

Isaiah 40 - Glory Shall Be Revealed

by Mariano Di Gangi

The sermon emphasizes the importance of preparing a way for the Lord and revealing the glory of God in Jesus Christ, which brings salvation and unity to all people.

Duration: 26:25

Scripture: Isaiah 40:1-5, Matthew 3:3, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Glory"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on Isaiah 40:3-5, which speaks about preparing the way for the Lord. The voice calling in the desert is not one of complaint, but rather a strong and confident proclamation of God's message. The glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all mankind will see it. However, there are those who are blinded by Satan and cannot see the excellence of Jesus. The sermon also refers to the previous week's message, where God comforts His people and speaks tenderly to them, addressing their guilt, loneliness, and weakness. The preacher emphasizes the importance of addressing the mind, will, and emotions through the word of God.

Transcript

During the Sunday mornings leading up to Christmas, we are focusing on the opening section of the 40th chapter of the prophet Isaiah. Last Lord's Day, we concentrated on the opening two verses, where the Lord, through his prophet, says, Comfort, comfort my people. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem.

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. There are times when the word of God is addressed to the mind. Truth is communicated that the mind might receive it and be enlightened.

There are times when the word of God is addressed not so much to the mind, but to the will, calling for a decision on a crucial moral issue. There are other times when the word of God is addressed primarily to the emotions. Speaking tenderly to Jerusalem is God's way of dealing with the hurt, dealing with the regret, dealing with the guilt, dealing with the loneliness and the weakness of his people.

God speaks in terms of truth to the mind, a moral challenge to the will, and tenderly, the language of the heart, speaking to our innermost needs. Today, we concentrate on verses 3, 4, and 5 of this marvelous chapter of Holy Scripture. A voice of one calling, In the desert prepare a 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. Here in this text we have the note of preparation. In the desert prepare a way for the Lord, And this is said by the voice of one who is calling.

You can count me in as one who appreciates the beauty of the language of the King James Version of Holy Scripture. But the King James rendition of the beginning of this text could be subject to misunderstanding, where it speaks about the voice of one crying in the wilderness. And you get the picture of one who, broken and weak, pours out a voice of complaint, a sigh, a sob.

But what you have here is not the whimpering of a wimp. What you have here is a form of expression which resembles the roaring of a lion, or the bellowing of a bull. Here is a voice of one who calls.

Here is the voice of one who with clarity and with conviction and with confidence makes known what is in the mind and heart of Almighty God. And that is the sound that must issue forth from the pulpits of our land, from Newfoundland to Vancouver Island. A way with confusion, a strike of blow for clarity.

A way for doubt to speak with conviction. The voice of one crying, the voice of one calling, the voice of one being heard in a way that is definite, declaring what God has to say to our generation. The voice of one calling.

In the desert, prepare the way for the Lord. Make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. Isaiah, here, pictures those who have been exiled in Babylon, those who have been put into the fiery furnace of chastisement on account of their undisciplined ways.

And now that God's refining work has run its course, the bondage of captivity in Babylon will be broken in the providence of God, and the exiles will make their way home from Babylon to the land of promise. And at their head is none other than the Lord God Almighty. And had the hymn been written then, I'm sure they would have sung it, Lead on, O King Eternal, the day of March has come.

It is the Lord who leads his people out of the place of bondage and of discipline and chastisement back home once more. And a way is to be prepared for the Lord and those whom he restores from the bitterness and brutality of their captivity. In the desert, prepare the way for the Lord.

In the wilderness, make straight a highway for our God. And this is true to the tradition of Hebrew poetry, where you have a parallelism, desert and wilderness, way and highway. In the desert must this way be prepared for the Lord.

In the wilderness must there be made straight a highway for our God. And what an apt description this is of a world that is a stranger to God's renewing and saving grace. A world that indeed is a desert place.

A world that is truly a wilderness. A world in which only the howling beasts of prey are heard. A world in which you do not cultivate the fruit of the Spirit, but rather you see the proliferation of the deadly sins, like envy and jealousy and anger and sloth and pride.

