

THE SERVANT KING: Mighty to Save, Gentle to Carry

Big Idea: The Servant King is strong enough to rule the universe yet tender enough to carry your wounds.

Key Texts: Isaiah 40:9–11, 28–31; Matt 11:28–30; Heb 4:15–16; Ps 23

ATTENTION GETTER

“Light and Life family, it’s good to be with you as we continue our series “Servant King” how Isaiah leads us to Jesus, and I want to begin by asking you a question today:

Have you ever been in a situation where your well-being — maybe even your survival — depended entirely on whether someone else kept their word?

For my family, that moment came in April of 2021...”

(Tell the Tahoe story — babies, cold, uncertainty, trusting strangers.)

“In Tahoe, we trusted strangers because we had no other option. We didn’t know their story. We didn’t know their history. We just had to decide — do we believe them?

But when Isaiah 40 opens with the words, ‘Comfort, comfort my people,’ God isn’t asking His people to take a gamble.

He’s not saying, ‘I know you don’t know much about me, but take a chance’.

He’s saying, ‘Remember who I’ve always been.’

Because hard seasons mess with your memory.

Waiting makes you start to doubt what you once believed.

And when life hurts, it’s easy to wonder if God’s still for us.

That’s where Israel was.

And if we’re honest, that’s where many of us find ourselves.

When you’re praying for healing and the pain doesn’t lift.

When you’re asking for direction and the path still feels unclear.

When you’re trying to hold your family together and it feels like you’re running out of strength.

Isaiah 40 steps into that space and says: Look again.
Remember again. Behold your God again.

And when we behold our God, here is what we see, this is the Big Idea:

“The Servant King is strong enough to rule the universe, yet tender enough to carry your wounds.”

EXEGESIS

If you’ve ever wondered whether God still sees you...
if you’ve ever felt forgotten...
if you’ve ever questioned whether He’s really coming through...

Our passage today, Isaiah 40 doesn’t begin with thunder.

It begins with comfort.

Let’s hear it together. We are in Isaiah 40:1-5

1 Comfort, comfort my people,
says your God.

2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and proclaim to her
that her hard service has been completed,
that her sin has been paid for,
that she has received from the Lord’s hand
double for all her sins.

3 A voice of one calling:
“In the wilderness prepare
the way for the Lord;
make straight in the desert
a highway for our God.

4 Every valley shall be raised up,
every mountain and hill made low;
the rough ground shall become level,
the rugged places a plain.

5 And the glory of the Lord will be revealed,
and all people will see it together.
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

“Did you hear how that begins?

Not with another warning, correction, or reminder of failure.

But with comfort.

For 39 chapters, Isaiah has spoken hard words — words of judgment, consequences, exile. And they were deserved.

But now — everything changes.

The tone shifts.

The posture shifts.

The voice softens.

‘Comfort, comfort **MY** people,’ says God. Reminding them in one swift moment they are still very much His.

And that reveals the first thing Isaiah wants us to understand about this King:

I. The Servant King stays close to His People (v1-5)

Even after wandering. Even after rebellion. Even after bitterness. Even after doubting Him.

Some of you walked in today quietly wondering, *Is God still near me? Have I drifted too far? Would He still receive me?*

Listen to what He says: “Speak tenderly.” That phrase literally means, “Speak to the heart.”

The service has been completed. The sin has been paid for. It is done. No more. You have had enough.

It’s a bit like disciplining your children. When I discipline my son— because I love him — we always hold him close and say, “Okay. It’s done. We love you”

The consequence is real. The correction matters
But hear me... the relationship is never canceled.

That's what God is doing here. He is assuring them they belong even as He disciplines them.

And then Isaiah shifts the imagery.

He speaks in pictures the people would immediately understand.

When a king was coming to visit, you didn't just wait for him to arrive. You prepared the road. Valleys were filled in. Hills were leveled. Obstacles were cleared. You made a straight path because the king was coming.

