

## Tidings of comfort and joy: Isaiah 40.1-26

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

***Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, and her iniquity is pardoned: for she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.***

*Magnificent words from Isaiah ch.40, set to magnificent music in Handel's Messiah. Very appropriate for this morning's news about the Oxford/Astra Zeneca vaccine, holding out hope for a way out of the pandemic for millions around the world. I think the world heaved a collective sigh of relief last night (I know I did!). You can feel the tension starting to leak out of your shoulders — and you suddenly realise what a burden we've been braced to carry all these months. Of course we're not out of the woods yet, and it'll be a long hard struggle — but even the prospect of finding a way out is like a light in the darkness.*

*That enormous sense of relief, that lifting of the tension, comes across from the message of Isaiah, announcing the beginning of the end of the exile, as Kate explores in today's TFTD:*

The fortieth chapter of Isaiah begins with encouraging words of hope and comfort; that even though the people were carried away and living in captivity in Babylon, they will be able to return to their motherland and experience freedom because God has forgiven their sins and will dwell among them. Accordingly, his glory will be revealed and he will tend his flock like a shepherd, gathering them into his arms.

This declaration of the gospel is beautiful and exciting that the Lord is coming with compassion to save his people from their sins. Here we see that God does not set his heart on our destructions but instead on our redemption.

Now God has made his promise to save. But can God do it? Will God keep his promise of deliverance? Consider that this question is critically important because people who are taken captive do not go home. It is a large claim for God to say that he will deliver them and renew the covenant with them. God is going to prove himself by declaring how great he is. By understanding God's greatness, we will be able to have confidence in God's promises for us today and appreciate the God we worship.

The first point God makes for his ability to save is his vast wisdom. **Verse 12** begins by describing the massive nature of God. God is able to measure the waters of the earth (the oceans) with his hand and likewise able to measure the heavens with the span of his hand. **Verse 13** continues with that very thought. Who can tell the Lord what to do? Who can inform God? Who can be his advisor or counsellor? Who is going to teach the Lord anything? God does not consult with anyone, he does not need to be informed. Remember that this includes us. We are in no position to teach God. We are not God's counsellor. God does not need our advice.

Not only is God wise and massive, he is also incomparably powerful. The nations are like a drop in a bucket or dust on a scale to the Lord. They are totally insignificant in God's presence.

There is no comparison to God. He is completely unique and cannot be explained because there is nothing like him and he certainly cannot be compared to an idol or any powerful world leaders.

In the light of this passage, God has promised to remain faithful to us and to all generations in spite of whatever hardships we are faced with (illnesses, bereavement, depression, loneliness, covid-19, anxieties or homelessness) God is still almighty, all powerful and all loving and will always available to help us.

“God is not a God,  
of circumstance  
nor is He a God  
of happenstance.  
For, He is a God,  
all-knowing, all mindful  
everything He does  
is mighty and powerful.  
God is not a God,  
of coincidence  
nor is He a God  
of indifference.  
For, He is a God,  
of purpose, of design  
everything He does  
is righteous and divine.  
God is not a God  
of circumstance  
He leaves nothing . .  
to luck, fate or chance!”

**By Deborah Ann Belka**

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