

GOD'S GLORY (Isaiah 40)

INTRO: My wife and I moved to Atlanta from the city of Louisville a little over 3 years ago. And we loved Louisville and one of the many things I loved about the city was the Kentucky Derby! It was truly one of the things that makes Louisville a glorious city.

- It all starts with **Thunder over Louisville** [IMAGE].
- **Pegasus Parade** marches through downtown Louisville [IMAGE]
- KY Derby takes place at the famous **Churchill Downs** [IMAGE]
- The **dress attire** for derby is also super fun, the **funkier the better!** [IMAGE]
- For ladies this calls for the **famous overly decorated Derby hat**. Hats at Derby range from **beautiful** [IMAGE] to the **not so beautiful** [IMAGE].
- Derby tradition calls for **Mint Juleps** [IMAGE], **Derby Pie** [IMAGE].
- Finally there's the **actual race**. The announcer shouts, "**And they're off!**" And there's the **Start** [IMAGE], and then the **Turn** [IMAGE], and the **final Stretch** [IMAGE] and then the **Finish!** [IMAGE]

The Kentucky Derby is one of the great glories of Louisville. **But today I want us to talk about something, really someone, that's far more glorious than derby and that's God and his Glory.** When we speak of the Glory of God, we're speaking of the weight and beauty of who God is. IOW, we are speaking of God's infinite worth, unmatched greatness, perfections and his beauty gone public for all to see! It's an attribute of God that sums up all that He is.

GOD'S GLORY IS PROMISED (vv. 1-11) Context is important...

This was one of the darkest moments in Israel's history. The glory days when David was King are now long gone. Godless leaders followed King David that led the people away from God. They put their hope and trust in other gods, or in alliances with other nations and they suffered greatly for it. The people of God were divided into 2 kingdoms, Israel and Judah.

The 1st 39 chapters. of Isaiah consist of a lot of warnings & the declaration of God's judgment on His people's sin. Trust in Him and Him alone. Serve Him. Worship Him. Yet the people of God didn't listen.

- The city of **Jerusalem has been crushed and Judah destroyed.** The people of God are now in **exile in Babylon.**
- They were dealing with the **guilt and shame of their rebellion and their sin.**
- They were dealing with great **fears as well - fears of being persecuted, killed, fears for their children.**

They were a lot like us. We all have turned from God to sin, we have guilt & shame we carry around.

- **Guilt** over things we've done or didn't do.
- We have fears as well. Fears about our **country**, fears about our **health**, fears about our **children**, fears about our **future**.
- Maybe your **fears go deeper**. Fear that **God is absent**. Fear that **God has had enough of you**.
- **Their condition and our condition are the same.**

What we see in Isaiah 40:1-2 is God spoke a surprising/shocking word to them - it is a word for us as well this morning!

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God [In the midst of their sin and rebellion]. 2 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.

God is speaking peace into their pain and turmoil. This is a prophecy, it had not happened yet - a future date. The day will come when your struggle will be over, when you will find peace and comfort.

ILL: Not wanting to identify with people...God still identifies with us!

APP: Even when we don't act like the people of God, he still identifies with us: "... my people ... your God."

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

And here is the promise.

3 A voice of one calling: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. 4 Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain.

ILL: ATLANTA - closed down 75/85 completely!!!! Because the presidential motorcade came rolling through. If you were around or saw it on TV, you knew something big was going down.

Any reader in the ancient world know that this is an announcement that royalty is coming.

When a King would visit a new part of his Kingdom, roads and highways would be built.

Isaiah tells us that a King greater than any King in history is coming.

- He doesn't **just stop traffic or shut businesses down**, he's **bringing mountains down**.
- He doesn't simply **build bridges over valleys**, instead the **valleys are vanishing before Him**.

Now remember, these are a rebellious people, they've rejected God as their King and turned from Him. And yet God declares, be comforted, for I am coming.

What will happen when the King of Kings comes?

5 And the **glory of the Lord will be revealed**, and **all people will see it together**. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

This would have been shocking and confusing to them! They knew no-one could see the glory of God and live!

In Exodus 33, Moses asks God, show him his glory. God tells Him that no one can see His glory and live.

18 Moses said, "Please show me your glory." 19 And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The Lord....' 20 But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live."

Now here we have God saying the only way to live and be comforted is to see the revealing of God's glory!
So what is he referring to that will bring life and comfort instead of death?

He is speaking about the future revealing of the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ who is the ultimate display of the glory of God.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... 14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. **We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son**, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. - John 1:1,14

3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory

Not just speaking of his coming but of his dying on a cross for the sins of his people! The display of God's glory is nowhere greater than at the cross of Christ! At the cross we see all the attributes of God radiantly displayed - **his love, mercy, grace, wisdom, power, wrath, justice, patience, his goodness and on and on it goes!**

So what we are seeing here in Isaiah 40:5 is the Gospel beautifully displayed!

A Rebellious people, a God-forsaking people, who have run after other gods to worship, who have run into the arms of sin, and yet God in his sheer grace and love for them promises not to punish them as they deserve but to comfort and bring them into his presence clean and forgiven by revealing his glory in the crucifixion of Jesus **"the Lord of glory"** (1 Corinthians 2:8).

