

Don't You Know? Haven't You Heard?

I want to share a word of encouragement this morning from Isaiah 40. Isaiah ministers in the Southern Kingdom of Judah during the reign of King Uzziah and King Hezekiah. During his time he sees the Assyrian Empire capture the Northern Kingdom of Israel and carry the people off into exile. While the Assyrians never captured Judah, Isaiah begins to warn the people of judgment that would come from another nation, Babylon. Isaiah is dead when that happens, but eventually Jerusalem is destroyed by Babylon and the people are carried off into exile. In Isaiah 39, the prophet tells King Hezekiah. **“Hear the word of the Lord Almighty: ‘The time will surely come when everything in your palace and all that your fathers have stored up until this day, will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left...and some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood who will be born to you will be taken away and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.’”** Isaiah 39:5-7

An alarming prophetic word of judgement. God's justice requires judgement of sin. The sins of the people would bring tragic, bitter consequences. It happened just as the prophet said. But God is not only a God of justice, He is a God of mercy. The next chapter opens with the prophet declaring, **“‘Comfort, comfort my people’ says your God.”** Isaiah is looking ahead. There is maybe 150 years between what he says will happen in chapter 39 and what happens in chapter 40, but he is certain of God's mercy. After they bear the consequences and after they repent of their sins and return to the Lord, God will return them from exile and back to their land. Another Exodus. But how? It's as if the prophet anticipates the questions the people will have during their exile and he has answers. Fast forward 70 years or so.

The people have been exiled in Babylon for 70 years. They are wondering, “Has any people carried into exile ever returned? (NO!) Doesn't the fact our temple was looted and destroyed, the king's palace ransacked, the city in ruin, doesn't that mean the gods of Babylon are stronger than our God? After all, our God lost the battle didn't he?” The people in exile are wondering if their God, the God of Judah, is big enough, powerful enough, great enough to bring them back to their land and restore all that was lost. It had never happened before.

Isaiah says, “Don't you know? Haven't you heard? Maybe you haven't, maybe you've forgotten who your God is. Let me remind you.” **V3 “Make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God.”** Go ahead and build a highway for our God straight through the wilderness from Babylon to Judah, because he will be bringing you back from exile. If you think

obstacles in the path will stop him consider that, **V4 “Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain...”** He’s the God who can change the very landscape, who can raise up valleys and lower mountains and hills. Obstacles can’t stop him. Men and armies can’t stop him. Verse 6 says that to the God of Judah, **V6 “All men are like grass and all their glory is like the flowers of the field...the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever.”** Before God, men are like grass. He breathes on them and they wither and fall. Their words and decrees can’t stand, but the word of God stands forever, his promises will not fail. If he says he will bring you back to the land from exile, he will bring you back! You can count on it.

“He says he will, but can he deliver us?” **V10 “See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power and his arm rules for him.”** “But is he truly greater than the gods of Babylon that enabled them to conquer us, or is he greater than the other nations of the earth?” In verse 9 Isaiah says, go up on a high mountain and shout with a loud voice to all the towns of Judah, “You’re worried about whether your God is able to deliver you? **“Here is your God!”**

Then Isaiah begins to describe the majesty of the God of Judah. **V12 “Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, or with the breadth 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?”** Isaiah makes sure they know about their God. “If you are worried about whether Babylon or the other nations might present a problem to you or to our God when he starts to bring you back from exile,” Isaiah says, **V15-17 “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...Before him all the nations are as nothing; they are regarded by him as worthless and less than nothing.”**

But what about the gods of Babylon and the gods of these other nations? How does the God of Judah compare? Isaiah says, **V18 “To whom then, will you compare God? What image will you compare him to? As for an idol, a craftsman casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold and fashions silver chains for it...He looks for a skilled craftsman to set up an idol that will not topple.”** You’re wondering how the God of Judah compares to other gods. You mean how does he compare to the idols? To the gods that some craftsman fashioned out of wood and covered with gold? How does Judah’s God compare to a god that someone has to set up, to make sure that god won’t topple over if someone bumps into it?

V21-25 “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...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...‘To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?’ says the Holy One.”

Don't you know who your God is? Haven't you heard? God is able to deliver you and return you from exile not because he's greater than other gods or bigger or more powerful than other gods, but because the God of Judah is the only God! He has no equal. He is incomparable. When he says he will bring you back from exile and establish you in the land, his word is settled, his promise is certain and it will happen.

What are you worried about today? What obstacle has you wondering if God is big enough, strong enough, faithful enough to bring you back? Are you worried your troubles are greater than God? I'm standing on that high mountain bringing you good news. I'm lifting up my voice with a shout as the prophet said, declaring “Here is your God!” He is the Sovereign Lord. He has all power and you have nothing to fear. Those mountains and obstacles in your path, he can move with one breath. He is going to bring you out and bring you back.

