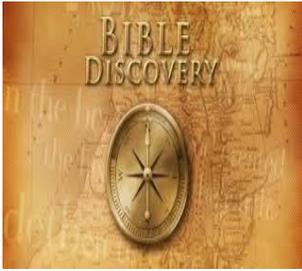


October 18, 2015

Isaiah 40:1-11

## The Greatness of God



In the verses we read at Isaiah 40:1-11, we hear the tender voice of God to the people of Jerusalem that her time in exile is soon to come to an end. The Lord is coming to her rescue! Having spoken in harsher tones of the coming judgment of God on the disobedient Jewish nation, Isaiah now proclaims a time when God restores them to their land; when again she's the chosen people, a people of God in the land promised them through their forefathers. It's a bittersweet story with all the ebbs and flows of a great epic because it demonstrates the fickle waywardness of people – including us; and the wonderful faithfulness, the mercy, the compassion, the greatness of our Heavenly Father.

### ***Just how big is your God today?***

This question, often raised by children, has no doubt stumped many a parent. But actually, it's the question many of us ask, either consciously or unconsciously, when change, difficulties, and uncertainties come our way. We hesitate, we ponder, we fret - ***“Is God big enough to deal with this problem?”*** we in effect are asking. We may not speak those words, but when we fail to trust, when we fail to rest in Him, when we fail to follow the advice of God's Word, we're demonstrating the question resonates deep within our hearts. This is exactly what God's people were thinking in Isaiah's day too, some seven hundred years before the birth of their Saviour - our Saviour - Jesus Christ; but Isaiah knew if we could just see how great God is, we'd never have to ask the question again. No more questioning what God can do! Rather we must stake our comfort, not on some airy-fairy, uncertain answer to a hypothetical enquiry, but on the certainty of our eternal God – discovered through Isaiah's words which provide us with...

## Four Amazing Facts about God

### 1. God has dealt with our sin!

*“It is finished”* Jesus said as He was nailed to the cross at Calvary to pay the full price of sin. Isaiah foretold, *“Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.”* [vs. 1-2] Because sin separates us from God, because God cannot stand in the presence of sin, because sin destroys us and makes us unable to recognize our need, dealing with sin is always

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God's first step in bringing change to our lives. As we place our trust in Jesus, as we turn from our wicked ways, confess we're sinners, and seek God's amazing grace, we too know our sins are forgiven. We discover of Jesus *“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.”* [Ephesians 1:7]

### 2. God is coming.

In every situation we encounter, we discover that it is much easier to handle when we're not in it alone. Having a friend come alongside during periods of suffering, grief, or worry lightens our load. What a wonderful discovery that God Himself is coming – coming to change the circumstance of the people of Israel, coming to change the circumstance of your life, coming to establish His kingdom for all eternity. Jesus comes to all who

call upon Him meeting their need. This is what Isaiah is saying: When God comes, things change! See the words we heard from Isaiah 40:3-5...

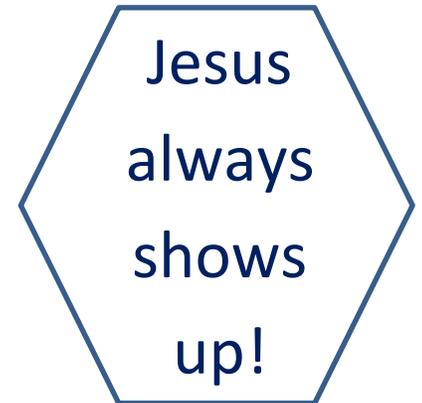
<sup>3</sup> *A voice of one calling: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. <sup>4</sup> Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. <sup>5</sup> And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all people will see it together. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."*

And again, Isaiah encourages us with the news announcing our Lord's coming in verses 9-10...

<sup>9</sup> *You who bring good news to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good news to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, "Here is your God!"*

<sup>10</sup> *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.*

This is what was announced at our Saviour's birth, this is what is announced as we walk with the Lord, this is what is announced as we place our trust in Jesus. Jesus always shows up. Jesus meets us wherever we are. When Jesus raised the widow's son as Luke records in his gospel at chapter 7, having seen her pain and agony over the loss of her only son, having His heart go out to her, instructing her "don't cry", God was present in that place. Do you remember the story? Jesus went up to the coffin saying, "Young man, I say to you get up!" And the young man did just that. He got up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. When God shows up, things change. The people who witnessed this were filled with awe, exclaiming, "*God has come to help his people.*" Isaiah's prophecy had been fulfilled.



