

April 1, 2018

There Is No Other God Isaiah 40:12-17

As I've already said, our sermon text this morning is Isaiah chapter 40, verses 12 to 17. I am going to read from Isaiah chapter 40, verse 1 through to verse 17. I want to give it its context. Before that reading, we'll pray. Please join me in prayer.

Our Father in heaven, as we continue now to worship you in hearing your word read and in hearing preaching from your word, I pray, Father, that you would help me as I speak. I pray that you would help us all as we listen. Lord, may we be given ears to hear, eyes to see, and hearts that understand and obey. These things we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Isaiah chapter 40, starting our reading at verse 1, and our sermon text will be verses 12 to 17.

“¹ Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. ² Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to 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.

“³ A voice cries: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. ⁴ Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. ⁵ And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.’

“⁶ A voice says, ‘Cry!’ And I said, ‘What shall I cry?’ All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field. ⁷ The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the LORD blows on it; surely the people are grass. ⁸ The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

“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!’ ¹⁰ Behold, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. ¹¹ 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.

“¹² 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? ¹³ Who has measured the Spirit of the LORD, or what man shows him his counsel? ¹⁴ 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? ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ Lebanon would not suffice for fuel, nor are its beasts enough for a burnt offering. ¹⁷ All the nations are as nothing before him, they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness.” Amen. May God bless that word.

So our passage today, as we've read, comes from Isaiah chapter 40, but this is a passage in an ongoing book, and we've worked our way over a year and a half now. We started Christmas Day, 2016, in Isaiah chapter 1, and now we've gotten our way through to Isaiah chapter 40.

The book of Isaiah is a prophetic book, directed to God's people who lived in Judah, that southern kingdom of Israel. The book of Isaiah speaks of the failure of Israel to worship God truly, to worship God in the method, or the means, the way that God required. Back in Isaiah chapter 1, God actually says to the people, "I hate your worship. I hate your gathering together." Why? Because it was hypocrisy. It was hypocritical. They did not worship from the heart.

They treated worship as nothing other than a ritual that you go through. As long as you kept what they considered to be God's calendar, it was okay. It was almost a "user pays" kind of agreement, as far as they were concerned. You turned up at service on Saturday, you handed over your money, you paid for the lamb that was going to be sacrificed—that's it. God's happy. Now I go, and I sin as I please. We could say things don't much change over the history of the church, couldn't we? There's a lot of very light-hearted gathering that calls itself worship, even in this day and age.

But, back into the book of Isaiah, it speaks of the failure of Israel. It speaks of the failure of the nation of Judah, that southern nation. Israel was really only united into one great nation under the Kings Saul, David, and Solomon. Solomon sinned by committing idolatry, and the nation of Israel was split almost in halves. Though ten tribes and two tribes doesn't sound as though it's a half, but when you look at the actual populations that went one way or the other, it's almost a split in half.

The southern kingdom of Judah and Benjamin were what was considered to be the faithful kingdom. After all, they had Jerusalem. They had the temple. They had temple worship. All the Levites had come to the kingdom of Judah. They had abandoned Northern Israel. So Judah should be where you find faithful worship of the living God. And Judah had the sons of David as kings. So once again, you would expect, if that's where the line of David rules over the people of God, well, that must be where you will find things the way they ought to be.

But unfortunately, anyone who knows their Bible will tell you that that's not the history of Judah. There were four, possibly five good, solid, holy kings, or godly kings—we would say, true worshipers of God, and in those times whilst they were reigning, things were good. But there were also some terrible, terrible failures. There were idolatrous kings who sacrificed children in the fire. Sons of David, and yet, they worship Moloch and burnt their babies.

So Isaiah addresses not only Judah, not only the people of God, but Isaiah addresses the line of David. He basically tells them that the line of David will come to an end. There will come one last great king. Isaiah chapter 7 speaks of the fact that He will be born of the virgin. Isaiah chapter 7 speaks of the fact that He will come with justice, that He will come with righteousness, and that He will set God's people free from the burden of their sins.

Isaiah chapters 1 through to 39, though there is a constant message of God's impending judgment and doom for the nation of Judah, there is also the constant message of the coming Saviour. There will come a Saviour. There will come a King. There will come a Shepherd. There will come one who will accomplish God's purposes in salvation. Then we got to Isaiah chapter 40. And Isaiah chapter 40 through to Isaiah chapter 66—well, it's almost the gospel in the Old Testament. It's almost the fifth gospel in the Bible.

