

Isaiah 40 - Behold Your God

by Mariano Di Gangi

The sermon encourages listeners to behold God as a Sovereign Lord who comes with power and as a Shepherd who tends His flock and feeds His sheep, and to trust in His power, tenderness, and justice.

Duration: 19:13

Scripture: Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah 9:6, Isaiah 40:3-11

Topics: "God"

Description

In this sermon, the emphasis is on the message of God rather than the messengers. The preacher highlights the description of God as a sovereign, coming with power and ruling with his arm. The Prophet urges the people to behold their God and not be afraid, as he tends to his flock like a shepherd, gathering the lambs in his arms and leading them gently. The sermon emphasizes the importance of feeding our minds with the word of God and not being influenced by the negative influences of the world.

Transcript

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. A voice of one calling, in the desert prepare the way for the Lord.

Make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low. The rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain.

And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken. A voice says, cry out. And I said, what shall I cry? All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field.

The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the Lord blows on them. Surely the people are grass. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever.

You who bring good tidings to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout. Lift it up and do not be afraid.

Say to the towns of Judah, here is your God. See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power, and his arm rules for him. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.

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.

Here is your God, or as the King James Version put it, behold your God. It is the purpose of the prophet to pinpoint God as the center of our attention and devotion. The focus of our faith is to concentrate on Jesus Christ, and the Scripture says, look at him, behold in him your God, made visible and tangible on this planet.

The emphasis is not on the messengers, but on the message that they bring. The emphasis is not on him who points, but on the one to whom the preacher points. Behold your God.

Here is your God. Fix your faith with holy fascination only and always on him. How does the prophet describe this God? How does he portray him to our watching, wondering eyes? He compares him to a sovereign.

See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power and his arm rules for him. See, his reward is with him and his recompense accompanies him. What is God like? He is like a sovereign.

He is Lord. He comes with power. We behold God made flesh in the image of a little child cradled in a manger, helpless, vulnerable, exposed to the world.

But the time will come when he will be tested and he will triumph. He comes and he comes with power. The evil one will engage him in the wilderness and tempt him and seek to dissuade him from doing the will of God.

But he will resist the tempter and he will put Satan to flight and he will defeat the devil, serving only the Lord God and refusing to bend or bow or break before the power of the enemy. In his time of testing and his hour of temptation, he proves strong and he defeats the enemy by remaining true to the will of his Heavenly Father. He comes with power.

The time will come when he will be betrayed, mocked, treated with savagery, whipped and nailed to a cross, and he will die. But the third day he will rise again from the dead and he will bring life and immortality to light. The Sovereign Lord comes and he comes with power, defeating Satan and defeating death by resisting temptation and triumphing over the last enemy in the glory and the wonder and the splendor of his resurrection.

He is a sovereign who comes with power and his arm rules for him. We sometimes sing of gentle Jesus, meek and mild, and he certainly shows those characteristics. But that is only a partial and incomplete view of Jesus Christ.

We also have to see him as the Sovereign Lord who comes with power and whose arm rules for him. For he is not only the wonderful Counselor, but the mighty God, and the government shall be upon his shoulder. All power in heaven and on earth is given to him.

He is King of kings and Lord of lords. His arm rules for him and we are to be subject to his will. We are to be yielded to his sovereignty.

We are to be obedient to his commands. He rules and his arm rules for him. And when he comes he brings reward and recompense.

When he comes he will reward those who have believed in him and obeyed him, and he will visit retribution on those who have been disobedient, unbelieving, and impenitent to the last. In other words, he will not merely rule with power, but his power will be wedded to justice with recompense and reward and retribution. He cannot be bribed.

He cannot be intimidated. He will judge according to truth, both in dispensing rewards for faithfulness and retribution for the faithlessness of men and women. Behold your God.

He is like a sovereign who comes with power, who rules in righteousness, and who dispenses justice. But he's not only compared to a sovereign. He is likened to a shepherd.

Behold your God. This is the character of the one who comes. He tends his flock like a shepherd.

He gathers the lambs in his arms. He carries them close to his heart, and he gently leads those that have young. He tends his flock.

He feeds his flock. He is a shepherd who cares, and he would nurture us in green pastures and beside still waters. The tragedy in our time is that there is too little for the mind to feed on apart from the green pastures of the Word of God and the quiet waters to which he would lead us.