Yes God is coming. Jesus, in His letters to the churches given to John, reminds us "*I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.*" [Revelation 3:11] Are we looking expectantly for God to return? First do we look for Him in our daily lives? Do we walk with Him, and talk with Him? Do we hear Him tell us we are His own? Do we find joy as we tarry with Him?

### 3. God's Word and Promises are unchanging and eternal

We can have confidence in our relationship with our Heavenly Father. We have a saying these days that the only constant is change itself. Yet Isaiah could honestly profess, "*The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the Word of our God endures forever.*" [Vs 8] The claim that God's Word is bound to time and shackled to a culture whose time has come and gone doesn't do justice to God's revelation. According to Jesus, the message of the Word of God doesn't change as the world changes. God's Word is always timely, always useful for instruction and guidance, always purposeful for directing our paths. We can't relinquish this precept for Jesus says of the permanence of His Word, "*Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away.*" [Luke 21:33] Let us hold to that truth knowing in these restless, uncertain times two things remain unchanging – God and His Word. This permanence brings comfort, security and hope to all who will trust in Him and His Word, which promises salvation in His Son, Jesus.

When the Bible is examined mostly from the literary and historical perspectives instead of for its spiritual content and wisdom, we suffer the ailment of modern man who no longer believes the teachings of the Bible are applicable for this present complex era. The God of eternity has not changed however; the God of the Old and New testaments remains. In His presence is God's promise of a Saviour to sin-fallen man and the fulfillment of that promise in His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Finally, Isaiah shows us that God not only comes,

### 4. God comes with power wrapped in compassion and tenderness.

Does it not amaze you that God, though He's limitless in power, chooses to exercise that power with amazing tenderness, looking after His people as a shepherd looks after his sheep? The prophet Ezekiel spoke

for God when he asked, *“Should not the shepherd take care of the flock?”* [Ezekiel 34:2] Ezekiel further reports God’s promise,

*“I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness.”* [Ezekiel 34:11-12]

Isaiah records this same message in this way,

*“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 have young.”*

And our Lord Jesus spoke of His fulfilment of the Father’s plan to care for the flock as sheep in need of a shepherd...

*“I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep...whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture...I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”* [John 10:7, 9, 11]

So what about you and me? How do we perceive the greatness of God? Have we received Jesus as our Shepherd? If He’s not preeminent in our hearts, if He’s not foremost in our thinking, He’ll never be great in our living! J.I. Packer shares Luther’s words to Erasmus on the concept of God, “Your thoughts of God are too human.” This is where most of us go astray. Our thoughts of God are not great enough; we fail to reckon with

the reality of God’s limitless wisdom and power.” Because we ourselves are finite, because we lack power, because we view God through the lens of our own being, we fail to see the greatness of God. When we open His Word, when we surrender to His presence in our lives, when we allow God’s Spirit to work in us and through us, we discover that God is great! Rather than thinking of God in our own mindset, let us this week open ourselves to letting God into our lives, setting aside the difficulties of grasping God’s promises, and letting Jesus’ sacrifice have fruition in the way we live our lives. Let us see our Sovereign Lord as we pray and meditate on His Word and follow His precepts.

If we can start to see the greatness of God, to recognize He never tires, never fails, never forgets, never is caught unawares; if we can accept that God has dealt with our sin separating sin from us as far as the east is from the west; that God has not abandoned us but in fact is coming, coming again very soon, that God’s coming changes everything about our life, that God is not only coming with power but with compassion and tenderness like a mother, like a tender shepherd since He is our shepherd, then I believe that we will find ourselves able to *“wait upon the Lord”* with increasing joy until we discover that *His* strength, *His* knowledge, *His* will has become ours and we are completely *His* – forever! And remember God is a God who just loves to pour out His great goodness on behalf of those who wait on Him! Won’t you wait upon the Lord; won’t you call on our great God today? Our Lord Jesus Christ has a place in His heart just for you. Get down on your knees today and pray that you might have an eternal relationship with Him – you’ll never regret it!

**Blessings,**

*Pastor Dave*

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