

**Sunday evening June 17<sup>th</sup> 2018 at CBC**  
**Sermon outline: ISAIAH 40**

*27 Why do you say, O Jacob,  
and complain, O Israel,  
"My way is hidden from the Lord;  
my cause is disregarded by my God"? NIV*

We may not be where Isaiah's contemporaries were exactly, but when from time to time we see spiritual decline amongst the people of God, and we see hostility to the gospel in the world around us, we all too easily think that our way may be hidden from the Lord and that he has disregarded our cause.

What was the answer to the concerns of Isaiah's contemporaries?

And what will the answer be to our concerns?

**[1] THE REMARKABLE HONESTY OF GOD'S WORD**

If you have ever found yourself wondering if God really knows where you are and cares about you, it may be a surprise to discover that God's word has *anticipated that you might think like this*.

In other words, God's wisdom includes the recognition that the relationship between Him and his creation, between him and his people, will not always be straightforward or easy.

**[2] THE INCOMPARABLE NATURE OF GOD'S CHARACTER**

How would the doubts and questions of God's people as articulated in 40.27 be resolved? How can our doubts and

questions about locating the purposes of God in our lives be resolved?

The answer lies in focussing on the incomparable nature of God's character. This is a theme that runs through chapter 40, and onwards. We shall focus on the verses that surround verse 27.

### **[a] a challenge to the claim of ignorance**

Sometimes it can feel/seem as though the way out of the kind of dilemma that verse 27 articulates is not at all clear. But there is an implied rebuke, albeit gentle, in verses 21,27 and 28?

The point is that God's people are not as ignorant of him and his ways as they make out.

### **[b] A reminder of what God is like**

Isaiah is reminding his contemporaries of what they know:

#### **[i] His truth is incomparable 18-20**

The sheer illogicality of making and worshipping idols is frequently mocked in the Bible precisely because it is illogical. And the difference between an idol that human beings make (and stupidly call 'god') and the God who has made the universe and all the human beings in it is just so obvious. How do you compare an idol that needs to be made 'topple-proof' (40.20) with the everlasting Creator? Now this utterly illogical thinking can be found in our society which may not make physical idols but which thinks in much the same way – illogically.

### **[ii] His authority is incomparable 21-24**

Again we find the repetition of an earlier theme, see verses 15-17. Look how far above the world he sits, look how his power ultimately controls the destinies of rulers and nations. On our time scale rulers are raised up and they may rule for many years. But the Lord's perspective is different. Look at verse 24. They have hardly arrived before they have gone. The Lord blows them away.

### **[iii] His attention to detail is incomparable 25-26**

The Lord invites his people to look at the evens.

*'Lift up your eyes and look at the heavens. Who created all these?'* [26] Notice that every heavenly object in the sky is known to God. In the same way, the Lord knows all his people and cares about them. How could it be otherwise?

### **[iv] His strength is incomparable 28**

He has created the world and he now sustains it and he does not grow tired or weary and we cannot understand that, or indeed the extent of his wisdom.

### **[c] A promise of what God will do**

He will renew strength, even remarkably so – isn't that picture of a soaring eagle very striking? And the runner will not grow weary and the walker will not faint.

How do you access this power? The key is simple – *those who hope in the Lord.*

If his truth is incomparable it must guide our life, regardless of the consequences, for the simple reason that it is true! How can we live in way that is not true to God's revealed truth?

If his authority is incomparable, then whatever is going on in the nations, in the UK, in the church, in our lives, will fall under his ultimate authority. It cannot be otherwise.

If his achievements are incomparable, then we can trust the One who put the stars in place to create in our lives the unique pattern that he has for us. But did he get it wrong with the stars? No, and he will not get it wrong with us.

And if his strength is incomparable, then he will never run out of the resources, the power of His Holy Spirit, the wisdom of his word, the fellowship of his people, which we need to do his will. Placing our hope in him and his character will never fail.

## **CONCLUSION**

And how may all of these resources be accessed? A figure appears in Isaiah from time to time. He is in **40.11**. How does the Sovereign Lord come with power, and yet as a shepherd gathering lambs in his arms?

He is in **42:1-4**, a sensitive servant on whom the Spirit will rest, who will not break a bruised reed or crush a smouldering wick.

He is in **53:4-6**, pierced for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. He is the Lord Jesus Christ in whom we put our hope, for to put our hope in him is to put our hope in the LORD of Isaiah 40.31.

And when we put our hope in him, he puts eternal hope into our hearts!