

"God of Lost Causes" Isaiah 40

All sin leads to regret. And that regret leads us to wonder, "Can God fix what we've broken through our sin?" "Even if He's able to fix it, is He willing?" In Isaiah 40, God's answer resounds unequivocally, YES! In His unchangeable grace and limitless power, He is both willing and able to rescue and restore His people even after their sin.

- **Have you ever felt the consequences and regret of sin?**
 - o You're not alone – sin always leads to regret
 - o Steals wealth, destroys property, fractures relationships, wounds our bodies, steals our peace and joy

- **In the midst of regret, we wonder, "Can this ever be fixed?"**
 - o What about the marriage, kids, friend, finances, peace & joy we've sacrificed – can we ever get them back?
 - o Can God fix what we've broken?
 - o Even if He can, is He willing to fix what we've broken?

- **Those were the questions that consumed Isaiah's audience in ch40...**
 - o Entering 2nd half of book
 - o 1st half – written to contemporaries – warning – they don't listen
 - o Starting in ch40 – writes to future generation on other side of judgment – exiles – very different place spiritually...
 - Exile will bring an end to pride, idolatry, self-confidence
 - Quite the opposite – crushed & full of regret – lost everything
 - o In the midst of that regret, they would begin to wonder...
 - Are we a lost cause?
 - Has our God been defeated?... another casualty of our sin?
 - Or has He abandoned us? Did we cross a line?
 - o Isaiah knows they'll struggle with those questions, so He answers them ahead of time

- **Ch 40 – answers their 2 primary questions** – same questions we ask whenever we experience the painful consequences of sin...
 - o Is God willing to restore me after I've seriously sinned?
 - o Even if He's willing, is God able to restore me?

He starts with first question...

1) Is God willing to restore me after I've sinned?

a. read v1-2 – simple answer: YES!

i. Even after centuries of big sins (pride, idolatry, injustice) - still God's intention towards His people is comfort.

1. "comfort" = to encourage

- 2. Note repetition – God’s strong desire
- ii. Even after flagrant sin, still God **“speaks kindly”**
 - 1. lit: “speak to their heart” = tenderly, lovingly
- iii. What are these kind words? **3 synonymous statements...**
 - 1. warfare ended... iniquity removed... sin paid for
 - 2. point: time of discipline has come to an end so that restoration can begin.
- iv. **God’s final word to His people is never discipline!**
 - 1. God’s final word is always comfort & deliverance
 - 2. He will never leave us crushed & abandoned
 - 3. His ultimate purpose: life, not death; restoration, not discipline
 - 4. That ultimate purpose not changed by our sin
 - 5. If we will repent, He will comfort & restore
- v. Remember **Isa 30:18** – this is what God longs to do!
- vi. SO, is God willing to restore? YES! ALWAYS!
- vii. But Isaiah has something more to say in answer...

b. v3-5 – He wants to do it in person!

- i. Beautiful poetry reveals that God plans to bring this restoration in person!
 - 1. Isaiah pictures God far from His people: wilderness, desert...
 - 2. That’s how they feel...
 - 3. But all that’s about to change! God is coming!
- ii. So Isaiah commands them to get ready - prepare the way
 - 1. = “roll out the red carpet”
- iii. Point: God doesn’t work in our lives remotely!
 - 1. Doesn’t call us up on video chat
 - 2. Comes in person – that’s always how He operates
 - 3. 2000 years ago – incarnation
 - 4. Today – Holy Spirit – living in us, literally!
 - a. Your sin doesn’t change that
- iv. God doesn’t comfort and heal from a distance
- v. He does it in person
- vi. But Isaiah’s not done yet. Keep reading...

c. v6-8 – He’ll do it no matter what.

