

The Incomparable God

Isaiah 40:12-31

Last week we started in Isaiah 40 and learned:

The Servant of the Lord will:

1. Gently comfort God's people
2. Urgently warn all people
3. Clearly proclaim the Good News

"Go on up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news... Say to the cities of Judah, 'Behold your God!'" v. 9

John the Baptist fulfilled this as he prepared the way for Jesus. *Jesus fulfilled it as he proclaimed the kingdom of heaven.* The apostles fulfilled it as they spread the message of the gospel throughout the Roman Empire. And believers down through history have faithfully fulfilled the calling of the Servant of the Lord as they have spoken comfort, warning and good news.

Look at the specific message the Servant of the Lord is expected to get up on a mountain and shout: "**Behold your God!**" This was the task of all of Israel's prophets - to speak the Word of the Lord and point the people of God to the One True God, the Only God. And this remains our task to this day - to point to Jesus and say to all who will listen: "Behold your God!" There is no other god, no other hope, no other Savior, no other power you can trust to save you, to love you, to strengthen and guide you.

It's like when Jesus asked Peter if the disciples would abandon him like so many others had and Peter said, "*Lord, to whom shall we go?*"

There is nowhere else we can go - nowhere else anyone can go - because **there is only ONE GOD.** And His name is Jesus. What we'll see in the second half of Isaiah 40 today is three examples of the supremacy of God, three aspects of His glorious perfection, three reasons we should boldly proclaim: "Behold your God!" First:

God is utterly Unique:

- He is Sovereign in **Power**

"Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span?" Isaiah 40:12

Verses 1-11 include many bold statements and commands. Verse 12 to the end of the chapter include **23 QUESTIONS**, starting with this one. All 23 questions are *designed to engage us in a conversation* about the uniqueness and supremacy of God.

Isaiah first directs our attention to *the vastness of God in comparison to the created universe*. He measures the OCEANS of the world in the hollow of his hand. He marks off the endless expanse of the universe with the span of his hand - the distance from his thumb to his little finger - basically saying that God can plam the whole universe like a basketball.

God is utterly Unique:

- He is Sovereign in **Power**

“Who has... weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance?” Isaiah 40:12

God can pick up Mount Everest like a grape and place it gingerly on a scale to weigh it. He can place all the hills of the earth together on a balance. Isaiah goes on with these cosmic comparisons in verse 22:

God is utterly Unique:

- He is Sovereign in **Power**

“It is he who sits above the circle of the earth and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers.”
Isaiah 40:22

How could you compare God to the sun, or the storm or the sea - gods of ancient times - when He is so vastly above and beyond these things as the Creator of all of them and the Sovereign Ruler of the entire universe? He is seated far above all of these created things and surveys them all at once as we would glance down at a colony of ants.

God is utterly Unique:

- He is Sovereign in **Power**

“Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in.” Isaiah 40:22

The Temple in Israel was not God's true dwelling place - He cannot be contained in space and time at all - so the prophet uses this dramatic language to show how God stands above and beyond everything. The vast backdrop of the night sky with its endless array of stars, planets and other galaxies is just a curtain - a backdrop or divider in God's

celestial house. The heavens aren't God's home, **they are his tent** to for a weekend campout.

God is utterly Unique:

- He is Sovereign in **Power**

“Lift up your eyes and see, who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name.” Isaiah 40:26

Just **as a shepherd of old** would lead out his sheep, calling them one by one by name - so God summons the stars every night.

God is utterly Unique:

- He is Sovereign in **Power**

“By the greatness of his might and because he is strong in power, not one is missing.”
Isaiah 40:26

Sheep go astray; they get lost; they get eaten by wolves. Children grow up and wander off. Houses and cities are built but later collapse and disappear. But the heavenly bodies remain because God upholds them. **Isaiah makes it personal in verse 27:**

God is utterly Unique:

- He is Sovereign in **Power**

“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?’” Isaiah 40:27

The Jews were always tempted to worry and complain - going back to the earliest days when it was just Abram and Sarai, and on through the wilderness wanderings, the conquest of the land and even the time of the kings. By the time of Isaiah the glory days of the united kingdom were in the distant past, fears and dangers were all around. So - once again, the people began to complain that God did not see them, did not care about them. But God responds in verse 28:

God is utterly Unique:

- He is Sovereign in **Power** - so **Trust Him**

“Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.” Isaiah 40:28

The Lord of Israel is the One True God - the everlasting One, the Creator of all things - so TRUST HIM. *He has not forgotten you!* He has not abandoned you!