It's not unlike today. When a president visits a city, streets are secured, routes are cleared, everything is arranged in advance. Preparation announces importance.

That's the picture.

But notice something surprising.

Isaiah doesn't say, "Prepare the way so you can get to God."

He says, "Prepare the way of the Lord."

This sentence implies that God is the one coming toward His people.

The valleys will be raised.
The mountains will be made low.
The rough ground will become level.

In other words — nothing will prevent Him from arriving.

He is not distant.
He is not hesitant.
He is not waiting for them to climb their way back to Him.

He is coming.
And His glory will be revealed.

Some of us need to hear that.

Because it can feel like we're the ones trying to fight our way back to God.

But Isaiah 40 says something different.

God goes the distance so He can be near His people.
He moves toward us.
He clears the obstacles.
He makes the way.

Our God does not retreat when things get messy — He comes.

The valleys rise.
The mountains fall.
The rough places are made smooth.

Nothing stands in the way of His arrival.

Do you hear that?
Your God removes every barrier so He can come near to you.

Application: Maybe the most spiritual thing some of us can do today is stop trying to earn our way back — and simply surrender to the comfort He’s already speaking. Maybe some of us need to lay our pride down and simply receive His love and strength today.

Bridge: Now just because this King stays close to you does not mean He is weak... in fact, Isaiah tells us that the Servant King reigns over everything!

II. The Servant King Reigns Over Everything! (v6-26)

Listen to these words in Isaiah 40:6-11.

6 A voice says, “Cry out.”
And I said, “What shall I cry?”

“All people are like grass,
and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field.

7 The grass withers and the flowers fall,
because the breath of the Lord blows on them.
Surely the people are grass.

8 The grass withers and the flowers fall,
but the word of our God endures forever.”

9 You who bring good news to Zion,
go up on a high mountain.

You who bring good news to Jerusalem,
lift up your voice with a shout,
lift it up, do not be afraid;
say to the towns of Judah,
“Here is your God!”

10 See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power,
and he rules with a mighty arm.
See, his reward is with him,
and his recompense accompanies him.

11 He tends his flock like a shepherd:
He gathers the lambs in his arm,
and carries them close to his heart;
he gently leads those that have young.

“All people are like grass... grass that withers and fall
but the word of our God endures forever.”

Do you hear how steady that sounds?

Everything in our lives can change quickly, right?.

Doctors' reports change. Jobs change. Relationships shift. Strength fades.

Grass looks alive in the morning... and by evening it's brittle.

That's us.

But not God.

Not His Word.

When God says something, it doesn't weaken over time.

If God promises something, that promise doesn't lose power because you wait
His authority is not diminished by delay, doubt or difficulty.

If God speaks “Comfort,” then know that comfort has power

If God says “Forgiven,” then know that forgiveness is total and complete

And if God says “I am coming back,” nothing in heaven or earth can stop Him.

You may feel weak, but the One holding you is not weak.
You may feel tired, but the One who watches over you does not slumber.

His Word stands — praise be to God that His Word stands.

And if His Word has never failed across centuries...
it will not fail you now. So fall in love with His Word, put your trust in it, it can hold you.

Now something really astonishing, really beautiful happens in verse 9... I want us to read it again because it is so key:

9 You who bring good news to Zion,
go up on a high mountain.

You who bring good news to Jerusalem,
lift up your voice with a shout,
lift it up, do not be afraid;
say to the towns of Judah,
“Here is your God!”

The understanding here is that the ones who bring good news to Zion, the ones who will go on a high mountain are the very people that God has spoken comfort over.

The very people who needed comfort...
are now the ones lifting their voices.

The comforted become the proclaimers.

The ones who wondered, ‘Is God still for us?’
are now shouting, ‘Here is your God!’

That’s the transformation.

Comfort turns into confidence.
Assurance turns into announcement.

And what are they shouting?

‘Behold your God.’

