

# Guest Preacher

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let us now turn to the Old Testament and to the prophecy of Isaiah and chapter 40.! And we shall read from the beginning of the chapter, but our focus will be on verse 3 onwards.

Verse 3.

And every mountain and hill be made low. The uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places are plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall sear together. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken. This morning we saw how the Lord spoke through the prophet Isaiah to bring hope, encouragement, and consolation to his covenant people while they were being disciplined by him in the Babylonian exile.

We saw that there were three main themes running from chapter 40 to the end of the book. There was deliverance from the future captivity in Babylon.

[ 1 : 35 ] There was the redemption from sin through our Lord Jesus Christ. And there was the glory of the redeemed church of God in the advance of the gospel in this world and the glorious eternal inheritance in the world to come in the new heavens and in the new earth.

Also, we noted this morning as we looked at three main themes that was contained within the message. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and cry unto her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins, that the time of hardship was an allotted time, that it would come to an end, that her sins would be forgiven, and that the justice of God would be satisfied.

This evening, I would like to think of a fourth theme contained within the comforting message that we find in this passage. In these words, A voice cries, In the wilderness.

That signifies to us or tells us that there is urgency and importance. This voice is not just a whisper. This is a voice that calls for our attention. However, this is a voice which is giving further information to us about the message of comfort that was extended to Jerusalem, that was extended to the covenant people.

[ 3 : 49 ] In these words, Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. It is a picture of the heralds that would go before the king, that would call on the people to receive their king.

The heralds would call on the city while the king was still at a distance, for the people of the city to prepare. There was no properly maintained roads in those days, so that when a king was going to visit, it was customary to send a herald in advance to command the local people to repair and to make ready the royal route which the king would take.

Now there is another prophecy in the Old Testament that is like that of Isaiah, and that is to be found in the prophecy of Malachi on chapter 3.

And there we read, Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple.

And it is interesting that when we come to the Gospel of Mark, that he does something that is quite remarkable.

[ 5 : 10 ] He quotes the prophecy of the two Old Testament prophets, namely Malachi and Isaiah. And he points us to the fact that they were both fulfilled in the ministry of John the Baptist.

We know right here this evening that when the angel announced the birth of John the Baptist to his father, that the angel said, Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for a prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will be your son, and you shall call his name John.

And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord, and he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.

And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, and to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.

After he was born, his father Zechariah prophesied, A new child will be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people, and the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high, to give light to those who sit in darkness, and the shadow of death to guide our feet into the way of peace.

[ 6 : 49 ] Marcus, not alone in the New Testament, for the Gospels takes this prophecy that we have here, in Isaiah 40, verse 3 onwards, and applies it to John the Baptist.

For instance, in Matthew chapter 3, we have these words, In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, when he said, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

And these are very striking words for us, For there had not been a prophet in Israel now for around 400 years, between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

There is a gap there of around 400 years, wherein there was no prophecy. And here is one now coming, John the Baptist, and he is the last prophet of the Old Testament era.

[ 7 : 57 ] And he is given this message to prepare for the first coming of Christ. When Jesus, after his baptism, began his message, it was the same.

From the time that Jesus began to preach and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Repentance was at the core of the preaching of the apostles.

On the day of Pentecost, when the people who heard Peter preach, they were cut to their heart.

And they said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brothers, what shall we do?

And Peter said to them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, for the promises for you and for your children, and for all who are far off, every one whom the Lord, our God, calls to himself. The church, the early church, testified that now God calleth all men everywhere to repent. So we see that repentance must be at the very heart of our preaching.

[ 9 : 20 ] The gospel demands repentance. And here is John the Baptist, and he is preparing the way for the first coming of the Lord.

And how is he preparing the way? He is calling the people, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Repentance was at the core heart of the ministry of John the Baptist as he prepared the way for the first coming of Christ.

And repentance is at the very core of preaching today as we prepare for the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Repentance is at the core of our message. It is at the very heart of our preaching. What is it to repent?

Well, repentance is a gift of God, and it is part of the saving grace. He gives through the work of the Holy Spirit.

[ 10 : 24 ] The Greek word for repentance means a complete change of mind.

This is more than to feel sorry for sin or to regret sin. It is a radical shift in one's understanding of God, of sin, and of self.

True repentance involves recognizing the holiness of God, the gravity of sin, and the necessity of turning from sin to embrace Christ for salvation.

David in Psalm 51 said, Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight.

Psalm 32, verse 5, the psalmist says, I acknowledge my sin to you, and you forgave the iniquity.

But until that moment in which he acknowledges sin, his condition, he describes thus, For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

[ 11 : 58 ] For day and night, your hand was heavy upon me. My strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity.

