

The Greatness of God

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[0:00] Well, to fear the Lord, that's what we're talking about in this class, the fear of the Lord, the joy of fearing the Lord. And those two ideas of joy and fear can seem like, how do we put those together?

But the Bible, when we understand the biblical definition of the fear of the Lord, you realize why it is something that you can rejoice in, that you take joy in. To fear the Lord is to live, to really live. It's to have peace. It's to have confidence. So turn in your Bibles to Proverbs chapter 14. As we begin, we want to look at two passages from Proverbs and remind ourselves again of why the study is so important, why we are doing it, why the joy of fearing the Lord is such a good thing.

So Proverbs chapter 14, verse 26 and 27. If someone could read that for us. Proverbs chapter 14, 26 and 27. Just anyone.

He who fears the Lord has a secure fortress, and for his children, it will be a refuge. The fear of the Lord is a mountain of life, turning a man from the snares of death.

[1:25] Okay. It's a fountain of life. The fear of the Lord is a secure fortress. The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life. The fear of the Lord keeps us from the snares of death.

So just think about that phrase, the fountain of life. That's a very picturesque and a wonderful image. The fear of the Lord is that fountain of life. And when you have the fear of the Lord in your heart, you have a fountain, you have a hose hooked up to your heart, and it's producing life.

Not merely survival, not merely getting by, but thriving. It pours out life. And so the more we move into, the more you move into the fear of the Lord, and understand it, and appreciate it, and grow in it, the more life you have.

Now turn over to Proverbs chapter 19, in verse 23. Again, listen to what it says. The fear of the Lord leads to life.

Then, one rests content, untouched by trouble. So there's life. There's contentment. There's peace.

[2:41] Rest. That's what the fear of the Lord brings to us. And so, we either try to cobble those things together in our own life, in our own power, with our own ideas.

We're trying to cobble this life together of peace, and contentment, and joy. Or, we can fear the Lord, and then what happens is, God installs that fountain into our heart, and all of that comes with it, and begins pumping out into our hearts, into our life.

It becomes a normal part of our lives, because God has put it there. And we're not having to add these things to our lives, because they're already there.

They're already coming naturally, through the fear of the Lord. And so, one way to think about it, that's the difference between what most of us have to do. We have to leave the home, leave the cave, go kill something, drag it home, in order that we can eat, in order we can survive, in order we can provide for our family.

Those are good things. But that's the difference between having to do that, and having sort of like an investment fund in the bank, that just is producing money all day long, naturally.

[3:51] We don't have to work for it. Now it's just doing it on its own. And so, the fear of the Lord is the key to all that treasure.

Remember that verse? And so, do you want to live a life free? Free from the terrible sense of, I'm not living up to people's expectations.

Or, I'm needing to do more to get them to notice. Or, I'm afraid that they are going to notice me. Do you want to live a life free from that rushing sense of, I have to go fight this big, bad world all by myself.

I'm alone. I'm in this. All by myself. It's a dog-eat-dog world. And I've got to win or else. I'm not going to have what I need. Do you want to live a life free from the sense that, God doesn't notice me.

He doesn't understand. He's not here. He's not present. He's not available. He doesn't notice me. He's not my big, loving Father.

[4:56] His love matches His greatness. Isaiah says, He gives Egypt for your ransom, and Cush and Siva in your stead.

That's how much God loves us. He'll give nations over to save His people, to rescue them. That's my God. He's so big. He's so powerful that He can and that He will give countries over to rescue me.

So life, contentment, peace, freedom. That's what the fear of the Lord promises. That's what the fear of the Lord brings. Now, the fear of the Lord comes from seeing things about God, seeing God as He is.

And so over the next several weeks, we are going to be starting to look at just attributes of God.

And today we're looking at the greatness of God, how great He is.

So if you would, would you turn in your Bibles to Isaiah chapter 40? Isaiah chapter 40. Isaiah chapter 40. We are going to look at Isaiah chapter 40.

[6:10] Other passages that are really good to see the greatness of God. Think of the end of Job, where God interrogates Job with all these questions.

And they're all designed to say, Job, you're out of your league. You're out of your league. Your questions are inappropriate.

Your demands are inappropriate because I'm so great. Isaiah 40 is what we're going to look at today, though. Isaiah 40 is a beautiful, glorious picture of God.

And I would challenge you. This might seem like a huge challenge, and it might be something like, there's no way I can do it. But memorize this chapter. Or at least start at verse 12, and memorize through the end of this chapter.

These are words that are good to have in your heart. Words that are good to have in your mind. So Isaiah chapter 40. And the first thing I want you to notice about this whole chapter is, is that it's meant to be good news.

[7:20] It's meant to be good news. Let's look at verse 9, and we're going to read 9 through 11. You who bring good tidings to Zion, go up on a high mountain.

You who bring good tidings 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. See, the sovereign Lord comes with power, and his arm rules for him.

See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him. He tends his flock like a shepherd. He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart.

He gently leads those that have young. And then he's going to begin talking about how great God is. So let me ask you, just from verses 9 through 11, what is some of the good news that we already see?

What are some of the truths that we need to hold on to as we launch into this beautiful picture of how great God is? What are some of the truths here just in verse 9 through 11?

[8:26] Why is all of this good news? What are some reasons? The sovereign Lord comes with power. He's sovereign. And he's coming.