God is utterly Unique:

- He is Sovereign in **Power** - so **Trust** Him

“He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.” Isaiah 40:28

We are the ones who get tired, who forget about things, who abandon people and break our promises. God cannot do any of those things. He never needs a nap. He is the source of all power and life - He never gets tired. We don't understand life and history and we certainly don't understand the deep things of God. But God knows everything, sees everything and understands every single detail.

This is our first example of the uniqueness and supremacy of God. He is sovereign in power, so trust Him. **God is the ONLY ONE who is worthy of our trust**, as we'll see in a minute. What other options are there? Other gods? Other nations? Other leaders? Idols? Ourselves?

Whatever you are experiencing right now - trust in the Lord with all your heart. You may be tired and weary, but learn to WAIT upon the Lord and trust Him to renew your strength and give you understanding in His time.

- This is a challenge when **your body** is breaking down or you are watching a loved one deal with pain and chronic illness.
- This is a challenge when **life is not working** according to your plan - changes, worries, concerns.
- This is a challenge when a **key relationship** is damaged or threatened and you don't know what's going to happen.

We all feel tired and weary. We all struggle to know what's going on. But one thing we know - this we can always hold on to - TRUST in the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. Trust in the One who never grows tired or weary, and who promises to give strength to those who wait on Him in faith!

But God is not just sovereign in power:

God is utterly Unique:

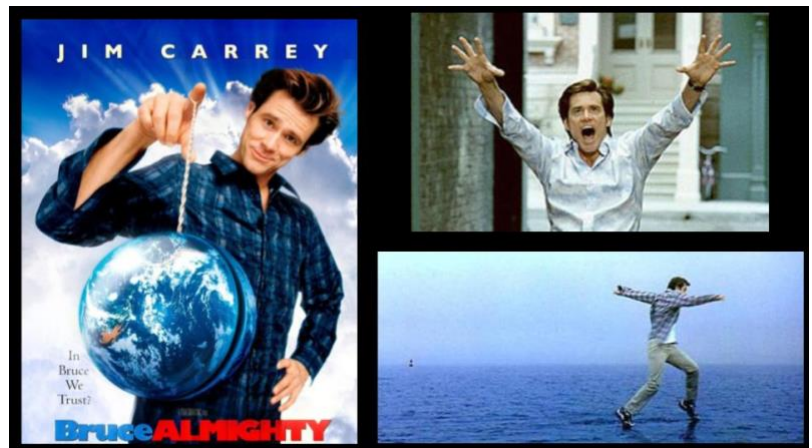
- He is Supreme in **Wisdom**

“Who has measured the Spirit of the Lord, or what man shows him his counsel.” Isaiah 40:13

How could you even try to measure the Spirit of God? *What kind of tape measure or thermometer* would tell you the size and scale and shape of the Infinite, Almighty Holy Spirit?

Who ever pulled God aside, sat Him down and said, “Listen, God, here is the plan - you need to hear my counsel”? Set aside the audacity of that request - where would you dare to hold that meeting? Your house? A hilltop somewhere? Beside a lake or ocean? Where would you HOST the Creator of the Cosmos and say, “pull up a chair here in MY place”? The absurdity of it should jump out at us.

Remember the old movie **Bruce Almighty** [IMAGE]? Jim Carrey managed to convince God (of course played by Morgan Freeman - who else?) to let him take over for a while. How well do you think Jim Carrey did at handling omniscience and omnipotence? At first he was understandably shocked by all of the input - people praying all over the world - all of those prayers suddenly hitting him and overwhelming his mind. But it didn't take long before he began to abuse his power - just showing off - and eventually making his rival news anchor spout nonstop gibberish on the air.



Bruce Almighty was a comical reminder about why humans are not entrusted with divine powers - we simply would not handle them well. We might question how God is running the world, but none of us would make a good candidate to take over for Him.

God is utterly Unique:

- He is Supreme in **Wisdom** - so **Listen** to Him

“Whom did he consult, and who made him understand? Who taught him the path of justice?” Isaiah 40:14

It is absurd for weak, finite beings with such limited perspective to tell God what to do or question His justice. ***Who are we that God should consult with us*** or that we should help God understand what to do and why? Who are we to correct God like a parent with a wayward child?

God is utterly Unique:

- He is Supreme in **Wisdom** - so **Listen** to Him

“Who taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding?” Isaiah 40:14

God is the One who invented the human brain. **He gave us our MINDS** to process information, articulate words, communicate meaning. Now are we going to turn around and try to teach the Teacher? Are we going to correct the Great Master?

It's like a young ***child who gets \$5 for allowance*** and then goes back to his father with two bucks and says, “Hey - can you take out the trash there for me? There's a good chap!” “Uh, I don't think so, Buckaroo - you can take out the trash or the whole \$5 is coming back to me along with all future installments!”