I said, I will confess my transgression to the Lord, and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. So having experienced forgiveness, he could write, Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in his spirit, there is no deceit. To repent, then, is to confess the sinfulness of our sin against God.

To repent is also to be contrite. It is more than to feel sad and remorseful. We may feel like sad or be remorseful simply because we have been caught out, or we have been brought to face the consequences of our sin.

You can have a sense of sin. For instance, Pharaoh had a sense of sin. For he confessed, This time I have sinned. The Lord is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong.

[13:18] And what happened after that? He went and he hardened his heart. That was not true repentance. And yet, he had a sense of the sin, of his sin.

Judas, who betrayed the Lord, had a sense of his sin. I have sinned, for I have betrayed innocent blood. To have a sense of sin is not repentance.

To be truly repentant, to be truly contrite, is to be grieved by your sin as an offence against God.

To repent is to change our ways, turning away from sin. It is enough, not enough, to know that sin is sin, or even to shed tears of sorrow.

If we are to be truly repentant, then we will leave our sin behind, and we will follow God. Through repentance, it's a person who grieves for and hates his sin, as to turn from them into God, purposing and endeavoring to walk with him in all the ways of his commandments.

[14:37] Our catechism answers the question, what is repentance into life? And the catechism answers like this, repentance into life, is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, does with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it into God, with full purpose and endeavor after new obedience.

You see, through repentance has these very important principles connected with it, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, David had a true sense of his sin when he uttered these words, against you, you only, have I sinned.

but he also had an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ. And having these two, he with grief and hatred of his sin turned from it into God, with full purpose of and endeavor after new obedience.

John the Baptist came, and this was at the core message of his, of his preaching, repentance. That was what he, what he taught, that was what he preached upon in preparing a way for the Lord.

John the Baptist, he challenged the Pharisees and the Sadducees that came to hear him. He said to them, bear fruit in keeping with repentance.

[16:22] Thomas Watson says that there are six ingredients in true repentance towards God. First of all, he says, there's a sight of sin.

Then there is sorrow for sin. Then there is confession of sin. Then there is shame for sin. Then there is a hatred for sin.

And then there is a turning away from sin. Philip Henry, wisely said, some people do not like to hear much of repentance.

But I think it is so necessary that if I should die in the pulpit, I should decide to die preaching repentance. And if I should die out of the pulpit, I should like to die practicing it.

In verse 4 of this chapter that we have taken from Isaiah this evening, we have a description of what must be done to prepare for the arrival of the Lord.

[17:30] It says, every valley shall be lifted up and every mountain and hill be made low. The uneven ground shall become level and the rough places are plain.

what that brings before us is that every possible obstruction is to be removed. Whatever hinders us from repenting must be removed.

The voices in the wilderness, it is interesting that John is living quarters and where he baptized is given to us in the New Testament as in the wilderness.

I think that there is some significance attached to that. For often in the Bible, the wilderness reminds us of a place that is dry and barren.

We can see that if we travel along with the children of Israel in their wilderness journey. In the prophecy of Isaiah in chapter 33, the wilderness is portrayed to us as a land that has suffered the divine penalty on its sin.

[18:39] And there we read the highways lie waste. The traveller ceases. Covenants are broken. Cities are despised. There is no regard for man.

The land mourns and languishes. Lebanon is confounded and withers away. Sharon is like a desert and Bershon and Carmel shake off their leaves.

But it is into such a barren and wasteland that the voice cries and is heard. Is that not true of the gospel call?

That it is to a spiritual barren land that it comes. That it is a barren land that hears the gospel. The gospel that proclaims to repent. The gospel that claims repentance as the way to prepare for the Lord.

[ 19 : 43 ] What is emphasised here is the removal of obstacles of every sort no matter how great and how can this be done you see?

Well it can only be done in faith. Anticipating the arrival of the one who is coming is announced what we have here is a picture it's an illustration of me and you because we are under the divine penalty for our sin.

Our hearts are like the wilderness spiritually dry and barren and we all need to prepare our hearts to receive the Lord. There remains obstacles which must be attended to before the Lord can be received before he comes to dwell with us.

John spoke of that preparation work as repentance. Augustine once said how long shall I say I will repent? Tomorrow he says how long will I say I will repent tomorrow but why not at this instance because delay brings danger.

Today you will hear his voice harden not your hearts such are God summons to repentance. Here we come face to face with a great challenge and that is to recognize our need for repentance.

[ 21 : 14 ] That's where it begins. We must recognize our need for repentance. We must recognize our sin and our sin against God.

You see often we downplay our sin or we brush it off us that is no big deal. That's often what we hear today.

If we bring sinnership before our people if we say that you're a sinner or if we pinpoint some sin in the life of our nation you see many people downplay it and brush it away completely saying well that's not a big deal.