Even when they deserved to see his glory and die, he promises to reveal his glory in Jesus death and resurrection so anyone who repents of their sins and trusts in Jesus will experience eternal life!

And they can be assured God will do this because his His word and his promises to reveal his glory stands forever!

6 A voice says, "Cry out." And I said, "What shall I cry?" "All people are like grass, and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field. 7 The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the Lord blows on them. Surely the people are grass. 8 The grass withers and the flowers fall, **but the word of our God endures forever.**"

Even though they don't last forever, they can be assured God will reveal his glory to comfort them because his word and his glory last forever!

Then God tells Isaiah go tell everyone about the glory of God that is to come!

9 You who bring good news to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good news to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, **"Behold your God!"**

And that is exactly what Isaiah does for the rest fo Chapter 40. He invites us to "Behold our God" through the eyes of God!

T/S:

GOD'S GLORY IS INCOMPARABLE

10 See, the **Sovereign Lord** comes with power, and **he rules** with a mighty arm. See, **his reward** is with him, and his **recompense** accompanies him.

Isaiah is making it clear that God is the Sovereign King of Kings, God rules all, and He judges all!

He is the terrifying Warrior of Revelation 19 who is coming again with **eyes of blazing fire, many crowns on his head, "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" tattooed down his leg and a sword in his hand, wearing a robe dipped in blood, riding on a white horse with the armies of heaven following him to slaughter evildoers until their blood runs through the streets like a river.**

God is Sovereign, rules over all and judges all, and yet at the same time He gently loves and carries His people close to His heart like a Shepherd!

11 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.

Behold your God! Who is the the Great Warrior and The Great Shepherd!

And we see the same thing in Jesus, the glory of God revealed!

- He made **water into wine for a wedding** and he made a **whip of judgment for his enemies**.
- He is **all-powerful**, yet He became the **servant of all**. Demonstrating **ultimate power**, and **ultimate love**.
- He is the **King of infinite majesty who is unceasingly worshipped by the angels**, But He is also the **servant of complete humility** who **rode a donkey** on his way to **die in shame on a cross**.
- He is the **Creator of all things** and yet He is also the **GOOD Shepherd** who **lays down His life for His sheep**.
- The **King of Kings**, became the **Savior of the World through His sacrifice**.
- **How the Lord of Glory Jesus Christ could stoop so low to save sinners like us?!?!? BEHOLD YOUR GOD!!!!**

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

- God holds all the waters of all the oceans (6 miles deep), lakes, and rivers in the cup of his hand!
- If a human tried to scoop out even a bathtub full of water, it would take more than one thousand handfuls to empty the bath tub!

12 Who...with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens?

God measures all of creation by the span between God's outstretched thumb and pinkie! Behold your God!

Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket, or weighed the mountains on the scales and the hills in a balance?

The entire weight of the earth feels like picking up a grain of sand to God! Behold your God!

13 Who can fathom the Spirit of the Lord, or instruct the Lord as his counselor? 14 Whom did the Lord consult to enlighten him, and who taught him the right way? Who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding?

Q: What expert would God go to for counsel, what school does God attend to learn justice?

Q: Who shows God how things work? The answer to all these questions are obvious—NO ONE!

Has it ever occurred to you that nothing has ever occurred to God? God has never learned anything and never will!

- When God created everything, **he needed nothing**. All the **ideas**, all the **genius**, were **his alone**.
- God imagined every **tropical fish**. He established every **function of gravity**. He **shaped galaxies**. He imagined the **colors of a sunset**. He came up with the **human body with all its complexity!**
- He came up with it **all**, by himself, out of his own super-intelligence.

There is no creator, sustainer and counselor like God. God's glory is incomparable. Behold your God! Amen!

15 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...17 Before him all the nations are as nothing; they are regarded by him as worthless and less than nothing.

ILL: If you were carrying a bucket full of water and you stumbled and one tiny drop flew to the ground, would you go back and refill the bucket? Of course not. Why? One drop just doesn't matter, its insignificant! That's what the nations are in God's sight!

When Isaiah compares all the Nations to God, the nations add up to nothing before him—less than nothing. A minus!

18 With whom, then, will you compare God? To what image will you liken him? 19 As for an idol, a metalworker casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold and fashions silver chains for it. 20 A person too poor to present such an offering selects wood that will not rot; they look for a skilled worker to set up an idol that will not topple.

God who rules the universe lines up these pathetic idols of our making alongside himself. How laughable the comparison is!

- All the lifeless idols must **be nailed down so they won't fall over!**
- The true and living God **needs no such help from anyone!**

BL: He needs nothing from us, he is SELF-SUFFICIENT! But on the flip side, we need him for everything, we are completely GOD-DEPENDENT!

“In him we live and move and have our being” - Acts 17:28

21 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? 22 He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in. 23 He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing. 24 No sooner are they planted, no sooner are they sown, no sooner do they take root in the ground, than he blows on them and they wither, and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff. 25 “To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?” says the Holy One. 26 Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one and calls forth each of them by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.