Isaiah chapter 40 starts where the gospels in the New Testament start. One comes preaching, “Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.” “A voice cries: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, every mountain and hill be made low.’”

And we know that that one is John the Baptist. John the Baptist came speaking of the one who would come after him, the one whose shoe laces, we would say, whose shoe laces he was not fit to tie. We know who that one is—the Son of David. The gospel of Matthew tells us that Jesus is the son of Abraham, the son of David, the Son of God.

In other words, all of those promises that we’ve found in the Old Testament that were channeled through Abraham, channeled through David—they’re all coming to their completion and their fulfillment in and through the person of Jesus Christ. And He’s that King. Isaiah tells us, looking at verses 6 to 8 of chapter 40, that humanity is like nothing. It’s like grass that burns—here today, gone tomorrow.

And then from verses 9 to 11, he tells us about our God: “Behold, your God! Behold, the Lord GOD comes in might, and His arm rules for Him.” And yet, this Almighty God who has the power of life and death in His hand, what is He to his people, to His chosen ones? “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.”

That brings us to our text this morning, verses 12 to 17. What do we get from verses 12 to 17? Well, later on, I’m going to bring it to three points: First, the Trinitarian nature of our God. That is revealed to us in Isaiah chapter 40.

Second, the assaity of our God. What is assaity? It’s a theological term. What does it mean? It means that God is absolutely self-existent, that He relies upon none, that He needs no other. No one created God. God is God. God relies on nothing or nobody. The whole universe could be dissolved in fire; God is still God. He needs no person, He needs no outside input. He’s the one who makes input into all of creation.

Finally, the third thing we’ll look at, the third point I want to develop later is that God is a God of justice, and His justice cannot be bought off. You can’t turn aside His justice through your own works or offerings. It just can’t be done. Always remember that the Lord, Yahweh, whom Isaiah speaks of, He was revealed to Isaiah back in chapter 6 as Yahweh—Holy, holy, holy. The one to be feared. The one in whose presence Isaiah felt that he was being uncreated; he was being made into nothingness in the presence of this holy and good and just and righteous God.

So that’s where we going. Let’s work our way through our text, and I’ll just draw some immediate points from the text. Looking at verses 12 to 14: “¹² 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? ¹³ Who has measured the Spirit of the LORD, or what man shows him his counsel? ¹⁴ 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?”

What you've got there are four rhetorical questions. The subpoints are simply developments of those four main questions. Look at the four main questions: Verse 12: "Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand?" Verse 13: "Who has measured the Spirit of the LORD?" Verse 14: "Whom did he consult?" Second half of verse 14: "Who taught him the path of justice?" There's an obvious answer to all of those questions, and the answer is: *Nobody*. Nobody. Nobody measured the waters in the hollow of their hand. Nobody marks off the heavens with a span. Nobody measures the Spirit of the Lord. Nobody teaches God about justice. God doesn't take advice from anyone.

The purpose of the questions is to compare the frailty and the weakness of humanity against the greatness and the glory of our God. Isaiah's putting a stark contrast there—it's as stark as the contrast between darkness and light. It's the contrast between the created—that's us, we're the created ones—and the uncreated, the uncreated ones.

I've mentioned a hymn before, and we haven't sung it here yet. I'll have to dig it up from somewhere, but it starts, "God of God, the uncreated." I do like that hymn. God of God, the uncreated. Where does God come from? God comes from God. He's God of God. He relies on no one or nothing. He needs no help from anybody—our great and glorious God.

And notice something about this God: He's absolutely nothing like us. He's not the creation of a person. Look at the nature of a created god, an invented idol. Look at the nature of something that is invented by humanity, and what you get is some kind of small "g", little god, who is nothing other than something like a big person. And that's it!

When you hear people talk and say something like this: "You know, God, to me, is like..." or they say, "Jesus, to me, is like..." I always want to cut them off. You know, I have to restrain my native rudeness, but I just feel like saying, "I don't care what He is like to you! I don't care what you think about Him! I want to know what Scripture tells me about God. I want to know what God has to say about Himself! What God is like to you means nothing. Who cares?"