- i. Beautiful poetry **contrasts the unreliability of man with the reliability of God**
- ii. “loveliness” (v6) = “loyalty” – our promises
- iii. You can’t count on the promises of mankind. Why? Because we’re grass!!
 - 1. Not flattering
 - 2. *hamsin*: hot, dry wind from the East, blows in May, turns the countryside from green to brown in 48 hours or less.
 - 3. That’s mankind. Fragile. Fleeting. Unreliable. Can’t count on us.
- iv. **In contrast, the loyalty of God stands forever**
 - 1. His “Word” = “decree” – “promise”
 - 2. Is absolutely reliable – nothing can alter it
 - 3. Point: Your sin may be awful, but it doesn’t matter – it cannot altar God’s promise to be gracious and compassionate to you!
 - 4. You are not a lost cause in God’s eyes
 - 5. He will be faithful to you no matter what you do!
- v. One last thing to say...

d. v9-11 – He’ll do it so we can be His witnesses to the world

- i. Isaiah tells the Israelites to proclaim good news.
 1. **“good news”** – *basar* in Heb; *euangellion* in Gr – often translated **“gospel”** in your Bibles.
- ii. **What is that “good news”? God saves all who call on Him**
 1. **v10** – Comes as a military hero: liberation, freedom
 2. **v11** – Comes as a caring shepherd: heals, protects
- iii. Purpose: why does God rescue & restore them?
 1. Not just so they can enjoy His grace...
 2. But so they can share His grace with the world!
 - a. Be His witnesses, proclaim the gospel!
- iv. That’s why God wants to enter into the mess we’ve made – because it gives Him an opportunity to reveal to creation that He is glorious in grace...
- v. That’s why He will never give up on you!

Is God willing to rescue & restore you? YES! in person... no matter what you’ve done... so you can be His witness to the world.

Now for the 2nd question...

God is willing, but is He able?

- Can we fall beyond hope of recovery?
- Is it possible to become a lost cause with God... just too far gone?

To answer it, He points us to God – begins to describe God

- Who is this God we believe in?
- What is He like?
- Does He have the ability to rescue lost causes?

2) v12-26: Is God able to rescue and restore me even after I’ve sinned?

read v12 – First thing to know about our God: He is...

a. Immense (12,15-17)

- i. v12:
 1. Rhetorical question: “No one but the Lord!”
 2. pictures God like a merchant...
 - a. weighing on a scale
 - b. measuring with His hand
 3. point: He is incomprehensibly immense! Greater than all creation combined
- ii. v15:
 1. All of the mighty nations of the earth...
 - a. a drop
 - b. a spec of dust
 2. Some of you take cooking pretty seriously...
 - a. weigh flour...
 - b. take everything great in this world...
 - c. it’s not the flour – it’s the dust left behind!
 - d. doesn’t even register – 0.000!
- iii. v16:
 1. Lebanon – massive cedar forests, home to countless animals
 2. STILL not a worthy sacrifice!

- iv. v17:
 1. 3 words for nothingness, insignificance
 2. lit: "All the nations are as nothing in His presence; they are counted as nothing and nothingness to Him."
- v. Add everything on earth together – hold it up next to God, and you have nothing!
 1. Creation is infinitesimally small next to Him!
 2. The whole universe fits on His workbench!
- vi. 2nd thing to know about our God... read v13-14...

b. Omniscient (13,14)

- i. rhetorical questions: "No one!"
- ii. In Babylonian religion
 1. creator Marduk – needed help from Wisdom
- iii. In contrast, our God needed no one's help!
 1. omniscient: He knows and fully understands all things, past, present, and future, both things actual and things possible.
 2. Nothing He does not fully know & fully understand.
- iv. 3rd thing to know about our God... read v18-20...

c. Incomparable (18-20)

- i. rhetorical question: "Nothing!"
 1. Nothing is like Him; nothing can compare!
- ii. That's why idolatry is so idiotic...
 1. Create idols from creation that can't even stand up!
 2. Our idols are just as unreliable: wealth, fame, beauty
 3. Fools to worship anything in this world rather than He who created the world!
- iii. He is without rival, without equal, without peer
- iv. Finally, 4th thing to know about our God. He is...