But there is another question they had. They were in Babylon, far from home. “Our God is powerful, but can he find us to bring us back? He is the God of Judah, but is he the God of far away places? We're exiled, lost, separated.” That may describe the way you feel. You've run, wandered, strayed, sinned, and now you feel like you are in exile somewhere, away from God, away from family, friends. Lost. Can God find you? Does he know you and does he know where you are? Once again, we hear him say, “Don't you know? Haven't you heard.”

V26-27 “Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing. Why do you say...and complain...‘My way is hidden from the Lord; my cause is disregarded by my God?’”

Isaiah says, “Look to the heavens. See all those stars? God created them and placed them exactly where he wanted them to be.” The prophet implies this is not by some random or even evolutionary process, but the stars are in place as a result of the personal exercise of God's sovereignty. He knows each one of them and calls them by name; not just the ones you can see in the night sky. He knows the trillions upon trillions of stars in galaxies hidden to you, beyond

you. He knows them all. He knows their exact location. Not one of them is missing. Can you even begin to comprehend the magnitude of that? It's why I wanted you to see this image.

As you know, I'm not exactly a science guy. But here's what the National Geographic website told me. This is the milky way. It's our galaxy and they estimate in our galaxy alone there are somewhere between 100 to 400 billion stars and Wikipedia says it includes at least that many planets. "Galaxies are sprawling systems of dust, gas, dark matter and anywhere from a million to a trillion stars that are held together by gravity....one 2016 study estimated that the observable universe contains two trillion or two million million galaxies." Two trillion galaxies with each galaxy having possibly a trillion stars in each galaxy. It's more than my mind can begin to comprehend, but...God brings them all out, one by one, by his design, sets them into space, and knows each one of them by name. (How creative is God that he can come up with that many names? I can't even come up with new passwords for things.)

Now, what was it you were saying about whether God would be able to find you and bring you back out of exile? Why do you complain and say, "My way is hidden from the Lord and my cause is disregarded by my God?" Are you kidding? Seriously? He knows the names of trillions of stars in trillions of galaxies and you're wondering if he knows you and your situation? Not one star is missing. Trust me, you aren't lost to him, you aren't hidden from him, not even in your self-imposed exile. He hasn't disregarded you or your cause, your circumstances.

Remember Isaiah said he is the Sovereign Lord and that he sits enthroned above the circle of the earth. It's not just that he knows the stars by name. He is not only above all the stars, the New Testament writer says "**He is before all things and in him all things hold together.**" **Colossians 1:15-17** He is holding it all together, sustaining all things by his will, his might and power, his purpose. Don't you know? Haven't you heard? If God can uphold the stars, if he can hold all things together in this universe, if he is God alone and greater than all and creator of all, then he can handle whatever you are facing! He holds the stars in place so he can hold you up, he can hold your world together when it looks like it's falling apart. Don't panic. Don't give in to despair. God's got this. Look to Him!

The prophet says it again. **V28 "Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary and young men stumble and fall;**

but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”

What he does for the universe, that’s one thing. But verse 11 says, **V11 “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.”** He knows the stars by name, but he not only knows our name, He holds us close to his heart. He never grows tired or weary and he imparts strength and power to us when we’re weak. To those who hope in the Lord, who wait upon and look to him, he gives the help we need so we can soar like eagles when we need to rise above the storm. If we look to him and trust him, he’ll enable us to run and keep on running, with new strength and energy, a renewed purpose. If we rely on him, he’ll help us walk and not faint.

I don’t know what you are facing, but I know who is facing it with you if you look to Jesus. If you’re wondering whether he is able to handle your problems, is he powerful enough to bring you back from sin, from sickness, from brokenness, from addiction, remember what Isaiah tells these exiles. Don’t you know? Haven’t you heard? Get ready, prepare the way for the Lord because he is coming. He is God and there is no other like him. He’s going to bring you back (v5) “and the glory of the Lord will be revealed for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

If you’re thinking you’ve wandered beyond his reach, beyond his mercy and grace; if you think your way is hidden to him or he has disregarded you, remember he knows the names of the stars, he placed them in the sky and he has not forgotten one of them. Not one of them is missing. He knows where you are and he calls you by name.

If you are facing a challenge bigger than you can handle, remember you’ve got a God that’s bigger and greater than that. If you feel abandoned and forgotten, remember you’ve got a God that knows exactly who you are, where you are and what you are facing. Don’t you know? Haven’t you heard? He can and will bring you back. He can and will deliver you from exile, from trouble, from addiction and brokenness and bondage. He knows where you are and where your loved one is that may be lost or exiled from you. “The Lord your God is the Everlasting God. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak!” Don’t you know, haven’t you heard? You can trust the Lord. Call on him now!