And far too many people grovel on the garbage heaps of this world and would feed their immortal soul on that which is diseased, debilitating, and deadly. On what do you and I feed our minds? The spiritual anemia with which many people are afflicted this day, the spiritual diseases with which so many are infected this day, stem from the fact that they do not let the Good Shepherd lead them in green pastures. They do not feed their souls upon the Word of God.

They do not thrive on communion with the Lord, but live the kind of life that imbibes and digests what the world provides with all of its deception, with all of its greed, with all of its envy, with all of its anger, with all of its lust. We need to let the shepherd tend his flock and feed us with that which will nurture our souls, bring us spiritual health unto life everlasting. He tends his flock, he feeds his sheep, and he gathers the lambs in his arms.

Later on in the book of the prophet Isaiah there will be a description of the human predicament which is so simple to state and so complex to unravel. All we like sheep have gone astray and we have turned everyone to his own way. The absolute self-centeredness, the absolute egotism of men and women who are only concerned for what they want and are absolutely inconsiderate as to what others need.

Egotism, self-centeredness, each going his own way. But the Lord seeks that which has gone astray and he gathers them up and he carries them close to his heart. He gathers the lambs in his arms, he gathers in what has gone astray, he reunites what is fragmented, he creates a sense of community among those who thought only egotistically.

Where Christ is at the center, there will be a gathering and assembling together of those who had gone astray, a oneness of heart and mind on the things that matter most. Our fragmented situation can become a unity in fellowship. When we let this shepherd gather the lambs that had gone astray into his arms, we must be clustered around Christ and note that he carries them close to his heart.

What other religion of all the religions on the face of the earth have a God who reaches out to frail creatures of dust, reaches out to people as sinful as you and me, and is willing to carry us close to his

heart? Only the God of the Gospel, only the God of the Bible reaches out and carries us close to his heart. This is a figure of speech, this is a concept which occurs over and over again in the Bible and in the Old Testament which is supposed to be the vengeful portrayal of a God of justice. For in the Old Testament we read that God is like a man who carries his young son on a desert journey.

In the Old Testament we read of God like a nurse carrying an infant close to her heart, giving it warmth and security. It is in the Old Testament that we read of God like a strong eagle with mighty wings and on those wings bearing up its young. Behold your God, see his tenderness and his concern and his availability to provide for our basic spiritual needs.

And he gently leads those that have young. The Hebrew term behind this phrase of gently leading is a fascinating one. It's the picture of a stream and of the sun and the surface of the stream suddenly catches a glimmer of the glory of the sun and that sparkling of the sun is led gently by the water as it goes its way.

That is the way that God leads those that have young, not driving but gently leading like the stream that on its surface carries the sparkle of reflected sunlight. That's the kind of God we have and it's the purpose of the Christian pulpit, supported and sustained by the Ministry of Christian Music, to say to you and me week after week as we worship, behold your God. And isn't that a theme that runs right through Scripture with reference to Jesus Christ? Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and you shall call his name Emmanuel, God with us.

Behold him, conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. Behold your God who comes as a strong sovereign and as a tender, gracious, gentle shepherd. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion.

Behold, thy King cometh unto thee. He is a righteous Savior and he will speak peace to pagans in their warring madness. In Lamentations we read, behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow.

And this is inexplicable, this is mysterious. How can it be that one who opens the eyes of the blind and feeds the hunger of the poor and makes the lame to walk and the dead to rise should have his heart broken and have an incomparable sorrow visited upon him? The darkness is dispelled by a ray of light that gives us a clue in the saying of John the Baptist, behold the Lamb of God who bears away the sin of the world. Do you wonder how one so good and kind could suffer so grievously and unjustly? It is not for any crimes that he had done but taking upon himself the sum total of all our misdeeds.

He is willing to bear in his own body the penalty of our sins on the tree. You see on the snows of Christmas there is the blood of the Lamb of God. Behold the Lamb of God.

So scripture constantly insistently calls on us to look on him. Behold your God. Come and behold him born the king of angels.

Oh come let us adore him. Oh come let us adore him. Let us pray.

Lord forbid that we should be distracted by the tinsel and the trapping of a commercialized season and that our eyes should move from Jesus Christ, the God who was willing to become man and to bear the punishment of our sins that we through faith in him might receive the inestimable gift of the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting. Increase our faith and grant that it may ever be focused on Jesus only. In his name we pray, amen.

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