**This Is My Father’s World**

**Isaiah 40**

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Dr Ritch Boerckel

What a challenge these days are! They’re filled with uncertainty. They’re filled with hardship. We’re going through something that hasn’t happened in any of our lives. And yet, we believe. We believe in God the Father. We believe in God the Son. We believe in the Holy Spirit. We believe that these three are one. We believe in the saint’s communion. It’s on the basis of doctrine that we have a stable ground under our feet. Everything else seems to be shifting and shaking, but God Himself does not. His Church continues and moves forward as God intends. Community is so important in all seasons, but I think particularly, it’s really important for all of us to make even a greater effort to say, “How can I experience life and God together in community with other brothers and sisters in Jesus?” So let’s pray toward that end.

Today, at the beginning of this time, I’m going to ask if you’d open up your Bible’s to Isaiah chapter 40. This is a chapter we read on Wednesday night. I’ll read it again. I’m going to read verse 1 and then skip down to verse 11 and read the rest of the chapter.

***1*** *Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.*

***11*** *He will tend his 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.* ***12*** *Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance?* ***13*** *Who has measured the Spirit of the LORD, or what man shows him his counsel?* ***14*** *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?*

***15*** *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.* ***16*** *Lebanon would not suffice for fuel, nor are its beasts enough for a burnt offering.* ***17*** *All the nations are as nothing before him, they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness.*

***18*** *To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him?* ***19*** *An idol! A craftsman casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold and casts for it silver chains.* ***20*** *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.*

***21*** *Do you not know? Do you not hear? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?* ***22*** *It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretched out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in;* ***23*** *who brings princes to nothing, and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness.* ***24*** *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.*

***25*** *To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One.* ***26*** *Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name; by the greatness of his might and because he is strong in power, not one is missing.*

***27*** *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”?* ***28*** *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.* ***29*** *He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength.* ***30*** *Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted;* ***31*** *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.*

We are surprised by so many things. I know I didn’t anticipate this. I didn’t anticipate, at

least, the measure with which this has taken in our community. Nothing surprises God.

We’re surprised by so many things in this world. Nothing ever surprises God. We are in

control of so little in our lives. God is in control of everything. Nothing happens that

doesn’t first pass through our God’s loving hands. God is ultimate! We think that there

are powerful forces in this world. We think of nations. We think of diseases. We think of

the dollar. We think of science and of medical breakthroughs. All of these things are very

powerful to us, but none of these are ultimate. Only God is ultimate!

As we walk through these times which many are calling “unprecedented”…And I think

that’s a great word; unprecedented. It’s a season such as we’ve not experienced. And in

some ways, everything is very different from the way it was just a couple weeks ago.

And yet, at the same time, everything is the same. Everything is different in relationship

to some circumstances, but everything is the same because the One who is walking with

us through these circumstances is exactly the same. We have the same Shepherd today

that we had two weeks ago, two years ago, two centuries ago. From the beginning of

time, this Shepherd who is our God has walked with His people. And He will do so all

the way to the end of human history.

Corrie ten Boom was a woman who knew trouble. She was a woman who knew uncertainty. She was a woman who knew what it was like to have a fearsome foe. She was in a concentration camp in Nazi Germany. And her family suffered. Most of her family perished there. But here’s what Corrie ten Boom said. “Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God.” Again, the hard part is we don’t know. We wish we could know, but we don’t know what the future holds. But as Corrie ten Boom would say, “Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God.” We know Him. And we know God because in His grace and His goodness, He revealed Himself to us.

Isaiah 40 is this great spotlight that puts a light upon God’s perfection. It highlights His greatness and His goodness. It’s the light of Scripture through the Holy Spirit as He opens up Scripture to us, as He illumines the words that God has given. It’s a living and an active Word. It’s the light of Scripture that helps us to see. To see what? To see God Himself. We see God in all of His majesty, God in His holiness. And what a precious gift God’s Word is for us. When we see God and we see Him through the Holy Spirit from the pages of His holy Word, everything else that seemed to be so prominent and take front and center of our vision, of our focus, begins to fade. When we put our circumstances in front of us, God begins to fade into the background. And Isaiah 40 is so helpful to bring God Himself straight up into our vision so that we see Him. He is a God whom we can know. And this is a season in which it’s really, really important for us to fix our eyes on God. It’s always a season to fix our eyes on Jesus, but this season makes it especially vital. So let’s be a praying people and pray, “God, give me eyes to see and ears to hear.”