And usually, the next thing that comes after someone says to you, "Well, God, to me, is like..." is that the god that they speak of is no one other than themselves, wearing their best clothes. It's no one other than them pretending that they are God. "God is nice." "God is fluffy." "God is a hybrid cross between John Lennon and Santa Claus." "All you need is love, ho-ho-ho."

The god whom they worship is nothing other than the foolish invention of humanity. I want to know who God is, who God says that He is. This is not a god that you would invent. If you want a nice, comfortable, easy-going religion, this is not the God whom you want! You don't want a god who is self-reliant, you want a god who needs you in the picture. If you're inventing your own religion, it would be nice to be important in that religion.

But Scripture, the word of God, tells us that we are nothing in the sight of God—not that He doesn't love us, not that He hasn't purchased us at a price. We bear His image, and so He loves us, and purchases us at a very high price. But in terms of our own personal importance? We're nothing. We're grass. "All flesh is grass, all its beauty is like the flower of the field."

And even those people whom God loves and upon whom God has set His heart, what does Scripture call us? The sheep of His pasture, the least self-dependent of all farm animals, the least

self-reliant of all farm animals, the farm animal that's most likely to die, given that you leave it alone to its own strength or its own ideas. The sheep. The ones whom God loves are sheep! Lambs! Weaklings that have to be carried!

The God of Scripture does not count human beings as anything overly important. Oh, He loves us. Oh, He has set His heart upon us. But we're not little Gods. We're not anything big in His sight. Usually in Scripture, when someone gets to know God, what do they do? They fall to the ground and they say, "I am nothing, and I am less than nothing. I repent in sackcloth and ashes. I am a worm in Your sight." That's the response of humanity in the presence of the living God. This God is all-knowing, He is self-reliant, He cannot be measured, we can't get our mind around Him.

If you're going to invent a religion, that's not the God you want to invent. You want that nice fluffy God who thinks you're important and gives you the things that you want. You want that nice fluffy God that makes you feel good about yourself. You don't want the God that says to you, "Fall to your knees in worship. Tremble in my presence. I want your whole life. I want everything about you. Everything about you I claim as mine, and I have the right to claim it because I am your Creator." That's the God revealed to us in Scripture. God's not like us. Praise God, He's not like me. Amen.

The next thing I want us to see as we move through the text, verse 15: "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." What do we need to notice there?

First of all, notice that word the "nations"—the goyim, to the Jew. That's the people of the world, all the peoples of the world. Unclean. Unclean. Basically, he's saying that all the nations, all the races, all the tribes, all the cultures, all the religions—they're as nothing! They're as nothing to God. They're like a drop from a bucket. And if you're carrying a bucket and you lose a drop, you don't worry too much about the drop. You don't go back and try and pick it back up. It's gone. They're as nothing to God

And where it says "he takes up the coastlands like fine dust," what's that saying? Well in the Jewish mind, that's basically saying, everywhere that the ocean touches. In other words, every land of the world. They're as nothing. To God, they're like fine dust. I grew up on a farm, and I used to like to go into the feed shed, where we stored the stock food. And if you got there at the right time of the day, it was an old shed with wooden slat walls, and the cracks of sunlight would come in through the cracks in the wall. And you'd see this dust, just floating in clouds in the beams of sunlight. You swipe your hand through them and watch them go in circles. Try and catch one. You can't. They're nothing. They're nothing. And God says, all the coastlands are like fine dust—they're nothing. They're just floating, floating around. They'll go whichever way the wind blows.

Here's the thing. God loves His own people. He doesn't necessarily love the nations that we come from. He loves His own people, but the nations are as nothing. Look back at Isaiah chapter 40, verse 1. God says, "Comfort, comfort *my people*." "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God." And yet, the nations are nothing before Him. The nations mean nothing before Him. What a God! What a great and glorious God.

I think this is what the Apostle Paul was getting at when he said there was neither Jew nor Greek, nor male nor female, etc., etc. He was saying that all of humanity can only come into a living, loving relationship with the living God according to His grace, according to His mercy, according to His calling by the power of His Holy Spirit.

Let's look at verses 16 to 17. ¹⁶“Lebanon would not suffice for fuel, nor are its beasts enough for a burnt offering.” Once again, we get this line concerning the nations. ¹⁷“All the nations are as nothing before him, they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness.” Why would God, speaking through Isaiah, tell us that Lebanon would not suffice for fuel, nor its beasts enough for a burnt offering? Well, we need to think through the implications of that.