A land in which you see the proliferation of vices rather than virtues. A land where there is lust and violence and death. And it is precisely in that desert, precisely in that moral and spiritual wilderness, that the road is to be made ready for the coming of the Lord.

How shall this road be made ready for the Lord who comes? How shall you and I have ready a highway for our God who comes to us again at this Christmas season and waits to gain admission into the depth and the control center of your life and mine? The prophet reveals the way in which the road is to be prepared for the coming of Christ within. Every valley shall be raised up, and every mountain and hill shall be made low. The rough ground shall become level, and the rugged places must become a plain.

You get the picture? It's a bulldozing operation that levels the hill. It's a work that builds up what is lowly and depressed to prepare a highway for our God. The mountain and hill must be made low.

Martin Luther was right on target, great evangelist that he was, when he suggested that before men and women can have any appreciation of their need of the gospel of God's forgiving grace, they must be made aware of their lawlessness and be convicted of their sin. And therefore Martin Luther wisely advised that the moral law of God be proclaimed in all its plainness and its power, that it be applied as a measurement over against human misconduct, so that people might see themselves as sinners deserving only God's judgment, and then would be open to receive the offer of his grace. And that is still the way in which every mountain and hill is made low, and every high and haughty thought of proud man can be abased, as the Spirit of God strikes conviction of sin, bringing his law to bear upon human pride and self-sufficiency, leveling the hill, leveling the mountain, preparing a way for the coming of the Lord of grace and the King of glory.

And then every valley must be raised up, for when we are convicted of sin, we become discouraged. When we become aware of our moral frailty and fallibility, we can become very depressed, and understandably so. And that is where the word of the gospel comes in, lifting up every valley, lifting up the downcast, lifting up the discouraged, lifting up the depressed, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you.

For God made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we in turn might become the righteousness of God in him. True, the wages of sin is death, but this too is true, the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. And so the prophet tells us that the road must be prepared in the moral and spiritual desert, in the moral and spiritual wilderness of our world, by leveling what is proud and stands in the way of the approaching Lord, and by lifting up with the word of promise, the good word of the gospel, those who are discouraged and depressed.

A word of preparation. We also hear in our text a word of revelation, the glory of the Lord will be revealed. That word glory is a fascinating word, and when you do a bit of research into the Hebrew background of the word, you find that it's related to the concept of weight.

There are people who are moral lightweights, they are like the chaff which the wind drives away. But when you speak of someone who has glory, the Old Testament Hebrew meant someone who had weight, someone who had dignity, someone who had nobility, someone who knew prosperity, someone who had authority. In other words, glory was synonymous with excellence.

And that is what our God has. And that is what our God is. He is weighty.

He has nobility. He has dignity. He has purity.

He has authority. He alone is God. He alone is all-glorious.

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handiwork. And in the 26th Psalm, David said, I love your house, O God, the place where your glory manifests itself. And the prophet Isaiah himself in the sixth chapter of his book tells us about a day of national mourning in which he went to the temple to seek solace, and there suddenly he caught a glimpse of the glory of the great God in all His majesty, hearing the angels that cried out, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God of hosts.

Heaven and earth are filled with His glory with the revelation of His excellence. And that glory of the Lord, says the prophet, will be revealed. Revealed in Jesus Christ.

For as we are told in 1 Timothy 3.15, He is God, the God of glory manifested in the flesh. Veiled in flesh, the glorious Godhead see. The author of the letter to the Hebrews in the first chapter of his epistle in verse 3, speaks of Jesus Christ not only as the climax of God's self-revelation to man, but he speaks of Him as being the very radiance and outshining of the character and the attributes and the perfections of God.