One of my favorite commentators is Warren Wiersbe, and one comment he made was “When you look at others, you’ll be distressed. When you look at yourself, you’ll be depressed. But you look to God and you’ll be blessed.” I like that! We can be distressed by looking around us. We can be depressed by looking inside. But we’ll be amazingly blessed when we look up and see God.

When I was in high school, I remember our church would sing a hymn, *This Is My Father’s World*. It gave me such comfort back then as a young man, as I looked into the future and didn’t know what was going to happen and I looked even at the present day back then and saw a lot going wrong. A lot of those circumstances and thoughts caused me to say, “God, are you really in control? Are you really active in this broken world?” And this hymn brought comfort by bringing me back to the Bible’s answers to these questions. Yes, God absolutely is active. He is absolutely in control. In the song, *This Is* *My Father’s World*, my favorite verse is this:

This is my Father’s world;

Oh, let me ne’er forget

That though the wrong seems oft so strong,

God is the ruler yet.

This is my Father’s world,

The battle is not done:

Jesus who died shall be satisfied,

And earth and Heav’n be one.

That’s our future. Jesus is satisfied by receiving the glory that is due Him. That’s where God is taking us. That’s where all of human history is moving, toward that one last great amazing event when all will see Him for the glorious Savior that He is. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess.

Let’s look at Isaiah 40. Isaiah turns a spotlight upon God’s person because the people to whom he is writing were in a world of hurt. They have been exiled from their homes to an empire called Babylon. Their cities had been decimated. Their rulers had been assassinated. Their families had been broken apart. Now they’re living in an area that doesn’t speak their language, doesn’t allow their religion. And they’re just wondering, what future is there for us as a people? God, where are you? Isaiah brings a message to this people that is filled with hope and filled with encouragement to strengthen this people who were very much afraid and very much despairing. And so we begin with verse 1. And the message that God has for this people is, “I have not abandoned you. I set My love upon you and I will never take My love off of you. I know the circumstances look dark and dismal, but I am with you. I will provide for you a future; a future filled with joy, a future filled with hope. I am your God.” And so verse 1 begins this way.

***1*** *Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.*

This people had sinned against God. They had committed gross acts of disobedience. They had bowed down to idols. They were filled with unbelief. And for this reason, God allowed Babylon to be His disciplining hand. And that’s why they are in Babylon at this moment. But now, after a time of discipline, God gives this word of tenderness.

***1*** *Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.*

It would have been easy for them just to say, “Maybe all this is our fault. We brought this all upon ourselves. We turned away from God. We committed idolatry. Maybe God has abandoned us. He’d be right to if He did.” And God speaks with a voice of tenderness.

***2*** *Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended,*

And then in verse 3,

***3*** *A voice cries: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD;*

God is so good to speak to a people who don’t deserve to hear His voice. And what a gift God’s voice is! When God speaks, He speaks truth to us. He speaks correction to us. He speaks hope. He speaks grace into our lives. That’s the gospel. And what is God saying when He does speak? He says, “The King is coming. The Lord is going to arrive. And this King is going to establish Himself upon the throne.” And then look at verse 5.

***5*** *And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”*

It’s a day of victory! You can imagine if you were an Israelite living in Babylon that you’d think, “I don’t think there are any more days of victory. I don’t think there are any more days of blessing for us. We’re through as a people.” God is speaking and He is saying, “No, you’re not through. It may look like that right now, but you’re not through. The glory of the LORD shall be revealed.”

As we look at our world, we see a world that is broken, a world that is often in chaos. And this disease itself that we’re dealing with seems very chaotic. It seems very unpredictable. It seems very difficult to contain. This world often reminds me of a jigsaw puzzle. When all the pieces are in the box and you open that lid, if you didn’t have a picture thinking that when they put the pieces together it was going to look like something, you’d think this just looks like it’s a mess. Isaiah 40 is the picture that God is laying out. Yes, the pieces aren’t all together. God says, “That’s going to come when the King comes. But believe me. I have a design for every piece that is happening in this world. It might seem like it’s chaos, but it’s not. I am in control.”