God is holy, we are not. We are not in a relationship with the living God that is in any way positive, apart from the grace of the living God. Why does it speak of the requirement of fuel and burnt offerings? Well, read your Old Testaments, my friends. How did a true worshiper draw near to the living God? A true worshiper drew near to the living God by offering burnt offerings, by offering blood sacrifices.

But here's the thing. Did you ever think that those sacrifices were nothing other than a payoff? You know, did you ever think those sacrifices were nothing other than settling an account? Some did. The ones who did think that are the ones whom Isaiah has prophesied against for the previous 39 chapters. All they ever were was a symbol of the promise of God's grace, God's mercy, of God Himself making the sacrifice that *would* please Him.

The true worshiper under the Old Covenant was never justified because he offered a lamb, a goat, or a heifer. He was never justified for those reasons. He was justified because he had faith in a gracious and merciful God. He was justified because he had faith in the God who revealed Himself, in places like Exodus 34, verses 6 and 7—a God gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sins.

An Old Testament believer was justified because he believed those promises from God, and he believed the promise that there was a Saviour to come. He was never justified because he gave a lamb to a priest, no more than a New Testament believer has spiritual life because they take the communion meal, or because they get baptized. I'm telling you now, there's nothing magic about bread and wine, and there's nothing magic about the water of baptism.

These things are signs and symbols, they are ordinances, they are legitimate worship. And because they are legitimate worship, we do speak of them, and we do speak of the benefit that comes from obedience to God in that way. But they themselves convey nothing. You're justified through faith, and faith alone, in Christ alone. You get nothing out of any of ordinances. You get nothing out of communion and baptism, apart from faith. And the Old Testament believer got nothing out of the sacrifices, apart from faith.

We read Psalm 51. Think about it. If the lambs and the bulls paid off sin, how would David have dealt with his sins concerning Bathsheba and Uriah the Hittite? Call in some advisors? Call in some advisors: “Well, fellows, I really stepped in it bad. I've done really bad. And I want to bring myself back into God's good books. What's it worth, fellows? What's it worth? Help me out here.” And they'd get out the abacus, or we'd say the calculator, and run some numbers. “Well, let's see. Adultery—I reckon that would be worth at least fifty spotless lambs.

And the murder of Uriah? We'd better throw in some bulls, and a couple of heifers, too. We better pay God off big time. Let's say fifty lambs, twenty bulls, ten red heifers." And David says, "Well, you know, I really want to be sure I get into God's good books. I really want to be sure I get there. I'll send him a hundred lambs, I'll send him fifty bulls, and I'll send him twenty red heifers."

It didn't work like that, did it. What was the sacrifice that God was looking for? The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. "A broken and contrite, O God, you will not despise." Why would his spirit be broken? Because of his faith in the living God. Because of his knowledge of the God whom he had sinned against. Because of the presence and the power of the Spirit of God in his life, convicting him of sin. Oh, David managed to harden his heart for a while. Read Psalm 32. He managed to harden his heart for a while, but eventually God sent a prophet. God called him back. God broke that hardened heart. A contrite spirit, a broken heart—these are the sacrifices that God requires.

And so here we have a God revealed to us who is a God unlike any that you would invent. You'd want a God who says, "You know, you're important to me, and I want you to feel really good about yourself." But the living God says, "You're a sinner, and if you don't repent, I'm going to destroy you." It's as simple as that, my friends. That's what He says. But He does say, "I have provided you with the means of repentance and salvation. I sent my Son. But understand something, the message is always this: If you don't repent, you do burn." Full stop. He's not cuddly and squishy.

And furthermore, He's a God whom you can't pay off. You just can't do enough to get into His good books. Why would that be? Because everything you do is tainted with your own sin. Because everything I do is tainted with my own wickedness. Everything! Nothing that I can bring to God is good enough. Nothing! I can't pay the price of my own sins. If God struck me with lightning a thousand times, and every time He killed me, He sent me to hell for a million years, and then He resurrected me, and He hit me with lightning again, and sent me back to hell for another million years—and He just kept doing that a thousand times over. I wouldn't have paid the price for the sins that I've committed against a gracious, loving, holy, holy, holy, perfect, righteous God. I would not have paid back my debt to Him.

