

Isaiah 40:1-31

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 22 September 2024

Preacher: Mike Loosa

[0:00] The sermon text for today is Isaiah chapter 40 verses 1 through 31. At the conclusion of this reading, I will declare this is the word of the Lord, and the church in a joyful response to his revelation given to us, will together respond, thanks be to God.

Let's read. Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and cry to her, that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the Lord's hands double for all her sins.

A voice cries, in the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord, make straight in the desert highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low.

The uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

A voice cries, or voice says, cry! And I said, what shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows on it.

[1:18] Surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever. Go on up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news.

Lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem. Herald of good news, lift it up, fear not. Say to the cities of Judah, behold your God.

Behold the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules with him. Behold his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will tend to the flock like a shepherd.

He will gather the lambs in his arms. He will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young. Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and marked off the heavens with a span, and closed the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?

Who has measured the spirit of the Lord, or what man shows him counsel? Whom did he consult, and who made him understand? Who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding?

[2:28] Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as the dust on the scales. Behold, he takes up the coastlands like fine dust. Lebanon would not suffice for fuel, nor are its beasts enough for a burnt offering.

All the nations are as nothing before him. They are accounted by him as less than nothing, and emptiness. To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness compare with him?

An idol! A craftsman casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold, and casts for it silver chains. He who is too impoverished for an offering chooses wood, that will not rot.

He seeks out a skillful craftsman to set up an idol that will not move. Do you not know? Do you not hear? Has it not been told to you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?

It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, who stretches out like the heavens, like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in.

[3:30] Who brings princes to nothing, and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness? Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth.

When he blows on them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble. To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him, says the Holy One? Lift up your eyes on high and see who created these.

He who brings out their hosts by number, calling them all by name. By the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power, not one is missing. Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel?

My way is hidden from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God. Disregarded by my God. Have you not known, have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth.

He does not faint or grow weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might, he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted.

[4:38] But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Heavenly Father, what a glorious word you have given to us in this prophecy from Isaiah 40.

And God, as has already been prayed, we ask that you would enlighten the eyes of our hearts. Give us spiritual vision. Help us to see you rightly. To see us in light of you rightly this morning.

And to be changed in the light of your glory. We pray this in Christ's name and for his glory. Amen. Amen. Well, good morning, church. My name is Mike.

One of the pastors here at Shoreline. And so glad that you've all joined us this morning. If you haven't already got a copy of God's word in front of you, there are Bibles on the back table. They're bookmarked to Isaiah chapter 40.

[5:37] You're welcome to take one of those as a gift to you if you don't have a copy. Well, today, as has already been stated, we're starting a new sermon series entitled From Sighing to Singing.

And that's going to go through Isaiah chapters 40 through 55. And it's going to take us through the rest of 2024. And I'm really excited to work through this portion of Isaiah with you.

Well, in my early 20s, I used to bike a lot more than I do now. And whenever I'd go for a long bike ride, in addition to water, of course, I would carry food with me, like in the pockets of my back jersey.

And, you know, biking burns a tremendous amount of calories. And so after a while, on a long bike ride, I'd find that my whole body and my legs especially would begin to feel weak and weary.

And in those moments, my go-to pick-me-up was a caffeine-infused chocolate energy gel. Sounds as, yeah, it's as good as it sounds. And that would give me this much-needed boost to keep pounding away on the bike.

[6:39] And, you know, as many of us have experienced, if you've been around for just a little bit of time, life is a lot like a long bike ride. Or if you prefer, maybe a long run, a long hike up a mountain.

You know, inevitably, we hit moments or seasons where the going gets tough, right? Our strength is dried up. It feels like we can't go on.

And we desperately need a boost. Life has a way of beating us down. Of making us feel weak and weary. Leading us sometimes to question whether God sees, whether God cares.

Leading us to feel like we're helpless and all alone. And I wonder if anyone here feels that way this morning. If you do, I want you to know first that you are not alone.

You are not alone. That's a common lie that the enemy wants us to believe in times of discouragement, in times of depression. You are not alone. And what you are feeling is common to the human experience.

[7:47] And in fact, that's exactly the predicament in which we find the audience to whom Isaiah is writing these glorious words in chapter 40 of this prophetic book. And since we're jumping into the middle of the book, some context is going to be necessary.

So here's just a little bit of background. Around 1000 BC, Israel had reached its height as a kingdom, right? Under King David and then King Solomon. But due to sin, the kingdom was divided

in half.

The northern kingdom of Israel, the southern kingdom of Judah. And if you read the books of Kings and Chronicles, they depict the awful decline of the nation as time and again, wicked kings led the people astray into idolatry and injustice.

And God patiently sent prophet after prophet to call the people to repentance, to call them to faith in him alone, warning them that the curses for disobedience that had been laid out in the Mosaic law and the covenant would befall them.

But they wouldn't listen. Isaiah, the son of Amoz, was one of those prophets ministering primarily to Judah in the days of Uzziah, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, as he writes in chapter 1, verse 1.

[8:59] And that means that he prophesied primarily from around 740 to 700 BC. And in chapter 6 of Isaiah is that famous vision of the throne room of God in which Isaiah is cleansed by the mercy of God and then commissioned to prophesy to Judah.

But, Isaiah is warned, his message is going to have a hardening effect on his own generation. And that's what we find in chapters 1 through 35 of Isaiah.

He warns Judah of the judgment to come for her sin and rebellion against God, which kindled God's wrath against her. And this judgment would actually not just be against Judah, but against all the corrupt nations.

Yet these chapters also contain wondrous pictures and promises of a glorious restoration to come, beginning with Judah and also worldwide in scope.

chapter 35 concludes, And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing, everlasting joy shall be upon their heads. They shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

[10:09] In the middle of the book, chapters 36 through 39, there is a historical transition. Poetry switches to narrative, and we find a terrified Judah under King Hezekiah besieged by the army of Assyria.

And God miraculously rescues Judah from Assyria's hand, proving his lordship over the kings and gods of Assyria. And yet these chapters end, not in victory, but with an ominous prediction of Judah's downfall by a greater nation to come, Babylon.

For in spite of God's continued provision, his continued protection, Judah continues to trust, not in him, but in herself, and in men, and in material wealth and power.

Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and that which your fathers have stored up till this day shall be carried on. Nothing shall be left, says the Lord. And then as we turn the page to chapter 40, we find a great shift in message and tone.

Isaiah seems to be prophesying not to a people just saved from Assyria, but a people ravaged by Babylon. It seems, in fact, that Isaiah is prophesying to that future generation of Jewish exiles who have been weakened and wearied by a life under the oppression of Babylon, living in a land not their own, longing for rescue, wondering whether God sees or cares, needing to be saved.

[11:42] Let's go.