Well, the Israelites are going to ask a whole bunch of questions of God and God is going answer all of these questions. The first question that I think the Israelites are asking is

**Question #1: God, do you still love us?**

“We are a sinful people. We have failed you. Do you still love us?” And I love verses 10 and 11.

***10*** *Behold, the LORD God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; behold his reward is with him,*

That’s the first little indication that he’s saying, “I’m bringing you, My people, a reward. I know you don’t deserve it. This is a reward of grace.” And then he goes on in verse 11.

***11*** *He will tend his 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.*

God is going to care for His people, each one like an individual lamb inside a flock that He cares over. He will gather the lambs in His arms. Those who are too weak to walk, He is going to gather them in His arms. He will carry them in His bosom and He will gently lead those who are young. This vision of God bringing comfort through His love is most clearly manifested in the New Testament.

**John 3:16** “For God so loved the world, that He gave His Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

What a God of love! While we deserved for God to turn His back on us,

**Romans 5:8** but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Christ died in our place. He died for us!

Have you ever asked the question: Does God really still love me? I’ve messed up so much. Does God love me? Isaiah 40 reminds us. God says surely, “Yes, I do. I’ll gather you in My arms like a lamb and I’ll carry you in My bosom. I’ll gently lead you.”

**Question #2:** Is God really strong?

The Babylonians seem like almost an unconquerable force. They couldn’t keep the Babylonians from destroying their land and bringing them into exile. Really, God, are you in control? That’s the second question. Are you really strong enough to be in control? Look at verse 12.

***12*** *Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance?*

I love this picture! God is pointing us to look at His created universe and He says, “I created that out of nothing.”

***12*** *Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand*

Have you ever taken some water in your hand, maybe under the faucet as we’re learning to wash their hands more? It’s not much water that our tiny hands can hold. But God is saying, “All the water in all of creation can be held in the hollow of My hand.” It’s not even two hands. It’s just one hand. How big is that hand to put all the oceans, all the seas, all the rivers, every drop of water in the hollow of his hand! He says, “That’s how big I am. My power is absolutely unlimited. There’s nothing outside of my power.” He says, “Look at the water. Look at the stars of the sky. I measured the stars with my hand. Look at the earth. I’ve put the dust of the earth and all of the material of the earth in a scale to measure it.”

You know, we often think in terms of easy or hard. We think, “This is easy; that is hard.” God doesn’t have those terms. He’s so powerful. Everything is easy! The most difficult thing for God, the thing that cost Him the most, anyway, is to forgive sins. That cost Him the life of His very Son. But nothing is too hard. I love Jeremiah 32:17.

**Jeremiah 32:17** Ah, Lord GOD! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you.

If God did that, out of nothing He spoke and the worlds came into being, if He created that by His power, everything that is, then nothing is too hard for Him. Let’s know that God really is infinite in power and that He is in control of everything. Nothing passes to us that hasn’t first passed through His loving hand.

**Question #3:** Is He really wise? Does God know what He is doing?

***13*** *Who has measured the Spirit of the LORD, or what man shows him his counsel?*

In other words, who could possibly give God advice?

***14*** *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?*

One of the interesting parts of the story behind what we’re experiencing is the science behind disease, the science behind cures. I encourage you to pray for those scientists. They’re working hard and they’re brilliant people. They’re far, far more brilliant than I could possibly imagine being. God created science. Does God really understand as much as these scientists? He created the science. The best of scientists are just discovering just a small infinitesimal part of this world. And even yet, that is true. They’re hustling to find a cure or a vaccine for this virus. And I think it’s right for us to pray that God would favor them with understanding and with knowledge. But that understanding comes from God. All understanding, all knowledge comes from God. So we ask, “God, do You really know what You’re doing, here?” And the answer is always yes, yes, a thousand times, yes! God’s workings may not seem wise to us at the moment, but that’s because we don’t have all the information.