d. Transcendent Sovereign

i. read v21-22 – sovereign Lord over the earth

1. "the circle of the earth" = enthroned on the horizon – all of the world lies at His feet.
2. We are like grasshoppers: small, insignificant
3. He stretches the sky like a thin curtain.
4. Absolute sovereign over earth, water, and sky.

ii. read v23-24 – sovereign Lord over humanity

1. Over all human rulers – kings, presidents
2. Last week – sovereign over king of Assyria
3. King of all kings and Lord of all lords.

iii. read v25-26 – sovereign Lord over the universe

1. Concludes by pointing us to space
2. Meant something back then
3. Means more today! We live in the days of the Hubble
 - a. meant for science – greatest benefit to worship!

Here's what we've learned in recent years...

- observable universe = 92 billion light years in diameter
- Contains ~ 100 billion galaxies
 - e.g. Sombrero galaxy – hundreds of billions of stars orbiting a super-massive black hole. Small compared to...
 - Pinwheel galaxy – 1 trillion stars
- Do the math: 100 bill gal with hundreds of billions of stars each...
- = 300 sextillion stars = 3 followed by 23 zeroes
- Too big to comprehend – illustrate:
 - backyard, night sky, powerful telescope...
 - 10,000 gal = 5 thousand million million stars!

e. Our God "calls them all by name!"

f. Our God is the immense, omniscient, incomparable, transcendent sovereign Lord of a universe that's too big and too great for us to even comprehend.

g. So, can He restore you even after you've sinned?

h. YES!! OF COURSE HE CAN!

- i. 300,000 million million million stars
- ii. Then He can take care of you!
- iii. No big deal for a God like this!
- iv. No lost causes for this God!

And that leads Isaiah to His conclusion...

v27-31: Conclusion & Application

- read v27: These are the words of the exiles...
 - Isaiah's encouragement...
- read v28-31:
 - look beyond yourself – look to God – infinite in strength
 - Shares that strength with all who are weary...
 - All we must do, is "wait upon Him" = faith / trust
 - He will fix what we've broken!
 - If we will trust, He will fill us with strength like eagles... strength, power, and freedom
 - That's what God wants for us – if we'll only trust Him...
 - That leads us to our application...

Application: Believe – trust

- Is that the same application as last week? Yes it is! Because you never get past this one. All of life boils down to faith. Will you trust God? That's the essence of life. Will you choose to believe that...
 - you are never beyond hope
 - God really does hear and care for you – even if it feels otherwise – He loves you and He longs to show you grace if you'll only turn to Him in faith
- Perhaps it's time for you to believe that truth for the first time...
 - Maybe you feel like you are beyond God's salvation – you've sinned so bad, He could never love you. Or you believe His love is possible, but you've got to earn it, you've got to merit it through your good works.

- What you need to realize is that God's love is not something to be earned – it is a free gift that He offers to all people, even those who've done horrible things. No one living is beyond God's grace. He is extending His love to you right now, and all you have to do to receive it is simply believe. Believe that Jesus, God's own Son, died for all of your sins, even the bad ones, He paid for all your sins. And then He rose from the dead so that you could have eternal life with God. The moment you believe that Jesus died for you and rose from the dead, you receive God's love and forgiveness as a free gift that you can never lose.
- If there is anything holding you back from that belief, please come talk to someone this morning. There is nothing more important you will ever consider than the good news of what Jesus has done for you.
- Now, what about those of us who've already trusted in the death of Christ for our sins... Some of us are like Isaiah's audience. We're children of God, who are full of regret. We've sinned and that sin has damaged us and damaged people we care about. If that's you, what you need to believe this morning is that you are never beyond hope. As a child of God, you are never a lost cause. God is both willing and able to fix what you have broken, to heal what you have damaged, if you'll only turn to Him. Turn away from your sin and turn to God in trust and He will deliver you; He will rescue and restore you. He's the creator of the universe – He can restore you even after you've sinned... if you'll simply believe, if you'll simply ask Him and rely upon Him for help.