In the first chapter of his gospel, at verse 14, John says, The word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glorious of the only begotten of the Father, filled and radiant with grace and truth. And when Jesus performed His first miracle at the marriage in Cana of Galilee, turning water into wine, John tells us that that was the manifestation of His glory, and the faith of the disciples was strengthened by it. The apostle Peter recalls how on the Mount of Transfiguration we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

We saw there the outshining of His glory. We caught a glimpse of His perfections and His excellence. And that's what makes Good Friday all the more perplexing.

How could people do it? In their ignorance, they crucified the Lord of glory. And His glory was visible again in His resurrection from the dead on the third day. And His glory is manifested at the right hand of God, for we see Jesus crowned, says the author of the letter to the Hebrews, crowned with glory and with honor.

And when He comes again, according to Mark 8.38, He will come in the glory of His Father, surrounded with the entourage of His holy angels. And He, the Son of Man, shall come and sit upon the throne of His glory to judge mankind in righteousness at the end. We prepare for the coming of the Lord by letting the law of God reduce us to humility and honesty and repentance.

We prepare by believing in the promises of the gospel that lift us up. And we look for the revelation of the glory of God, the excellence and the perfection of the Almighty, revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. Preparation, revelation, contemplation.

For not only will the glory of the Lord be revealed in the Lord who comes, but all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken. All mankind will see the revelation of the glory of God.

Mankind will get a glimpse of this glory. Mankind will be able to grasp something of this glory, of His dignity, of His authority, of His purity. What shall we say then about those on this planet who will not see anything of the glory of Christ, who still are taken up with the idea of their own self-sufficiency and autonomy and will not recognize Him in all His glorious majesty? Scripture tells us what the problem is.

For in 2 Corinthians 4, the fourth verse, we are told that Satan, the God of this world, has blinded the minds of men and women, lest they should see the excellence of Jesus, fall in love with Him, and follow Him faithfully to the end. How sorry you and I should feel for the secular humanists of our day with all their ungodly pride, who exclude Jesus and willfully close their eyes to the excellence of His glory. For they are deluded by the evil one and we must pray for their deliverance, that they too might have their eyes opened

to contemplate Christ and be fascinated with the revelation of His glorious character.

All mankind will see it. The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all sorts and conditions of men. It appeared to the Jews.

It appeared to the Gentiles. It's appearing in our day to the people of West Africa, to the people of Mexico, to the people of Latin America, to people in the islands of the sea, wherever missionaries are involved in communicating the truth about Jesus. Men and women are having their eyes opened and they are contemplating, as it were, for the first time, the fresh vision of the glory of Jesus Christ.

God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, says the Apostle, has caused us to see the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. All mankind, together, will see it. If there's anything that our world doesn't have, it's togetherness.

It's not merely that we have a multicultural society. That could be a beautiful mosaic. The basic problem is that people are self-centered and they collide and then drift apart with indifference.

There is a brokenness about our society. There is conflict within our world. And the design of God is that we should, together, behold the revelation of his glory in Jesus Christ.

And as we leave behind our own pet peeves and theories and likes and dislikes, and we focus on Jesus Christ, the closer we come to him, the closer we ought to be to one another. And then will all mankind, together, see this glorious manifestation in Jesus Christ. When we are drawn to him and are united to him, we come together because he has become our focal point for faith and hope and love.

Can you be sure that all of this will happen? Absolutely. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken. And in the desert, a way is being prepared for the Lord.

And in the wilderness, a highway is being made straight for our God. And pride is being cast down. And the discouraged are being uplifted.

And the glory of the Lord has been revealed in the Christ who came and will come again. And as we are fascinated with the loveliness and the majesty of Jesus, we leave behind all things that would fragment and divide and come together at his feet. Let us pray.

Your mouth, O Lord, has spoken. And none of your words will ever fall fruitless to the ground. May this marvelous prophecy find fulfillment in our midst and among all who hear the message of Jesus and begin to contemplate him as he is revealed in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

To this end, bless every effort at Bible translation. Bless every work that majors in the ministry of the Word and in your healing touch that Christ may be known, trusted, loved, adored, and obeyed. In his name we ask it.

Amen.

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