In Psalm 38, David uses the phrase, "My sins like a burden are too heavy for me. They have gone over my head." They've gone over my head! The sins of humanity are like an out-of-control credit card. You know, when a person's going towards bankruptcy, they can't even pay the necessary monthly interest payment. The thing just keeps getting bigger and bigger. They can't get themselves down into the capital, because they can't even pay the interest. And that's what sin is like over the heads of humanity. You can't pay the interest, let alone the capital. Who would invent that God? I mean, if you're looking for a comfortable, squishy God, who would invent that God? I know I certainly wouldn't.

Okay, we've worked our way through the text. As I said, there were three points I want to draw from our text. First of all, point one. Looking from verses 1 to 17, the Trinitarian nature of the God who is revealed. Now before I get into this, let me clarify. You go back into time, 800 or so B.C., and say to Isaiah, "Isaiah, do you believe in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?" And Isaiah's going to say, "What and who are you talking about? I believe in Yahweh. I believe

in Yahweh, revealed to me from Scripture.” Even if he read his own writings here, we’re told in First Peter that he did not necessarily, clearly and totally, understand the things that he wrote.

But let’s look at what he’s written here from verses 1 to 17. Notice, first of all, that seven times between verses 1 to 17, the covenant name of Yahweh is mentioned. “I AM THAT I AM.” I AM THAT I AM. The God whom Isaiah worships is Yahweh. Yet let’s have a look at verses 7 and verse 13. “The grass withers,” verse 7, “the flower fades when the breath of the LORD blows on it; surely the people are grass.” Now I’m sure many of you are already aware, that word “breath” is *rook*—“spirit”—“When the Spirit of the Lord blows on it.” How did man first receive life? It said that God blew His breath into man’s nostrils. Well, how does man finish his life? It says that God blows His breath upon that man.

Look now at verse 13: “Who has measured the Spirit of the LORD, or what man shows him his counsel?” What’s said there of the Spirit of the Lord? It said that He’s eternal. “Who has measured the Spirit of the Lord.” Remember, this is a rhetorical question. The answer is, Nobody. No one can measure the Spirit of the Lord. “What man shows *him*”—the Spirit of the Lord is personalized and spoken of as a person, He is a “him.”—“What man shows him his counsel?” Once again, a rhetorical question. The answer is, Nobody. He knows all things.

The Spirit of the Lord is eternal, He knows all things, and He has the power of life and death within His own person. And so, the Spirit of the Lord is spoken of as though the Spirit of the Lord is God Himself. So there we have the Spirit of the Lord.

But let’s also look at something else that’s shown to us in our passage. Note back in verse 5, we’re told that “the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.” Note in verse 10, we’re told, “The Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him.” And note in verse 11, we’re told that the Lord God comes as a shepherd. “He will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, gently lead those that are with young.”

Where and how and when was the glory of the Lord revealed? Turn to the gospel of John chapter 12. We’re going to go down to verse 38, but we’ll start reading at halfway through verse 36. My Bible conveniently puts a paragraph break there—“When Jesus had said these things.” John chapter 12, starting from halfway through verse 36:

“When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them.³⁷ Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him,³⁸ so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: ‘Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?’” Now that’s quoting Isaiah chapter 53. “³⁹ Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said,⁴⁰ ‘He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.’⁴¹ Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him.”

Now you’ve got to ask some questions here. John wrote the gospel of John. Who’s he speaking of? He’s speaking of Jesus. Who’s he quoting? He’s quoting Isaiah. Who did Isaiah see? Isaiah saw Yahweh, high and lifted up. “Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him.” What’s the promise in Isaiah 40? “The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.”

Who's "the arm of the Lord," there in Isaiah 40, verse 10? "The Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him." Well once again, John draws to us a quotation from the book of Isaiah concerning the arm of the Lord, John writing, "Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"

So once again, you go to Isaiah, and you say, "Isaiah, did you know you were writing of the Lord Jesus Christ?" And he'd say, "Well, look, I've heard that name Jesus"—he would hear Yeshua or Joshua—"I've heard that name Jesus. It's commonly used throughout the Hebrew nation, and we had a prophet and a leader. His name was Joshua. But, no. Who is this one whom you call the Lord Jesus Christ?" You see, but Isaiah wrote of him. He wrote of Him. He saw His glory. He saw the glory of God revealed. He saw the arm of the Lord coming to rescue God's people.