God is supreme in WISDOM. ***He sees the end from the beginning.***

God is utterly Unique:

- He is Supreme in **Wisdom** - so **Listen** to Him

“It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers.”
Isaiah 40:22

We are so limited in what we can see and understand - we can only see a very short distance over a very short span of time. If you've ever **tried to play chess** you know that it's always essential to watch THE WHOLE BOARD. If you get lured into a trap on one side and lose track of a bishop or Queen or knight just waiting to pounce, you'll lose a key piece and ultimately lose the game.

The world is a massive chess board with over **8 BILLION moving pieces** - and that's just the human ones. We just went to the Clearwater Aquarium and dissected a squid with Micah's class (barf). We learned there are over 300 different species of SQUID. 300. The giant squid can get to be 45 feet long. School bus size. Think about that the next time you go to the beach. Just kidding, they live in the really deep, dark water. But still. 300 kinds of squid. There are over 32,000 different species of fish - at least.

And God keeps up with all the details. Not one sparrow or minnow dies without God's awareness and control. He is SUPREME in wisdom. Only the unlimited mind of the Almighty God could keep up with *the infinite matrix of interactions* between all of the trillions and trillions of living things on this planet. He sees it all and upholds it all with the word of His power. The Lord Jesus sustains all things - moment by moment - by willing them to be.

This is the God we worship and serve - so trust Him! And listen to Him! And obey Him! Consider whose WORD you usually listen to. Whose wisdom do you follow?

I'm reading a book called **Hears and Doers** by one of my seminary professors, Dr. Kevin VanHoozer. Good little book to remind pastors that part of our job as Bible teachers is *to expose the lies of our culture and replace them with the better wisdom of God's Word.*

To that end, Dr. VanHoozer talks about the diet and exercise culture of modern America. And it really is a MODERN phenomenon. The very idea of WELLNESS is a 20th century topic - that has become a trillion dollar industry! On the topic of WISDOM - consider the reality of DIET FADS. The Atkins diet was all the rage for 10-15 years as **Dr. Atkins** insisted that eating all the meat and fat you wanted was fine as long as you had little to no carbs. People listened, bought his books and products until he died at the age of 73 and the "science" behind his diet was seriously called into question.

Kristin was just telling me about some Oprah thing lately about eating a gummy every day that will help you lose weight. Please don't google that right now. ***There is no end to the "Wisdom" presented by the latest diet book or weight loss product.*** But if we've learned anything from the last 30 years it's that you can't trust someone who is making a lot of money off of what they are selling you. I was very encouraged by the fact that it's just in the last 40-50 years that the ideal body type is the tan, toned and muscle-y kind. ***For most of history the pasty, slightly chubby Dad-bod was the industry standard and ideal.*** Look at me trying to bring that back, eh?

Dr. VanHoozer's point is to be very aware of the messages our culture sends us about our ***DIET, our BODIES and our FITNESS*** - exposing the false promises and false ideals that make wellness entirely physical, totally about this life, this world, this body - and ignore the wisdom of God, the teaching of the Bible that emphasizes **SPIRITUAL wellness and ETERNITY.**

So in the end, **who will we listen to?** Whose wisdom will we follow? The wisdom of this world that says - look your best - it's all about your physical body, this life and this world? Or the wisdom of God that says - LOVE your best - it's all about training yourself in godliness which is about denying yourself and living for OTHERS...

One more example of the uniqueness and supremacy of God.

God is utterly Unique:

- He is Surpassing in **Glory** - so **Worship** to Him

“Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as the dust on the scales.” Isaiah 40:15

Next to the power and wisdom of God, **who else should we trust and listen to and serve?** The temptation of ancient times was to **look to the nations around Israel** - to see how they were doing at any given time. If their crops were flourishing and their businesses were booming, if their temples were shiny and filled with gold, if their armies were winning battles - Israel was often inclined to worship and serve their gods.

Egypt was the perennial neighboring nation for Israel - always looking south to the great power of ancient history. The tribes and peoples in the land of Canaan rose and fell in power, but the Philistines kept coming back and, in time, the Babylonians rose to power in the north, followed by the Assyrians.

If there was **ONE PROBLEM Israel constantly dealt with** - it was this one. They continually ***looked to the nations around them instead of to God***. This is why they eventually asked for a king. It wasn't that God directed them to appoint a king. It was that they saw that every other nation had a human king to lead them, to fight battles for them, to tell them what to do. And they wanted to be just like all the other nations.

