

# The Living God of Renewal

Thomas Robinson, *God of Life & Light for the World*, 1. September 23, 2018

## Isaiah 40 (ESV Adapted)

### God Calls for a New Beginning for His People

<sup>1</sup> "Comfort, comfort my people!" says your God.

<sup>2</sup> "Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her  
that her compulsory struggle is ended,  
that her iniquity is pardoned,  
that she has received from Yahweh's hand  
double for all her sins."

### The Call to Prepare for God to Come in Glory

<sup>3</sup> A voice cries:

"In the wilderness prepare the way of Yahweh;  
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

<sup>4</sup> Every valley shall be lifted up,  
and every mountain and hill be made low;  
the uneven ground shall become level,  
and the rough places a plain.

<sup>5</sup> And the glory of Yahweh shall be revealed,  
and all flesh shall see it together,  
for the mouth of Yahweh has spoken."

### Calling the Prophet to Speak to Weak Humans

<sup>6</sup> A voice says, "Cry!"

And I said, "What shall I cry?"

All flesh is grass, and all its beauty  
is like the flower of the field.

<sup>7</sup> The grass withers, the flower fades  
when the breath of Yahweh blows on it.  
Surely the people are grass.

<sup>8</sup> The grass withers, the flower fades,  
but the word of our God will stand forever.

### Good News: God Comes with Power & Tenderness

<sup>9</sup> Go on up to a high mountain,  
herald of good news to Zion  
lift up your voice with strength,  
herald of good news to Jerusalem.  
Lift it up, don't be afraid.

Say to the cities of Judah,  
"Look, Here is your God!"

<sup>10</sup> Look, my Lord Yahweh comes with might,  
and his arm rules for him;  
behold, his reward is with him,  
and his recompense before him.

<sup>11</sup> 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's Incomparable Greatness Shapes Such Action

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

<sup>13</sup> Who has comprehended the Spirit of Yahweh,  
or who has instructed him as counselor?

<sup>14</sup> With whom did he consult,  
and who helped him understand?  
Who taught him the path of justice,  
and taught him knowledge,  
and showed him the way of understanding?

### God is Beyond All Human Forms of Power & Resource

<sup>15</sup> Look, the nations are like a drop from a bucket,  
and are accounted as the dust on the scales.  
Look, he takes up the coastlands like fine dust.

<sup>16</sup> Lebanon would not suffice for fuel,  
nor are its beasts enough for a burnt offering.

<sup>17</sup> All the nations are as nothing before him,  
they are accounted by him as less than nothing  
and emptiness.

### Anything Humans Make as a God Distorts Reality

<sup>18</sup> To whom then will you liken God,  
or what likeness compare with him?

<sup>19</sup> A human-shaped image? A craftsman casts it,  
and a goldsmith overlays it with gold  
and casts for it silver chains.

<sup>20</sup> Whoever makes an offering  
chooses wood that will not rot;  
he seeks out a skillful craftsman  
to set up a human-shaped image that will not move.

### God's Greatness spans all of Creation and all People

<sup>21</sup> 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?

<sup>22</sup> It is he who sits above the circle of the earth,  
and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers;  
who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,  
and spreads them like a tent to dwell in;

<sup>23</sup> who brings princes to nothing,  
and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness.

<sup>24</sup> 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.

### **God as Creator Intimately Knows all His Creation**

<sup>25</sup> To whom then will you compare me,  
that I should be like him? says the Holy One.

<sup>26</sup> 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.

<sup>27</sup> Why do you claim, Jacob, and say, Israel,  
“My way is hidden from Yahweh,  
and my right is disregarded by my God”?

### **Isaiah 6:8-10**

<sup>8</sup> And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here I am! Send me.”

<sup>9</sup> And he said, “Go, and say to this people: ““Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.”’

<sup>10</sup> Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.”.

### **Mark 4:11-12**

<sup>11</sup> And Jesus said to the disciples, “To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, <sup>12</sup> so that “they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven.”.

### **As Creator, God Gives Humans Power for Renewal**

<sup>28</sup> Have you not known? Have you not heard?

Yahweh is the ancient-future God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He does not faint or grow weary;  
his understanding is unsearchable.

<sup>29</sup> He gives strength to the faint,  
and to one without vigor he increases power.

<sup>30</sup> Even youths will faint and be weary,  
and the young will fall exhausted;

<sup>31</sup> but those who wait for Yahweh  
will renew their strength;  
they will mount up with wings like eagles;  
they will run and not be weary;  
they will walk and not faint.

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## **Isaiah, Prophet, Prophecy, Vision of God**

Isaiah is a big book! 66 chapters. Historical scope: Ch 1-39, c. 700 bc. Hezekiah, Assyria. Ch 40-55, c. 545 bc. exile, Persia. Ch 56-66, later, after some return. All one book. All the parts interact. Ch 40-55 are still Isaiah because the prophet actively interprets and continues message in new time. Becomes scripture for later generations. Ch 40-55 especially fertile for NT. Good News. God as creator, transcendent, involved, tender, seen through Servant songs/Arm. Isa continues to Live. Challenge of Isaiah. People see but don't (Is 6). Struggle to know such a God (Jesus, Mk 4 parables).

## **The Drama of What to Say – From Bad to Good News!**

God calls/commissions a prophet to express God's word good or bad. 40:1-11 renews 6:1-13 and sets a fundamental challenge. Israel so blind to God! Focus judgment toward exile. Now a new time (40:1-2). Voice: Get ready! Across the wilderness (John Bap. Qumran). Glory for all. But people are broken. God seems absent. Babylon destroys. God's Word acts. Lift it up. Tell it.

Good News (Gospel) for Prophet - Zion. Vv 9-11: God is here! Kingly power & tenderness (Jesus). God's Arm (power/servant). Still a challenge to see, hear (vv 21,28). Listen, Look! God acts.

## **Image and Reality**

We look at the world and think we know what we see. It revolves around us. Ancient/modern gods are forms of mighty humans, ancient images, modern structures. Empires of power, wealth, pleasure, control, identity. Human-shaped images. Who is the God we're trying to know?

Transcendent creator. Surprising purpose. Beyond structures. Into the ages. Lift up your eyes! We're not hidden even in disaster. The incomparable God reaches to us with renewing strength.