And so Isaiah, though he himself, I'm sure, would never have said that he understood that there was such a thing as one living God, who subsists as three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—though I'm sure he would never have understood anything like the Trinitarian formulations that we use, yet he wrote about that God! He wrote about Yahweh—the Father Yahweh, the Son and Yahweh, the Holy Spirit. He wrote about the one true living God who is three persons, yet one living God. Our passage is Trinitarian, my friends.

The second point, as I already spoke of, the assaity of God. I've already explained that to a certain degree, but let's just get it clear in our mind. That constant mentioning of the name Yahweh, the literal meaning of which is "I AM THAT I AM"—or you can even put it into the future tense, "I will be what I will be"—that name is basically saying, "You can't change me. I am what I am. You can't change me. I don't change. I'm reliant upon no thing, I'm reliant upon nothing. I, and I alone, am God, the one, true living God, and all others that claim to be God are pretenders and demons and liars and fools, and in the end, they will come to their just reward. They will come to their just reward."

God is absolutely and utterly self-existent, He's utterly self-sufficient, He relies on nobody, He relies not upon creation—Creation relies upon Him. He created all things by His word, and what does Scripture tell us? How are all things upheld? By His word. And so, my friends, let's just take that through to the end. How are all things going to be called to a finish? By His word.

We should tremble in the presence of the living God. We should tremble in His presence. We don't. Why not? Because we know that Jesus shed His blood for us. Sometimes we have these special moments of visitation. Sometimes you have these moments where you are just utterly, absolutely awestruck in the presence of God. Praise God for those moments. I hope you've all had at least one in your life. Praise God for those moments. But because of the blood of Christ, we rejoice in the presence of this living God, though by but a thought, He could destroy us. That's why you're supposed to tremble in the presence of God.

Have you ever been to the top of one of those really high buildings that has a lookout deck at the top, and you get to the top, and you go up there and you look? I don't know if you've ever noticed, but they're engineered to be flexible, so that when the wind blows, there's a little bit of give in them. Because if there was no give in them, they would actually be brittle, and would break. Have you ever been up there when one of them moved, and you felt and saw the move? I have, and I'll tell you what happened. I went like this—because the whole thing was moving under my feet, and just for a little moment, I was a bit awestruck.

I'm now telling you that that should be our response in the presence of the living God. Every now and then, you should be trembling and awestruck—that you don't actually just bend your knees, you fall to the floor, that you worship upon your knees, that you go down to your knees in the presence of the living God. For He is God. He is great and He is glorious and He is holy, and we are not. Yet, this God who is absolutely self-existent and self-sufficient, He loves us.

Third point. Once again, we've spoken of it a little, but we shall speak more of the justice of God, whom you can't buy off. Look where it says, halfway through verse 14, "Who taught him the path of justice?" My friends, we've got an idea of what justice is. We've got an idea of what right and wrong is. But have you ever tried to think back to where that idea comes from? It doesn't come from any other person that ever was born of the line of Adam. It doesn't come from any mere man or human being. That idea of justice doesn't come from your Mum and Dad, it doesn't come from humanity.

That which we know to be justice comes from the one who is just, from the one who is good, from the one who sets the standard of goodness and justice. That which we consider to be God's justice is nothing other than a reflection of God, and the problem of course is that we, being sinners, twist and pervert justice. But understand this: Scripture tells us that nobody teaches God the path, or the way of justice. Nobody.

Let's ask some questions—tough questions. When Job lost his health, his wealth, and his children, was God unjust? When nations are conquered and people are enslaved, is God unjust? All of these things that happen upon the earth that we look at, and we pray, "O Lord, how long? When does this evil come to an end?"—is God unjust in permitting, or even if you want to go all the way and use the word, in some way or other, *ordaining*, because Scripture says that in some way or other, He has ordained that these things happen. Proverbs 16:4: "The Lord has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble." Even the wicked for the day of trouble. Is God unjust? The answer is, No, He's not.

Well how is it, then, that He's not unjust, though we see wickedness all around? How is it? Well, my friends, there can only be one possible answer, and that one possible answer is this: God is holy and good and pure, and mankind is not. And so, anything that God sends the way of humanity, anything—full stop, anything!—His judgment is right. His justice is just.

Once again, we like to claim to be worshipers of the living God, but you've got to understand something. What you know of God is what He has revealed to you. You will never know Him in His fullness. I will never know Him in His fullness. I'll spend all of eternity in the presence of my Saviour, rejoicing in the things that He teaches me, rejoicing in the things that He shows me, growing day by day—and yet, for all of eternity, I will never know God in His fullness, because I'm not God; and neither will any of you. God is just in all that He does.