But if we truly want to repent we must see our sin as God sees it because God sees it as something that is serious.

God sees it as something deserving his judgment and we must see it serious and deserving the judgment of God.

[ 22 : 25 ] A diminished sense of sin can be an obstacle for repentance. So ask God to open your eyes to see your need for repentance.

Listen to David in Psalm 139 where he said search me O God and know my heart try me and know my thoughts and see if there be any grievous way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.

He was seeking the help of God and for you and me to repent we must also seek the help of God. In chapter 59 of this prophecy the Lord says to Judah but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God.

you know habitual sin can become so ingrained in your life that it can make you feel comfortable with it and it can become so accepted while it leads you in the path of eternal destruction.

[ 23 : 47 ] Every valley shall be lifted up and every mountain and hill be made low the even ground shall become level and the rough places are plain.

Repentance can be hard but remember that God's grace is greater than your sin. The cross of Christ stands as a constant reminder that God's grace is available to all who will repent and who will believe.

You know in the ministry of John the Baptist the gospel of Matthew calls for us the response of the people. John came preaching repent for the kingdom of God is at hand.

John came putting repentance at the core of his message to the people in preparing the way for the Lord. And we read about John's ministry that there went out unto him all the land of Judea and they of Jerusalem and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan confessing their sins.

A steady stream of people kept coming to him confessing their sins and were baptized by him.

There was a widespread acceptance and an embracing of the ministry of John and his preaching.

[ 25 : 14 ] Jesus himself says of John he was a burning and a shining light and you were willing for a season to rejoice in his light. But there were also those who objected and rejected and criticized especially the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

And wherever the gospel is proclaimed wherever the gospel of repentance is proclaimed there are not only those who accept and embrace but also those who rejected those who criticized it.

And each one of us tonight will belong to one of those groups. Luke tells us that among those who went out to John were publicans or tax collectors the rich and the poor even the Roman soldiers went out to hear his preaching.

And yet the Pharisees and the Sadducees criticized his preaching. the public ministry of John the Baptist was not a very long one.

Some estimate that the duration of his public ministry to be around six months to a year. It was a short ministry. But it leaves us with a question.

[ 26 : 36 ] How are we responding to God's call in our lives? How are we responding to the message of repentance? What hindrances and obstacles must you remove from your heart to receive the Lord Jesus into your life?

What hinders you from repenting? What hinders you from bowing down and asking the Lord to come into your heart? And here we read, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

Well, within the context of the chapter, of course, the glory and faithfulness of God would be shown in him delivering the people from the captivity of Babylon.

But it also points us to a greater deliverance in which we see the glory of the Lord being revealed.

Christ himself, who is the brightness of his Father's glory, reveals to us the glory of the Lord.

Jesus proclaims no one has ever seen God. God, the only Son, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

[ 28 : 12 ] The glory of the Lord, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, the glorious perfections of God's nature can be seen in him, can be seen in the miracles that he worked, in the doctrines that he taught.

The glory of the divine Father is revealed in the face or person of Christ. All the glory of God's attributes is shown in the work of salvation by him.

This phrase, the glory of the Lord, signifies his magnificence, his splendor, his greatness, which will no longer be hidden from the eyes of mankind.

The term all flesh implies that everyone, regardless of their background or status, will witness this revelation together, the revelation of the glory of the Lord.

The mouth of the Lord has spoken, indicates to us the certainty and the authority of this promise.

The passage captures the heart of God's message to his people.

[ 29 : 23 ] He decides for all to see his glory, a theme that echoes throughout the word of God.

Psalms 19 proclaims to us, the heavens declare the glory of God and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

And as Paul explains in his letter to the Romans, for what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world and the things that have been made.

And then he goes on and says, they are without excuse. The heavens declare the glory of God.

God. But there is a far greater revelation made of the glory of God. In John's gospel, chapter 1, verse 14, we read, and the word became flesh and dwelt among us.

And we have seen his glory, the glory as the only son from the father, full of grace and truth. so that the glory of the Lord has been revealed to us through his son, Jesus Christ.

[ 30 : 52 ] That verse reflects the fulfillment of this promise that is given for us here in Isaiah 40, verse 5. Because in the person of Christ, we see the glory of God.

We see the manifestation of God's glory through Jesus Christ. But for some tonight, that glory is hidden.

For some tonight, it brings them no comfort that that glory has been revealed. But for the child of God, for the covenant child tonight, this is his comfort, as we have already spoken of today.

his comfort that his hardship and all the hardship that he has in this world, it's got its unloved time, it's coming to an end.

That comfort that his sins have been forgiven. That comfort that the giant justice has been satisfied, that God is just in forgiving him or her their sins.