Look at Him.
See Him clearly.
Remember who He is.”

Isaiah goes to describe this mighty God. Listen to these words:

- “He comes with power (v.10).
- His arm rules with authority (v.10).
- He gathers lambs and carries them close (v.11).
- He measures oceans in His hand (v.12).
- He weighs mountains like dust (v.12).
- Nations are a drop in His bucket (v.15).
- Rulers rise and fall at His word (v.23).
- He calls every star by name and not one of them is missing! (v.26).

That is our God!

Application: So when your life feels chaotic, remember this: the One holding the oceans is holding you. The One who keeps the stars from falling is not going to drop your story.

BRIDGE: And yet... even knowing all of that, the people were still weary, we still feel worn down and discouraged

So God reminds them not only that He stays close,
not only that He reigns over everything,
but that the Servant King gives strength to the weary.

III. The Servant King Gives Strength to the Weary (v27–31)

I said at the beginning that hard seasons mess with our memory.
Waiting breeds doubt.
And when suffering lingers, it’s easy to wonder if God is still at work.

That’s where Israel was.

And if we’re honest — that’s where we find ourselves sometimes.

We know the truths about God.
We can recite them.
But they don’t always travel from our heads down into our hearts.

So how does God respond?

Listen to His words beginning in verse 27:

27 Why do you complain, Jacob?
Why do you say, Israel,
“My way is hidden from the LORD;
my cause is disregarded by my God”?

28 Do you not know?
Have you not heard?
The LORD is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He will not grow tired or weary,
and his understanding no one can fathom.

29 He gives strength to the weary
and increases the power of the weak.

30 Even youths grow tired and weary,
and young men stumble and fall;

31 but those who hope in the LORD
will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.

That statement “My way is hidden from the Lord, my cause is disregarded by the Lord” is not rebellion talk; it’s tired and weary talk. And God is not scolding them here, He is naming what they are feeling. It’s a bit like when a loving, wiser friend says to you “Why are you carrying this alone? You know I’m here.”

Isaiah then asks two rhetorical questions:

Do you not know?

Have you not heard?

And of course they know, and of course they’ve heard. In asking these questions, He is calling them to remember the next words:

The Lord is Everlasting - that is... before creation, before geography, before time as we know it — He already was. And He will still be when everything else fades. We need to join Moses in what he declared in Psalm 90 - from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

He is the Creator - that is.. nothing exists that He hasn't created. All things were created by Him and for Him, and in Him all things hold together. He can create man from dust, and He certainly can make dead bones alive.

He does not grow tired or weary - Unlike us, he does not get overwhelmed. He does not need rest to recover. There is no moment where God says, "I can't handle one more thing."

His understanding is beyond us - meaning there is no situation He misreads. No detail escapes Him. No outcome surprises Him. What feels confusing to you is not confusing to Him. Nothing confuses Him because wisdom belongs fully to Him.

And this same God gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.

Notice who receives His strength — not the impressive, not the self-sufficient, but the exhausted.

God moves toward weakness with strength.

Let me ask you today, Light & Life — do you know what it feels like to be weary?
Do you know what it feels like to reach the end of your own strength?

Because if you do, Isaiah says something remarkable:

Strength is available to you.

But if we insist on relying on ourselves... Isaiah reminds us that even youth — the symbol of energy, vitality, and confidence — eventually grow tired. Even the strong stumble. Human strength always runs out.

Our strength fades.

But God's strength does not.

And then Isaiah gives us a promise we cannot afford to miss.

This is a promise meant to carry you through every season of your life:

31 ... those who hope in the LORD
will renew their strength.

Sometimes translated “wait on the Lord,” this word hope describes expectant trust — the kind of trust that leans its full weight on something solid.

It is hope that rests not in circumstances, not in outcomes, but in the character of God Himself.

Church, the promise is this:

When we keep turning our eyes toward Him —
when it would be easier to look to lesser things,
when obedience feels costly, but we trust Him anyway

God renews our strength.

