our shepherd, our tender shepherd. He is able to care for us like that. So that's what this song is all about.

[ 27 : 38 ] It's an opportunity for us to place our trust in him again. Before we do that, let me just pray. Lord, you have told us that you are the sovereign and wise ruler over all.

help us now to place our trust in your sovereign shepherding care over us in 2025.  
For your glory and our good. Amen.