

Isaiah 40 – Trust in God Alone

This week Queensland has been struck again with disaster. Before many people have recovered from the disastrous floods a cyclone hit. Some of the images we have seen speak of only disaster, devastation, tragedy and despair. Houses wiped out. Crops destroyed. The things that we so cling to for security taken away.

This is the kind of circumstances Israel finds herself in. Things aren't the way God said they would be. However they have brought this on themselves by their rebellion. They had been surrounded and attacked by another nation – Assyria.

If things weren't bad enough Isaiah predicted that in the future Israel would go out of their land, the temple would be destroyed and the people would be carried off into captivity in Babylon. Isaiah 39 ends on this depressing note. Things are going from bad to worse.

Read Isaiah 39:6-8

Israel had failed God and paid heavily for it. They are defeated, bitter, disillusioned. They think God has failed them. The whole world has been shattered. They thought God had abandoned them.

That's what we do isn't it – think that God has abandoned us when things are going badly for us.

We should trust God alone. Why because of what we know to be true of him. When life is going well or badly we don't trust God alone. I mean we might trust him a bit but we mix it with trust of other things. We settle for the next little bit of fun for some hope. It might be the next purchase that will give us a burst of happiness. Or the next holiday or weekend away. If our hope is a comfortable successful existence until we die that's all we'll get. If we are looking for hope in the despair of our lives these things won't help.

In Isaiah 40 we are reminded we are to trust in God alone. In Isaiah 40 the prophet is looking toward the exile that was predicted and beyond. He promises comfort. He says God has the power to give it and he wants to.

Isaiah ministered from 739 to 686 B.C. He was a prophet ie a man speaking on behalf of God. Isaiah receives a vision from God in 1:1 we are told. He gives us a different way of seeing life. He interrupts our lives. He interrupts our lives and says there is another way to look at your life. Without his word we are limited to our own thoughts. With his word new realities can be seen. Hope is given. I hope as we start this series in Isaiah 40-55 you are expecting your life to be interrupted. Interrupted by the voice of God. Saying there is another way to look at your life.

He addresses the question that will be at the forefront of the exiles' minds: *Is the exile the end of the line for the Lord's people? Has God abandoned his people? Is this the end of the road for them?*

Firstly...

1. God promises comfort

Read: 40:1

There would have been disbelief at these words. Comfort coming from Isaiah. The one who was commissioned to speak judgment is now speaking hope and salvation. It would be as unexpected as a politician promising to cut all taxes. It is unheard of. It would have been enough to keep listening to what he has to say. This is not cheap comfort.

Look at what he promises:-

- God has not forgotten v.1

The relationship he started way back with Abraham and confirmed at the Exodus and Sinai still exists. They are still his people.

- God has forgiven v.2

The penalty for their sin has been paid in full. This is a mystery that will be explained in Isaiah 53 but for now know it is true.

- God will bring them home 3-5

- God's glory will be seen v.5

- God's Word is certain 6-8

We are unreliable. We come and go. Our plans don't always happen but God's do. The Bible is about God's Word being certain. So it is foolish to look to ourselves.

Victor Krankl was one of Europe's leading psychiatrists. But from 1942-1945 was imprisoned in Auschwitz and 3 other concentration camps. He saw what made the difference between the survivors and the dead, and it wasn't a matter of physical health and strength. What made the difference was hope – something to live for beyond the barbed wire, something to look forward to, something to go home to after the war. He wrote:- The prisoner who had lost faith in the future was doomed. With his loss of belief in the future, he also lost his spiritual hold; he let himself decline and became subject to mental and physical decay.

This is a message of good news. The word the Bible uses is Gospel. It is God's Good news. It is God's Gospel. It is a message of comfort. The truth should bring Israel joy so they want to sing and shout it. Sinful people can be free and forgiven. They belong to God. They have hope. God has not abandoned his people.

So God says he will bring comfort but can he. Making a promise is one thing but keeping it is another. Isaiah predicts a time of hope but does God have the power?

Secondly...

2. Can God bring comfort?

Read: 12

Have a think for a moment of these wonderful statements of God.

He is:-

- the designer/creator of the universe [12];
- infinitely wise [13-14];
- untroubled by Israel's enemies [15-17];
- There is no comparison [18,25];
- cannot be represented [19-20];
- enthroned over all [22]; and more.

We can become blasé about the nature of God.

Movies these days have amazing special effects. Think of some of the movies that have come out so that we've seen the sinking of the Titanic or a tidal wave destroy a city and it looks amazingly real. You can see so much special affects that it is really hard to impress us anymore. What once made us breathless at the movies is not common place. We can fell this about the amazing of God which he daily performs before us. If the rising and setting of the sun no longer fills you with wonder, you're going to be pretty hard to impress!

We need to recapture the wonder of God's daily works of power.

Look at verse 26.

Our solar system is inside the galaxy called the Milky Way. We lie about two thirds of the way out from the centre of the galaxy. out in the sticks. The Milky Way is 104 000 light years across containing 100 billion stars. To count them one by one would take us over 3000 years. We now know there are hundreds of billions of galaxies in the universe.

The God who made this and brings it out in display every night who calls each star by name so that not one is missing – has made a promise to our world. To us.

Do you think God who manages the universe right down to the faintest star will lose track of you?

Do you think the God who knows each star by name has the power to save you?

As God could then he can now overcome any threat in our world today. He can handle any kind of opposition people thrown at him.

The God who has given his word is THIS God. There is plenty on the horizontal plain to discourage, so they should look to God. The danger is not that God is inadequate, but that they will forget. Israel needed reminding and so do we.

It is one thing to have the power but does he want to bring comfort.

Thirdly...

3. Does God want to bring comfort?

Read: 27

It is one thing to believe in an all-powerful God. It is another to believe that he cares. The people question this. Read 28-31

God's glory is also displayed by his compassion and caring. He has a servant heart. He strengthens the weary. Nothing is too small or insignificant for God. Those who hope in God will not do so in vain. He sustains. He keeps his people.

The God who is so powerful and uncontainable because he is so vast is intimately involved with those who wait for him.

Remember. Take what you know and get it into your head and your heart.

This is why the evidence of God's people is that just keep on going.

Isaiah finds fulfilment in Jesus. This is what we are shown in the New Testament.

Jesus is the promised comfort. John the Baptist is the voice [Mark 1]. When Jesus was born the glory of the Lord shone around the shepherds. Luke 2:9 In John 1:14 we are told that in Jesus we can see the glory of God.

John 12:23 tells us that glory of God is ultimately seen in the death of Jesus. It is in Jesus we see the very nature of God. We see who God is.

Our only hope is in Christ. If you are not a Christian, then turn to Jesus. If you are a Christian, then keep your eyes on Jesus. When you are weary, struggling, burning out; when it seems that God doesn't care remember that God has kept every promise he has made. Lift your eyes to heaven and remember the gospel of our God. God saves sinners and the rest of this section shows us more of what that means. Why we need saving? How he will save? What are the benefits?

But for now as we see more and more of life, we are confronted with disappointment so consistently it seems relentless. Hope starts to look stupid or at least naïve. We become disappointed in our ideals, relationships, careers, jobs, people we trust, ourselves. When all human hopes have let us down, we might be ready for the only real hope that exists. God and his salvation in Jesus. Others have trusted him and he more than kept his word. Now it's your turn. But we don't have forever to make up our minds.

TRUST IN GOD ALONE.