We keep going.

We show up another day.

We walk with strength that is not our own, but strength given by God Himself.

God never promises to remove every difficulty.

But He does promise to sustain you in the middle of it.

So the question before us is simple:

Will you place your hope in Him? Will you lean on this Servant King who gives you strength?

ILLUSTRATION - PREACHING JESUS!

I want to end with this... as I invite the worship team to come up. Isaiah will end this chapter with a beautiful imagery. He says that those who hope in the Lord:

Soar like eagles

Run without getting weary

Walk without be faint

Sometimes renewal feels like soaring. You have mountaintop moments where you get particular strength, perspective, and faith to overcome. But even eagles are not always soaring.

Sometimes renewal feels like running. This refers to those seasons of life that demand a little more of us. You're pressing on, but without collapsing. Can I tell you that God strengthens us for seasons that demand more of us?

Most of the time though.. Renewal looks like walking.

Ordinary steps. Quiet obedience. Showing up. Praying again. Loving again. Trusting again. Not dramatic. Not flashy. Just faithful.

And don't miss this — Isaiah ends there. Not in the sky. Not in a sprint. But on your feet.

Because the promise is not constant mountaintop moments or adrenaline.
The promise is sustained endurance.

And can I tell you... man, I'm so excited about this... that's the picture of Jesus..

That picture... is the story of Jesus.

Because the Servant King did not stay distant from our weariness.

The everlasting God took on human flesh.

The One who never grows tired entered a body that could.

Jesus soared in glory before time began — the Son reigning with the Father, holding the universe together.

But He stepped down.

He ran the race set before Him — healing, teaching, loving, moving toward broken people with relentless compassion.

And then... He walked.

He walked dusty roads.

He walked toward rejection.

He walked toward suffering.

He walked carrying a cross that held the weight of our sin and our exhaustion.

The God who gives strength to the weary became weary for us.

He took our weakness so that His strength could become ours.

That is the great exchange.

He endured so that you would not collapse.

He walked through death so that you could keep walking in life.

And because He rose again, the strength He promises is not temporary encouragement
—

It is resurrection strength. Come on somebody, we are approaching Easter. It's resurrection strength. And that strength, should we choose to continually abide in Him, will carry us all the days of our lives! Can I get an Amen?

CHALLENGE: Hoping in the Lord - Fast & Feast

I'll end with this, I promise. Speaking of walking and the ordinary disciplines we can have, I want to invite you to practice what Isaiah 40 calls 'hoping in the Lord.'

And because we're in Lent — a season of intentional abstinence — I want to challenge you to fast in a way that teaches you how to hope in the Lord. We're calling Fast & Feast.

Pick 1 "Fast" (something to lay down):

- Social media (or one app)
- Sugar / caffeine / snacks
- Streaming / gaming
- Complaining (yes, that counts)
- Impulse spending
- Late-night scrolling

Pick 1 "Feast" (something to add):

- 5–10 minutes of prayer daily
- A Psalm a day (start with Psalm 23, 27, 51)
- A Gospel reading plan (Mark is great for Lent)
- One act of generosity each week
- One person you intentionally encourage each day

"Jesus, make room in me today.
Search me, forgive me, and lead me.
Give me hunger for You more than anything else.
Form Your love in me—so I live like You. Amen."

That's waiting well. I have provided a resource for you. Walk them through the resource.

RESPONSE: Now, I recognize that in this room, there are different levels of weariness...

As a symbolic way, look to the person next to you or close to you... hopefully they're cool. If you feel comfortable, get a little closer to pray with them.

HOPING IN THE LORD: FAST & FEAST

“... **but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength.** They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” - Isaiah 40:31

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My “Fast & Feast” Commitment leading up to Easter Sunday:

1. What I will fast from _____
2. What I will feast on _____

For more information and resources on Lent, go to lcf.org/lent

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