God lamented this choice because He told them they were NOT supposed to be like the other nations. The whole point of Israel being God's chosen people and a holy nation was that **they were supposed to be DIFFERENT**. That's what HOLY means: set apart, distinct. But they wouldn't have it. They insisted on having a king. And history shows how the vast majority of those kings rejected God and chose some other god or gods to serve - often collecting a whole mess of idols and other allegiances - until God finally got fed up and cast them from the land.

Isaiah calls them away from this idolatry, arguing that the nations like Egypt, Babylon and Assyria are nothing and less than nothing. Dust on the scales doesn't even affect the weight - you simply don't count it. A drop in the bucket. "Nothing and less than nothing," he says in verse 17.

God is utterly Unique:

- He is Surpassing in **Glory** - so **Worship** to Him

"Lebanon would not suffice for fuel, nor are its beasts enough for a burnt offering." Isaiah 40:16

What level of worship is due to the Lord? Lebanon was known for its towering cedar trees - but all of them combined would not provide enough fuel for the altars to give God the worship He deserves. All of the animals throughout all of Lebanon would not suffice to present to God in worship.

God deserves EVERYTHING. Everything we have is literally from Him - so the only appropriate response is to give everything back to Him in worship and devotion. Alongside the nations, the other competitor for worship was idols - false gods.

God is utterly Unique:

- He is Surpassing in **Glory** - so **Worship** to Him

"And idol! A craftsman casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold." Isaiah 40:19

Isaiah will come back to this theme over and over, as do the other prophets. ***Why would you worship an idol that had to be fashioned by a human artist?*** That little statue didn't shape itself. It didn't conjure up the gold from which it was made or covered.

God is utterly Unique:

- He is Surpassing in **Glory** - so **Worship** to Him

"He who is too impoverished for an offering chooses wood that will not rot... to set up an idol that will not move." Isaiah 40:20

Why would you think that a little idol can help you when it's made of wood or stone? Sure, it's solid wood that won't rot right away, but notice that last bit - it will not move. ***Here is a god you can control.*** It will stay put.

And isn't that what people generally want? A god you can understand; a god you can control. And the only way to get such a god is to ***make it yourself***. The true God cannot be shaped. He cannot be controlled or directed.

Oh, but **we are so good at making idols**, aren't we?

- We don't like ***the judgment*** part of God, so we carve off that problematic chunk and just trim out of the Bible any mention of wrath or hell or anything too confrontational.
- We don't like ***the rules*** in the Bible, so we set them aside as being for a different time and place and therefore not applying to us. Look at what our culture is doing with human sexuality, relationships, marriage and even physical gender. Who is God to tell someone what their real biological gender is?
- We don't like ***the Lordship*** part of Jesus that tries to tell us how to live our lives, so we just focus on the Savior part - and we create a "Christian culture" that looks no different from the rest of the world. Divorce is fine. No need to read your Bible if you don't feel like it. No need to pray. Fasting? Who even knows what that is??? Volunteer in children's ministry? Crazy talk!

Do you see what we've done with Biblical Christianity? We have taken the Biblical idea of Jesus as Lord and have trimmed away the parts we don't really like. Chip that away, cut that part off, throw that piece out - and what are we left with?

Anyone who takes that approach to God and the Bible does not come away with Christianity - ***they come away with IDOLATRY***. That is a god of your own creation - and it is not a god who can save you or help you or do anything for you.

Let's close today with the final verses of this amazing chapter:

"Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint." Isaiah 40:30-31

If we trust in the nations, or trust in other gods or trust in ourselves and our own strength - ***we will grow tired and eventually collapse***. But if we wait for the Lord - if we trust Him, listen to Him and worship Him - here is the promise of God's Word: we will fly! We will run! We will persevere! For the Lord Himself - the everlasting, all powerful Creator and King of all things will Himself sustain us.

God is utterly unique. There is no other contender - no other being in His class. He is sovereign in power, supreme in wisdom and all-surpassing in glory.

The key task of the **Servant of the Lord** is to get up on a mountain, ***to lift up your voice and proclaim to all who will listen: "Behold your God!"*** To be effective witnesses for the One True God we must first have these truths on our hearts. We must be deeply and personally convinced of God's absolute supremacy. We must treasure Him above all things and learn to rest in Him, to wait on Him, to center our whole lives and hearts on Him.

Jesus made it very simple: just abide in me - and you'll bear much fruit. Stay connected to me, Jesus said, and my life will flow through you; my Spirit will bear fruit in you and through you. Live with me. Dwell in me. Wait on the Lord. Feel the updraft of the wind of the Spirit - spread the wings of your faith and let the powerful swell lift you up.

Let's pray.