

## **Behold Your King: Behold Your God**

(Isaiah 40:1-11)

### INTRODUCTION

We make decisions every day. Sometimes, we make good decisions and sometimes, we make bad decisions. Whatever decisions that we make, there are consequences. Good decisions will yield good consequences. Bad decisions will yield bad consequences. We all have our share of bad decisions. After we have made it, we say, “Oh no, there are going to be some negative consequences that is going to come upon me.” We might have a hard time sleeping; we might be anxious; we might be conscious of what might happen. During those times, we all desire a word of comfort, a word of encouragement, and a word that show that we are still loved.

The Israelites made a bunch of bad decisions. They consciously chose to rebel against the Lord time and time again. Although God sent prophets to warn them, they refused to listen. One of these prophets is Isaiah, which we read from our Scripture this morning. Isaiah prophesied that God’s people would be judged. That would be the consequence of their rebellion. They chose to have other idols above their Lord. With that judgment prophesied, I am sure that they were anxious.

Before we go into Isaiah 40, I want to give you a big picture of the Book of Isaiah. Many have likened the book of Isaiah to a mini-Bible. The first 39 chapters of Isaiah summarize the 39 O.T. books, where God is a God of wrath. He judges those that rebel against Him. The second part of Isaiah consists of 27 chapters, like the 27 N.T. books, which focuses on God being a God of comfort, a God of grace and mercy. Sometimes, we only see God one way as a God of grace. But God is also a God of wrath. He is just and holy. These are two sides of the same coin. For the Israelites, they might see God as a God of judgment. As a result, they might be very anxious about what was going to happen. Isaiah 40 is the first chapter of the second part of the book, where Isaiah focuses on God’s comfort.

The Israelites were probably bummed out and feeling rejected. They were fearful of the coming judgment. The God of comfort sent his prophet to comfort them. God reminded them that He still loves them and cherishes them. [ The words of comfort can be divided into four voices in this passage. The first voice is the voice of pardon.]

#### A. The Voice of Pardon (40:1-2)

The people were probably very anxious. [Isa. 40:1-2] God starts out in verse one by saying, “Comfort, comfort my people.” There are consequences to sin.

##### 1. Consequences of sin

**APPLICATION** One of the first lessons I taught my kids is that there is consequences to our choices. Yes, there is freedom of choice, but we better think through what we are going to do because there will be consequences to whatever we choose. Wise decision will yield good consequences. Poor decision will yield bad consequences. Regardless, there are consequences to all that we do.

For the Israelites, they chose to rebel against God and go their own way. They were stubborn and not willing to listen. Therefore, God had to break their stubborn will in order for them to come back to follow the Lord. God did prophesy in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel that the Israelites would go into captivity as slaves because of their sin. They

had many chances to turn back to God, but they refused to do so. As a result, they would have to face consequences to their bad decisions. Although there will be consequences, we see that God comforts them with the voice of pardon.

## 2. Forgiveness of sin

Yes, there will be consequences to sin, but they will receive forgiveness from God. The Lord will pardon them. Just because we might ask God for forgiveness, it does not mean that the consequences will go away. Although we might decide to turn back to God, there is still going to be certain consequences. Yes, the Israelites will go into captivity and be slaves. However, they have something that they can look forward to down the road, which is forgiveness. They are not rejected. God promises to forgive them.

**APPLICATION** No matter how big of a mistake we have made, we need to face our consequences. But we also can be assured that God will accept us back and will forgive us. Are you facing consequences of poor judgment? Maybe God is trying to get our attention. Are we aware of what we have done? We need to turn back to God. When we do, surely we know that God is waiting to accept us back. [ This leads us to the second voice of comfort, voice of providence. ]

## B. The Voice of Providence (40:3-5)

The Israelites would be judged by going into captivity to Babylon as slaves. After paying the consequence of their sin, God would forgive them and would lead them back to their homeland. [ This prophecy has a near view fulfillment and a far view fulfillment. ]

### 1. Near view

The Israelites can be comforted with the voice of providence. God is in control. Although things are not looking good for us, He knows what is in the near future as well as the far future. In Isa. 40:3, they were “In the desert, prepare the way for the Lord;” While the Israelites were disciplined in Babylon, they were in the midst of a spiritual wilderness. The Jews are being to prepare themselves to get back into a proper relationship with God.

In verse 4, raising the valleys and lowering the mountains refer in hyperbole to workmen leveling or smoothing out the roads ahead of time to prepare the way for a dignitary or king to travel through. We have talked a lot about the coming King as we studied the Book of Judges. Here we see in the near view that the Israelites will go into captivity. They are in a spiritual wilderness or desert. They need to be broken first so that they will seek to prepare the way to return back to the Lord in the near future. The King is not quite ready to rule right away. During this Advent season, we know that Christ is coming again. He will come back to rule permanently in the future.

**APPLICATION** When we are walking in a spiritual wilderness, God is calling us to prepare the way for the Lord. We are to return back to Him. God is always there to lead us home from the wilderness. Are we in the middle of a spiritual wilderness? Is our spiritual life dry? Do we feel God is far away? God is calling us to come back to him.

During this Christmas season, we remember that Jesus came the first time not to become as a king, but as a suffering savior. The Israelites were looking forward to the

King to come. In the New Testament, they were looking for the political ruler to rule over them. When Jesus first came during the first Advent, He came to be the spiritual ruler. He recognized that we need to be redeemed. In order for this to happen, Jesus had to make Himself as a sacrifice on our behalf as He goes to the cross to pay the penalty of our sins once for all. As He is raised from the dead, we can be assured that if we placed our personal faith in Jesus, we will be saved. There might be some of us here that do not know Christ. I invite you to put your faith in the Lord Jesus. This is the First Advent. However, we know that there is a Second Advent, where Christ will come back the second time to rule as king permanently. We need to prepare the way for His return.