**Question #4:** Does God let other forces take the wheel?

Does God let other forces take control and be the driving element leading where human events go? Again, you can understand why the Israelites in Babylon might be asking that. Maybe God just said, “Okay, I’m going to sit back and let Babylon take control or I’ll let Babylon’s gods take over. I’ll let them do what they will.” Because it seems like that is what’s happening from the standpoint of their eyesight. It just seems like this is happening according to this nation, this powerful nation, or these gods that they’re worshiping.

***15*** *Behold,*

I like that word! God is saying, “Look! Open your eyes. I’m going to show you My glory, My greatness.”

***15*** *Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket,*

When you were little, did you ever carry a bucket of water maybe to help your dad or mom wash the car? As you carried that bucket and some spilled out, did you cry over the water that spilled out? No. It was like nothing. You have a whole bucket. You don’t need those couple drops of water. That’s what he says the nations are like. They’re insignificant in comparison to God’s power. The nations are like that. And they

*and are accounted as the dust on the scales;*

Again, Babylon, I’m sure to the Israelites, seemed like it had control of everything. And yet, what God is saying is it has control of nothing.

*behold, he takes up the coastlands like fine dust.* ***16*** *Lebanon would not suffice for fuel, nor are its beasts enough for a burnt offering.* ***17*** *All the nations are as nothing before him, they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness.*

God says not only is this nation not in control, but don’t think the gods that seem to be receiving so much glory and so much praise, because the Babylonians are praising their gods for how great their gods are over the gods of everyone else. The Israelites are hearing that over and over and over and they’re wondering “Where is God? Maybe these gods are in control because it seems like these other gods are winning.”

***18*** *To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him?* ***19*** *An idol!*

Think about an idol for a moment. It’s a person that casts it.

*A craftsman casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold and casts for it silver chains.* ***20*** *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.*

And then they have to try to really work so that the idol doesn’t totter. He’s showing the ridiculous nature of thinking any other god has any glory to it whatsoever. There are no other gods, yet, they’re so-called gods.

Anything that we trust to bring out a specific outcome or blessing instead of God becomes an idol. Now, we might not set up physical idols, at least not very many in our culture do that. Some do, but not many. But we still have them. We think, “Well maybe if I have enough money, then I’ll have a blessed life and I’ll be ready for the rest of my life and into retirement. Maybe if I have a strong physical body and I eat right and work out and just take care of myself, then I can trust that I’ll have a good life and live a long time. Maybe medical science. The doctors, they know so much today. Maybe they’ll always be able to help me.” Well, with circumstances like we’re going through, we see all of these idols totter don’t we? If you’ve had money saved up for retirement, you’re seeing that idol totter. If you’ve been trusting in your own physical health, you can easily begin to say, “That can be gone just like that. I have to isolate myself to my house now just to keep that from happening.” If you’re trusting in medical science, they don’t know the cure. All those things are gifts that God uses. He uses material wealth. He uses physical strength and health. He uses medical science, but they’re not to be trusted. They’re not in control. God alone is in control.

**Question #5:** Is God always present or is He sometimes absent?

This is the last question they’re asking.

***27*** *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”?*

In other words, they say, “Okay. We accept that He is powerful. We accept that He is loving. We accept that He is in control. And we accept that there are no other gods or nothing else that He cedes over His sovereignty to. But is He really present, or is He sometimes absent? Where is God?” And they’re saying, “My way seems hidden from the LORD. It seems as though God has just left and I’m not being regarded anymore.” Then he goes on to say,

***28*** *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 never gets tired of caring for His own people.

Well what is the application? It’s all driven towards these last couple verses in Isaiah 40. And here’s the application. Here’s where we park. It’s important to gather all that great truth and ideas about God in and just allow our hearts and our minds to just park there. It’s important to behold and see, not just to think about it, but to see that that’s who God is. And here’s the application.

***29*** *He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength.* ***30*** *Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted;* ***31*** *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.*

The application is, since this is our Father’s world…He’s our Father. He cares for us. He loves us and He’s never absent from His people. Since He’s all powerful, and He’s all-wise, since this is our Father’s world, let’s wait on Him. He’s doing something, and He’s doing something amazing! Let’s wait on Him. And when we wait on Him then the Lord will renew our strength.