If God chooses to permit, or in some way ordain evil, though He Himself is not responsible for that evil, for the purpose of revealing His glory, He's just in doing this. If the greater revelation of God's glory comes from, in some way, permitting or ordaining evil, God is just in using that to reveal His glory. I'm speaking of a God who is so great that we can't get our heads around Him, my friends. I'm speaking of a God who is so perfect and good and holy, that we can't actually hold this in, we can't appreciate it.

Though we know the truth, though we know the words of Scripture, though we are worshipers of the living God, the truth is, we can't take hold of it! It's greater than we are. In the end, anyone who is a true worshiper must come to the point where they say, "I've reached the limit of my understanding, and yet, I worship!"

Here's the thing: This justice that is of God demands payment for every single sin, every sinful deed, every sinful word, every sinful thought. This perfect justice demands complete payment in full. In full. No escapes. No roads out. No parkways out. I spoke earlier of Exodus 34:6 to 7. It says that He forgives iniquity, transgression, and sins, showing steadfast love to thousands. And then it says, "But he will be no means clear the guilty."

He will by no means clear the guilty. And you better think about that. You better think about that, my friends, because there's something hard to understand there. There's something that you've got to understand. When a sinner is forgiven, God doesn't have a whiteboard in the sky with a list of sins on it, and gets the eraser and just (rubs them out)—"There, all gone. No problem. Forgotten and finished. Didn't happen." He's perfect in His knowledge. He's perfect in His justice. He's perfect in His holiness.

You see, all those sacrifices that we've spoken of, what were they pointing to? They were pointing to a sacrifice that did actually make the payment. They were pointing to a sacrifice that did actually meet God's requirement of justice. What Scripture tells us is that when the one who was perfectly sinless, the one who was perfectly innocent, of His own free will laid down His life, bearing the penalty of the sins of His own people, what Scripture tells us is that God is satisfied with that payment.

And here we are. It's Easter Sunday. It is the day when churches speak of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Why was He resurrected? What's that all about? You see, He was innocent; therefore, death had no power over Him. Furthermore, God was satisfied; therefore, He was raised back to life.

What's the evidence, my friends, that this perfectly just God who cannot be bought off by all the offerings in the world—burn all the forests, throw on all the cattle, all the flocks, and you can't pay for sin—what's the evidence that the payment is made? What's the certainty that the payment is made? The answer is that the one who made the payment has risen to life. He is alive. This perfect justice of God is satisfied in, through, and by the work of His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. The payment, my friends, is made.

And so we rejoice. We rejoice. Our final song is "How Great Thou Art." Look at the third verse: "And when I think that God, His Son not sparing, sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in That on the Cross, my burden gladly bearing, He bled and died to take away my sin."

It's really very simple. Either through faith, you have laid hold of the Lord Jesus Christ—whereby you can be sure and you can be certain that your sins are paid for; you can look to an empty tomb; you can look to a risen Saviour who reigns at the right hand of God the Father on high, and you can say, "I know my sins have been paid for. Therefore, I have fellowship with the one true living God. I have eternal life. I share in His life. I am hidden in His righteousness."

Or, my friends, you pay it yourself, and you never stop paying, because you can't pay for it, because of what value are the nations in the sight of God? They're a speck of dust. They're a drop from the bucket. If the nations are of no value, what value is one individual sinner against an offended, holy, and righteous God? Less than a speck of dust. You're less than a speck of dust. I'm less than a speck of dust. And so, we can't pay Him off.

But Jesus has paid the price. The Lord Jesus Christ has paid the price. He has met the demands of God's justice. Jesus, the one true Saviour, the one good shepherd—"I am the good shepherd"—the shepherd who tends His flock, who gathers the lambs in His arms, who carries them in His bosom, and gently leads those that are with young. Amen. Let's close in prayer.

Father in heaven, O Lord, open our hearts and our eyes that we may worship you truly. May we know the presence of God in our lives. May we know the blessing and the power of your Holy Spirit. Father, may we know ourselves for what we truly are. May we know you, through Jesus Christ, by the power of the Spirit, for who you truly are. Enlarge our hearts that we may love you as we ought. All of these things we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.