

## **The Care of Our Great Shepherd**

Anchors in the Darkness: Words of Hope in Our Troubles / Isaiah 40:9-31 / April 12, 2026

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### **Introduction:**

This morning, we are beginning a special 4-week series titled “Anchors in the Darkness,” before returning to our study of Acts. One goal in this series is to honor Pastor Perry Kallis by giving him, in a small way, the opportunity to exhort this church family once more through God’s Word. If you are new to GracePoint, Pastor Perry served as GracePoint’s Lead Pastor for 25 years before my arrival. We had hoped he would remain on staff in a church care role before retiring, but brain cancer altered those plans, affecting his ability to form thoughts into words. As you might imagine, this is a uniquely difficult trial for someone whose ministry was centered on encouraging others with words. Yet, Perry’s steady peace and firm hope in God since his diagnosis in May of 2024 have been unmistakably evident. So, we asked him to select passages for that have sustained him in this trial, and he would proclaim to you if he were able. We will work through these passages and, at times, may even revisit his own words from past sermons on them. While one goal is to honor Perry, our ultimate aim is to hold out the same hope to you in the midst of your own trials. Today, we begin with Isaiah 40 and it’s no surprise this was Perry’s first choice. In a sermon on this passage, preached in 2014, Perry opened with this quote by A.W. Tozer, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us” (A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, p. 1). Any anchor in the darkness has to begin with God, and there are few better passages than Isaiah 40 for that. Look at verse 9, “Go on up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, ‘Behold your God!’” This call comes after God tells Isaiah to speak comfort to His people because He would pardon their sin and deliver them from captivity. Verses 3-5 say the sign of the deliverance would be a voice crying out in the wilderness to prepare the way of the Lord. The gospels show John the Baptist as that voice and place the ultimate fulfillment of Isaiah 40 in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This tells us that, while Isaiah speaks directly to Israel in Babylon, this call is for all who trust in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Hear the call, “If you are trusting in Jesus, boldly proclaim to your heart and others, ‘Look at your God!’ Shout from the rooftops that your hope in the darkness is God Himself.” Following this, we find three powerful reasons to proclaim this. First,

### **Your God is a Caring Shepherd**

The remainder of this chapter can be divided into three primary sections. Verses 10-11 proclaim God is coming to do something, verses 12-26 describe God’s nature, and verses 27-31 declare what this means for His people. Look at verses 10-11, “Behold, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.” God promises to come with two things working in tandem, the strength of a warrior and the tenderness of a shepherd. And note the imagery of God’s ruling and gathering arm. This is beautiful language to speak of how God is both able and loves to provide for His people. J. Alec Motyer puts it this way, “Mighty though [God] is, there is nothing ruthless in his power. Towards his people it is a power working by love” (J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary*, V 20, p. 277). Family, when you trust in Jesus Christ, as the Great Shepherd, you are trusting in a powerful God who loves to care for your every need. A God who has the strength to defeat sin, Satan and death, and the tenderness to carry you through all of life’s troubles. Proclaim “Behold your God” because your God is a caring Shepherd. Second reason to proclaim this,

### **Your Shepherd is Immeasurably Holy**

We speak of God as Holy often, but do we really understand its meaning? God’s Holiness refers to His separation from all things. A theological term for this is His transcendence. God’s transcendence is His existence outside, above, and independent from all things. Verses 12-26 detail this. Look at verses 12-14, “Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance?”

Who has measured the Spirit of the Lord, or what man shows him his counsel? Whom did he consult, and who made him understand? Who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding?" Beginning with the fabrics of creation—water, heavens, dust, mountains, and hills—we are shown God is so far beyond creation that, with precision, He measures the oceans in the palm of his hand, marks out the expanse of the galaxies with the span from his thumb to pinky finger, and places all the earth's dust on His measuring scale. Think on this imagery. Galaxies, mountains and oceans appear endless to our natural sight. But, God measures them without any instrumentation. Following this, Isaiah speaks of God's unrivaled wisdom, needing counsel from no one and having none who can instruct Him in matters of knowledge or justice. He creates and orchestrates all things according to the counsel of His own will. Notice how verses 15-17 build on these things, "Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as the dust on the scales; behold, he takes up the coastlands like fine dust. Lebanon would not suffice for fuel, nor are its beasts enough for a burnt offering. All the nations are as nothing before him, they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness." Dwell on this: nations—filled with millions, feared for their size and strength—are to God like a drop from a bucket, or the dust a chemist wipes away to get to a precise measurement. As God measures the waters in the hollow of His hand and weighs the dust of the earth as though it were nothing, all of humanity is no more than a splash that spills unnoticed, a particle of dust no one troubles to recover. Further, we could offer all of Lebanon as a sacrifice, a place known for vast forests and beasts, and it would never be sufficient for our Holy God. Why? Because, in comparison to the splendor of His majesty, humanity is "accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness." The point isn't to demean our existence but emphasize God's transcendence. Continue in verses 18-24, "To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him? An idol! A craftsman casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold and casts for it silver chains. He who is too impoverished for an offering chooses wood that will not rot; he seeks out a skillful craftsman to set up an idol that will not move. Do you not know? Do you not hear? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in; who brings princes to nothing, and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness. Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows on them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble." Let's focus on the main point here for the sake of time. It is foolish to try and craft an idol that depicts God because He has shown, from the creation of the world, that He sits enthroned over all things, treating the heavens like a tent, and rules over every earthly power, causing kingdoms to rise and fall with a simple blow of His breath. Look at verses 25-26, "To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name; by the greatness of his might and because he is strong in power, not one is missing." These concluding questions call for us look at everything we can see, recognizing nothing compares to the Holy One. God is absolutely unique in wisdom, might, power, and control. So much so that the starry hosts have been numbered and named, with none ever being out of place or escaping His control. As Perry said well in his past sermon, "God not only has power over the world, He has absolute power over the whole universe. There is nothing God is not in control of" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WzwG2HywYHY>). Church, our God is an awesome God. Yet, there's one more thing we should consider. This imagery of God's Holiness is helpful and pointedly powerful. But understand this, try as we may, we will never be able to truly describe or comprehend His immeasurable Holiness. Now, before moving on, connect this truth with the first truth. This immeasurably holy God is your caring Shepherd. This gets even sweeter with the third reason Isaiah gives, **Your Shepherd God Never Stops Working For His People** Have you ever wondered if God stopped caring for you in a deep valley of darkness? Be honest. Maybe that is even where you are today. Highlight, underline, and memorize these final words.