[ 32 : 05 ] and this comfort of repentance, to repent of our sin, to embrace the mercy of God, and this comfort that the glory of the Lord has been revealed in the person, in the work of Jesus Christ.

Christ, is that your own comfort tonight? Well, Paul went on to say to the Corinthians, if this glory is hidden from you, if our gospel is failed, it is failed to those who are perishing.

In their case, the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

And to some tonight, that whatever circumstances they may be facing in providence, there are some tonight who sins have not been forgiven.

There are some tonight who is under the just wrath of God. There are some tonight who is not repenting. There are obstacles in the way.

[ 33 : 31 ] There are some tonight who have not seen the glory, the revealed glory of the Lord in Jesus Christ. Is that you? The hard work of repentance is essential for every believer.

believer. As we read there in the prophecy, it says, every valley shall be lifted up and every mountain and hill be made low.

The uneven ground shall become level and the rough places are plain. That was hard work. And you know, repentance is hard work. We have to work at it.

And that hard work of repentance is essential for every believer. God calls us to live lives marked by continual repentance, a continual turning away from sin and turning towards the mercy of God.

Repentance isn't about punishment. It's about transformation. It means a turning away from sin to God.

[ 34 : 46 ] When we embrace the hard work of repentance, we open ourselves up to the fullness of life that Jesus has promised us. All flesh shall see together, not the Jews only, but the Gentiles were to see this.

Not with their bodily eyes, but with the eyes of their understanding. they were to see the glory of the Lord and the revelation that Jesus Christ has made of that glory.

The salvation of the Lord and his glory. As they read in that salvation which has been set forth in the everlasting gospel to the view of all, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it, that his glory should be revealed and be visible to all.

And therefore, because the mouth of the Lord has spoken it, it is sure and certain for what he has said, he does, and what he has spoken, he makes good.

Make room for Christ. Make straight a highway for him. repentance is continuous in the life of the Christian.

[ 36 : 08 ] It's not something we do one day and not the next. We live a continuous life of repentance towards God.

There is a sense in which for the Christian, he needs to repent for his repentance. He needs to repent for how little repentance he sees in his or her life.

Repentance is necessary for salvation. That was the core message of John. It is the core message of the preaching of the gospel tonight.

Repentance is necessary. It is a hard work. But it is a work that we must be involved in to see the glory of the Lord in the salvation that he has worked out for sinners like me and you.

And tonight I hope that we can all leave with that great comforting message that we see here in Isaiah chapter 40.

[ 37 : 33 ] May the Lord bless our thoughts upon it. Let us pray. Eternal and ever blessed Lord we give thee thanks for the comfort that thou doth give to thy covenant people those who are thine.

And we give thanks O Lord that thou doth grant to us the grace and the gift of repentance. O Lord we pray that we may see our sin and our sin as it stands in thine own presence as that which is he is.

And we pray O Lord that that desire will be planted in our heart by thy Holy Spirit a desire to turn away from our sin to sorrow over our sin to sorrow and hatred with hatred over our sin and to turn and to embrace the salvation that thou doth offer to us through thy son that we would be able to see that we know the glory of the Lord that it has been revealed to us through the work of the cross of Golgotha where he bore in his own body what our sins deserved.

We give thee thanks O Lord for the gospel and we pray that it may indeed be applied to our hearts through thy Holy Spirit that it may bring fruit forth in our lives to the glory of thy name.

We pray Lord that thou would continue with us bless the fellowship as they come to gather together.

We pray O Lord that it may be a means of bringing them to repentance to see their need of repentance to see the sufficiency of Christ to meet with their need that they may come to know the

blessedness of bearing the yoke of Christ in the days of their youth.

[ 39 : 27 ] We pray Lord that thou would continue with us in coming days and all that we ask for the forgiveness of our sins in Jesus name and for his sake. Amen. We shall conclude by singing from sing Psalms and Psalm 28 and at verse 6 praise to the Lord for he has heard the plea for mercy which I made.

He is my strength he is my shield I trust in him who sends me aid. My heart uplifted leaps for joy my thanks to him I gladly sing. The Lord God is his people's strength a saving fortress for his king. Lord save your people your own flock. Be pleased your heritage to bless be their good shepherd carry them forever in your faithfulness. We shall sing these verses to the Lord's praise of sing Psalms 28 verse 6 to 9 praise to the Lord for he has heard the plea for mercy which I made. Praise to the Lord for he has heard the plea for mercy which I made.

He is my strength he is my shield I trust in him who sends me aid.

[ 41 : 02 ] My heart uplifted lives for joy my thanks to him I gladly sing.

! The Lord God is his people's friend A saving for threats for his king!

Lord, save your people your people your own flock! Be pleased your heritage to bless be their good shepherd God!

for faithfulness for faithfulness for grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.