What it means to be renewed in our strength I believe is to be renewed in hope. It is to be separated from fear and despair that otherwise would capture our hearts. It’s to be infused with hope. Hope is this eager anticipation of a joyful future. I’m really excited about something happening in the future that God is going to do. Think of these Israelites. They’re still in exile, but God promises them a future. They haven’t experienced it yet. They’re to wait on the Lord until the Lord does it. They know for certain it’s going to happen because the Lord Himself has promised it. But they’ve not received it yet. They’re still in troubled times. But he says, “Hope in this.” In other words, park your heart on this future promise, this future day. Because what happens when we think about the future day, the future blessing that God promises to us, we can enjoy some of it now, even before it happens.

Not long ago, my grandson, Malakai, came to visit. Before he came to visit, I was super excited because I knew some things that he would like to enjoy. He loves these toys and he loves Spiderman in particular. So Kimberly and I bought him about six different little presents and we wrapped them up. And when he came here we said, “Malakai, we’re going to celebrate your birthday every day. We’re going to open one present a day.” And you know something? As I thought about what Malakai’s face was going to be like when he opened the presents, I enjoyed that future moment before it happened. I just got tickled wrapping. I got tickled buying because I could anticipate that when he unwrapped it, he was going to have such joy and that would give joy to my heart. That’s hope. We look forward to this future day and we look at it and we think about it and we imagine it so thoroughly, so clearly. But we’re taking some of that and enjoying it right now. God says in order to have that hope, we have to wait on the Lord.

By the way, despair is just the opposite. Despair is fearfully anticipating a dark future. And when we fearfully anticipate a dark future, what happens is we take the dark future that we imagine, and we are actually tasting some of that sour foul taste now, even before that happens. That’s despair. That’s the difference between hope and despair. It’s what our vision is. And because we have God, and because we have His promises, our vision can always be set on this joyful blessing.

What does it mean to wait on the Lord? Well, we wait on the Lord by considering who He is. That’s what Isaiah 40 says. It’s opening up His Word and saying, “I’m just going to let my mind roll over His goodness and His greatness.” We wait on the Lord as we think of His promise and of His future glory and say, “I want God to be honored. I want Him to be esteemed.” We wait on the Lord believing that God is going to strengthen us in the present. That’s who He is. That’s what He is promising this people. That’s what He is promising us as well. We wait on the Lord with hope, thinking about that future blessing that God has absolutely guaranteed for everyone who is in Him. That’s what it means to wait on the Lord. It’s not a passive word. It’s rather active.

It’s interesting, in the Scriptures, there are a couple word pictures. The first word picture is of a hired hand who waits for his wages. That’s the idea. He is waiting and looking forward to this. He’s patiently waiting. He’s saying, “I know it’s going to come. It’s guaranteed to me and I’m looking forward to it.” That’s what it means to wait on the Lord.

Practically, what steps might you take in order to wait on the Lord? The first step is to be part of God’s family. If you don’t know Jesus Christ as your Savior, call out to Him. You can’t wait on the Lord that you don’t know. And so call out upon Christ Jesus and say, “God, I need Jesus to rescue me from my sin. He died upon the cross for me. I need Him. And now, as a child of God, I want to wait on you.”

It’s simple. One of these things of waiting, we wait with an open Bible saying, “God show me wonderful things about Yourself.” We wait on the Lord as we listen to Him in His Word and by speaking to Him, calling out to Him in prayer. We say, “God, I’m going to tell you all my sorrows and I’m going to trust you. I’m going to cast my burdens upon you because I know you care for me.” We wait on the Lord then by sharing with other people the good news of the Gospel. And we wait on the Lord by longing for His return. That’s the ultimate promise. One day, Jesus Christ is going to return to this earth and He’s going to sit upon the throne. He’s going to establish a glorious kingdom. We’re going to be a part of that. That is a guaranteed future. So that’s what it simply means to wait on the Lord. And the promise is that when we wait on the Lord, the Lord Himself will renew our strength. What a great promise!