It is God who created each star and brings them out one by one and sets them in their place every night. He calls each by name and keeps each one burning moment by moment! He is their Maker and Master!

We should be awestruck at the greatness of God displayed in the heavens.

- Here we are on **tiny Planet Earth**.
- The **closest star to us is the sun**.
- The **sun generates energy with the same explosiveness as a nuclear bomb!**
- The **surface of the sun is a relatively cool 10,000 degrees**, while the **center is a toasty 27,000,000 degrees**.
- The **diameter of the sun is 870,000 miles, 109 times larger than the earth**, and its **volume could contain 1,000,000 earths**.
- Its **luminosity is equal to four million trillion 100-watt lightbulbs**—more than we could ever find at **Home Depot**.

And get this, the sun is just an average star!

- Our solar system is inside the galaxy called **the Milky Way**.
- The Milky Way is **104,000 light-years across, containing over 100 billion stars**.
- **To count them one by one would take us over 3,000 years**.
- And according to the latest probings of the Hubble Space Telescope, there are **hundreds of billions of galaxies in God's universe!**

We are dwarfed by the creation; but the creation is dwarfed by God.

25 **“To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?”** says the Holy One.
NO ONE!!!!!!

APP: This reality should cause us to shout out “Oh!” “That’s right! Oh!” When we lose this “Oh!” we lose our soul!

Q: Do you want to know why so many believers are just going through the motions just “getting by” in the Christian life?

- It’s because when they think of God, **instead of “Oh”** Our response is, **“Who?” of ignorance**, or a **“So what?” of who cares!**

The primary reason people are in bondage to sin is because people are bored with God.

Listen, **That sinful habit we struggle with daily, that addiction that keeps us in guilt and shame will only be overcome when our heart, soul and mind are captivated by the majesty, mercy, grace, splendor and beauty of God’s glory!**

- That’s why Isaiah’s single plea is **“BEHOLD YOUR GOD!”**
- Yes, this world full of “Oh”s.... but they can’t compare to the infinite “Oh”s that God gives when you behold him!

T/S:

GOD’S GLORY BRINGS RENEWAL (vv. 27-31)

27 **Why do you complain, Jacob? Why do you say, Israel, “My way is hidden from the Lord; my cause is disregarded by my God?”** God’s people we’re saying, **“The Lord doesn’t care about us! The Lord has forgotten us! The Lord doesn’t see that we need help!”**

That’s how we feel a lot of the times isn’t it? Like the Lord just doesn’t care about our pain and our problems. But that’s just not true.
God never forgets, never overlooks, never abandons, never loses interest, never stops caring about his people!

28 **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, [God is not like us. We get tired and weary; God does not!] and his understanding no one can fathom. 29 He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. 30 **Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall;** 31 **but those who wait for the Lord will renew their strength.**

Notice what the text says. It doesn’t say those who wait will renew their strength! Nothings more exhausting than waiting! Amen!
It says those who WAIT ON THE LORD will renew their strength.

- We tend to hear, “trust God while you wait on the thing...” And because of that we miss the key to everything!
- God is redirecting our focus! He is saying, **“WAIT ON ME!”** Bring God our need, longing, hearts desire, pain, problem, hopes... Instead of fixating on the outcome, fixate on the Lord!
- Waiting in Scripture isn’t passive. No, waiting in the Bible is a watchman on a wall anxiously and joyfully expecting GOD, knowing he will show up!!!!
- Waiting on the Lord means we actively and carefully watch for every hint of God showing up and showing out in our lives! Then we thank him and praise him for it!

BL: If you wait on the LORD, you will always, without fail, get what your waiting on: THE LORD HIMSELF!

Q: How does God renew the strength of those who wait on the Lord?

1. They will soar on wings like eagles.

They will soar on wings like eagles;

There are times when we feel **defeated and deflated and unable to rise above our circumstances.**

- Here he promises that we will soar on wings like eagles.
- It’s a picture of **soaring above our problems, our sin, valleys, and crazy emotions by the grace and glory of God.**

2. Those who wait on the Lord will run and not grow weary.

they will run and not grow weary,

The writer of Hebrews reminds us that life is a race.

Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. - Hebrews 12:2
The secret to running the race is “fixing our eyes on Jesus.” Waiting on the Lord!

3. God’s glory helps us walk when we are weak and laid low.

they will walk and not be faint.

BEHOLD YOUR GOD of Glory who brings renewal to the weak, downcast, hurting, and the underserving sinner!

No wonder all throughout the Bible the people of God declaring these things...

“May those who love your salvation say evermore, ‘God is great!’” - Psalm 70:4

Not mainly salvation is great, but my God is Great!

The LORD is my portion and my cup. - Psalm 16:5

As a deer pants for streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for you, for the living God. - Psalm 42:1

O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. - Psalm 63:1

My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. - Philippians 1:23

Why are they saying such things? Because they have Beheld their God of Glory and want nothing more than more of him!

How rich we are to have the God of Isaiah 40 as our eternal inheritance!

IOW, In Jesus Christ, we have the astonishing privilege of knowing the God of Isaiah 40 as our Father.

Q: Do you know the God of Isaiah 40?

Q: Are you "his" people and is He "your" God?

Communion