**APPLICATION:** Before Jesus comes back, He made many prophecies as to when He will return. One of the prophecies is recorded in Matthew 24:14, which says that the gospel needs to go to the whole world. During this Christmas season, we want to take advantage of this season, where people are more open to know what the meaning of Christmas is. May we talk with our coworkers, classmates, or neighbors about Jesus. There are many activities in your fellowship, small group or the church that you can invite your friends to. We have the Christmas service coming up, do invite them to come. Surely, the gospel will be preached. May we spread the Good News wherever we go as we do our part to prepare the way for the Lord to come. We look forward to His Second Coming. This is the far view.

## 2. Far view

In Matthew 3:1-3, Matthew quotes the verse here in Isaiah 40:3 to refer to John the Baptist, who prepares the way for Jesus. He went before the Lord to proclaim, "Repent, the Kingdom of heaven is near." People are to prepare for the king. Ultimately, Christ will come again in His second return in glory to rule as recorded in verse 5. We are to prepare the way for His return. [ God comforts the people with a voice of pardon and the voice of providence. God knows the future and we can find comfort in Him, which leads us to the third voice, the voice of promise. Isaiah wants the people to turn their focus and attention on the Lord, who can give them comfort because God is a promise keeper. ]

## C. The Voice of Promise (40:6-8)

This voice of promise is comparing and contrasting the difference between people and God.

### 1. Flesh will fade away

[ Isa. 40:6-8 ] Man is like grass; it will fade away. Flowers bloom and are beautiful to look at for a short period of time. Then its glory fades away. In v. 8, Man as described as temporary is being contrast with God's Word, which will stand forever.

### 2. God's Word will last forever

**APPLICATION** We cannot depend on man because it is temporary and it changes. However, we can depend on God's Word, which last forever and does not change because it is truth. Whatever He promises, we know that it will come to pass. We can find comfort in God's Word. When someone is discouraged, share a promise from God's Word with them. When you write an email, record a verse from the Bible to comfort those who are heavy hearted. Tell them who God is and what He has done for us.

We are to prepare the way for the Lord to return. **ILLUSTRATION:** My daughter and granddaughter came to visit us two months ago. We had to prepare the guest room

and clean up the house. There were a lot of things that we need to prepare before they came. As we look forward to Christ future coming, the Second Advent, may we prepare the way for His return.

Because God's Word does not change, we know when He promises us something, it will be fulfilled. The Jews in exile would be comforted knowing that God keeps his promises. God promised to pardon them and lead them back to their homeland. They could be assured that God would keep His promise. Christ also promises that he will return and we are to be ready when he comes.

[This leads us to the final voice that gives us comfort. That is the voice of peace. Again, the attention is focused on God. In verse 9, the messengers that are to take good tidings to Zion were commanded to shout and proclaim, "Here is your God!" You will find comfort knowing who God is. There are two descriptions of God recorded in verse 10 and 11 that will give comfort to those who will be in captivity. God is a powerful God and a caring God. [ Isa. 40:10-11 ]

#### D. The Voice of Peace (40:9-11)

##### 1. Powerful God

God is sovereign and powerful; He has great strength. The Jews could find comfort although they would be in captivity. They probably were wondering what was going to happen to them. God is in charge. He has power and authority. God will over power their enemies and restore His people from exile and rule over them.

**APPLICATION** We can be comforted knowing that there is nothing too difficult that God cannot handle because he is a powerful God. Are you in a big jam? Call upon the Lord.

**ILLUSTRATION** During this past year, my son and daughter went through tremendous stress. My daughter in-law, whose name is Anne, worked hard to finish her academic study as a clinical psychologist. She had two internships, which she did one in New York and one in Houston. She also had to take her board exam, which she passed. She was very eager as she submitted all of her records to the Texas State Board to apply for her professional license. To her surprise, she got a letter from the board rejecting her of her license because of a strange rule stating that internship must have more than one intern to be accepted. It just happened that the internship that Anne did in New York had only one intern. Anne appealed her case as she wrote her supervisor in New York to write all that she did in the internship, which fulfilled all of the internship requirements. Her supervisor submitted the letter to the board. But to our surprise, the Texas Board still rejected her license based on that strange rule. She did not know what to do next. Does that mean that she has to do another year of internship? She turned it over to the Lord. God gave her an idea, which is to apply for license in New York. She did although she had complication with the process. Eventually, she got her license from New York and she applied to transfer her license to Texas. After a long process, she got her license from Texas. Praise God. He is a gracious God.

[ God is not only a powerful God, but also a caring God. ]

##### 2. Caring God

God is our shepherd, who loves us and care for us. Those in exile can find comfort in the Lord being their shepherd. God cares for those that love him as well as those who rebel against him. God cares for those who are wealthy as well as those who are poor. God cares for those that are popular, but also those who are shy and loners. God wraps His arms around His lambs and carries them close to His heart. We all can find comfort in our Lord. Just as God cares for us, we are also to care for others, particularly those that are rejected by others, the misfits, the poor, the loners.

When we are discouraged, we can find comfort in the Lord because He pardons us. He forgives us no matter how big of a mistake we have made. We find comfort in God because he is a God of providence. He knows the future and we can find security in Him as well as in His Word, which will stand forever. God keeps His promises. Lastly, we find comfort in the Lord because He is a powerful and caring God, who can give us peace.