Look at verses 27-28, “Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, ‘My way is hidden from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God’? Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.” Pause there. We can think wrongly about God’s transcendence, thinking He is so far beyond us that He can’t bother to be intimately present in our lives. We need to remember another important theological truth, God is immanent. God’s immanence is His always active, never tiring, perfectly wise involvement in our everyday lives. And His transcendence isn’t in conflict with His immanence.

I love what Derek Kidner says about this, “The wrong inference from God’s transcendence,” he says, “is that [God] is too great to care; the right one is that he is too great to fail” (F. Derek Kidner, *The New Bible Commentary: Isaiah*, p. 656). A true understanding of God’s transcendence doesn’t place God too far away to be involved in our lives, it bolsters our confidence that His immanence means He can and will keep His promises. And notice one of those promises in verses 29-31, “He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.” Oh family, this is a great anchor in any darkness. When you are weak, faint of heart, worn out from your troubles, and feeling defeated without hope, God promises to give power and strength. Consider the significance of two words in these verses. First, is the word for “wait,” which is “qāvâ.” This term carries the idea of hopeful anticipation, patiently waiting, and fully resting in something. It’s used to speak of twisting strands together to make a strong rope to hold on to. What are we waiting on? “The Lord” to act. So, we should be a people holding onto a strong rope attached to our immeasurably Holy Shepherd God. Next is the word for “renew,” which is “ḥālap̄,” speaking of exchanging, or replacing with something fresh, used for changing garments. Hear this family! Those who wait on the Lord will exchange our frailty and human weakness for the strength of the transcendent God. And note the imagery of this new strength. It is like an eagle soaring effortlessly in the air, an Olympic runner never tiring, and walking endlessly without a hint of fatigue. This powerful anchor in the darkness is a word of hope to all who place their trust in Jesus Christ. He died and rose again, for you to be reconciled to the immeasurably Holy God. When you believe in His death and resurrection, you become part of God’s people and He turns towards you with His tender shepherding care for all of eternity. Family, God is your anchor in the darkness, who promises to give, as we sang earlier, “strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow.”

### **Conclusion:**

As the worship team comes for our time of reflection and response, let me conclude by sharing how I believe Pastor Perry would exhort you in your troubles—what I believe he has done in his.

### **Anchor Your Hope in Your Transcendent and Immanent God**

I say this with confidence because he spoke this to my heart this week. In fact, let’s have Perry directly speak to you to end our time. [Video Transcription] *“Are you waiting on God? It’s not so much that we have to hang on to God, it is, you have to know and believe that God is hanging on to you. He is transcendent, yet He is immanent. People’s faith may grow up and down. We get weary from time to time. Do you trust God as your hope? I mentioned earlier an illustration about my dad. It’s been almost two years since God called him to glory. I’m so happy for dad. The further I get away from that event, the more delighted I am that Dad’s there. But one thing I do remember about God or about dad and I miss about my dad, is his hands. He had these big, big farmer hands. His ring didn’t even fit on his fingers. That farmer’s hands get big. And I remember that his hands were so strong when I was a kid. He could tighten a bolt and it would take me a plier to loosen it. And yet as he got older, was off the farm. Now, what I remember about my dad’s hands is when he’d hugged me and they weighed himself heavily. They’re bigger than my hands by double and just a hug. I tell you that because strong and soft both work together, neither one cancels the other out. God is both transcendent, He is strong, and He is immanent. He is close and He is soft. And God’s there and He never fails.*”

*Maybe you've been forgetting that. Maybe you're filled with anxious thoughts about the future. Maybe you're overwhelmed by what you are facing here this morning. Maybe it's an illness in you or someone you love. Maybe it's a financial need that threatens to undo you. Maybe it's a conflict with someone and you don't think that relationship will ever be better again. Maybe it's a job that's demanding more from you than you can give. Maybe it's the prospect of retirement or children leaving the home or entering the home or a rebuilding process after your spouse has died. Whatever the mountain, you're not alone.”* Family, Anchor your hope in your transcendent and Immanent God. Would you pray with me as we prepare to respond to God’s Word today?