He's not distant. He is coming. And we're going to see, I think, one wonderful way that the Lord comes to his people. This whole chapter is sort of based on this idea.

He comes. What else? Why is it good news that the Lord is coming? He's your God.

He's your God. So he's come for you. You belong to him. He belongs to you. What else is good news about this?

His reward is with him. His reward is with him. He's not coming empty-handed to us. He's coming with rewards and recompense. He's going to pay you back for all your sufferings.

[9:26] That's verse 1. Or verse 2. What else? His arm rules for him. We can wonder who's in charge.

God's arm rules for him. He's strong enough to rule in the midst of his enemies. What else is good news about this? He'll take care of our needs.

He's our shepherd. And what kind of shepherd is he for us? Is he harsh? Gentle. He's a good shepherd.

He gathers the lambs in his arms. He wants us close to him. He holds us close to his heart. He gently leads those that have young. So a mama sheep that has lots of cares and worries and is

worried about her little lamb, he gently leads.

He knows what's on her heart. Now, Isaiah 40 is this beautiful picture of our shepherd who comes to us. It's a picture of God.

[10:35] But what I want you to notice here and just sort of bring into your understanding of Isaiah 40 is it's also a picture of Jesus. It's even more specifically a picture of Jesus, our Savior.

If you don't see Jesus in the passage, then you're half blind to the glory of this passage. Look at verse 3. What does that say?

In the desert, a voice of one calling, in the desert, prepare the way for the Lord, make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. Who's attached to those verses?

John the Baptist. What was his mission? To announce the coming of the Lord. So who is the sovereign Lord that is coming? Who is the shepherd that's coming?

Oh, it's Jesus. He came to announce Jesus. And so, Isaiah 40 is good news because it's God coming to us, but it's Christ coming to us, clothed in the gospel, clothed and ready for our salvation and our deliverance, coming with good news.

[11:52] And so what you are seeing in Isaiah 40, what are we looking at? It's a picture of God, but I would say even more specifically, it's a picture of Jesus Christ as he comes.

So who is our Savior? This is a picture of who our Savior is. Who was it that hung on a tree? Who was it that walked in men's shoes? Well, here he is.

So, from the New Testament perspective, this passage we see something of Christ's glory, his majesty, but it also, we see a picture of his meekness when we contrast what he goes through.

So, let's dive into this passage in verse 12. How great is our God? First point. He is infinitely greater than nature.

He is infinitely greater than nature. So, moms and dads, what do your kids who are afraid of storms need to believe that they have a God, that there is a God who is infinitely greater than nature?

[13:10] So, look at verse 12. Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand? Now, that's a rhetorical question. Have any of you scooped up all the waters in the earth and measured them out in the hollow of your hand?

None of you. But the Lord has. So, let's go back in time, get in our time machine, and pretend that we are ancient Israelite women, and we are now teaching our daughters how to bake some bread, and there's the dough, and it needs a little bit of water, and the mom might say to the daughter, it needs about two or three little handfuls of water.

Now, you can go home, and this is a good thing to do. This is a good thing to do if you have young kids, but it's a good thing for all of us to do. Go home, get out your measuring spoons, and find out how much water you can hold in the hollow of your hand without it spilling over.

Now, I have pretty big hands, at least relatively speaking, for most people, and I couldn't hold a tablespoon of water. When I did, some of it leaked out.

So, go home and try that with your kids. Try it with this verse handy. Make it an object lesson. God holds the waters in the hollow of his hand.

[14:37] Now, the U.S. Geological Survey, Water Science School, said that if you put all the oceans in a bubble, so in a sphere, it would be 332,500,000 cubic miles.

Wow. God holds the waters in the hollow of his hand. Like a little girl might add some water to some bread.

Now, think again. Was it a big deal to the disciples when Jesus calmed the storm on the Sea of Galilee? It was a big deal. It was a big deal.

Sea of Galilee, it's about six or seven miles across, I think. On the big scale of things, it's not one of the great lakes, is it? But they were impressed when they saw Jesus doing that.

But for him, think about how tiny and little the winds and the waves are. He holds the oceans in the hollow of his hand. What is the little storm on the Sea of Galilee?

[15:47] And so the one who holds the oceans in his hands, now think about that, he could hold all the water in the world. And on the cross, he said, I'm thirsty.

Isaiah goes on, or who with the breath of his hand marked off the heavens. So, again, the hand breath is this distance between the tip of your thumb and your pinky, sort of like from here to here.

Now, again, I have fairly large hands and mine was nine and a half inches. Nine and a half inches.

And so, again, we'll go back in our time machine and we'll go back to ancient Israel and now we're a dad and we're cutting some wood for a building that we're building and we might mark off the timber

with our hand breath.

So, that's where we're going to cut it. So long. Now, God, on the other hand, marked off the heavens, the universe, with his hand breath.

So, here's where we'll stop and here's the other side. So, we could go on forever about how big the universe is. About how big stars are and about how big galaxies are.

[17 : 15] And it really all comes down to a couple things. The first truth is we really don't know how big the universe is. Scientists obviously try to guess, but they don't know how big it is.

The second truth is if we could put a number on it, that number wouldn't really mean anything to us. Because I can understand that it's 17 miles from Bremen to Plymouth.

And I can understand that it's 103 miles from Argus to Indianapolis, but I can't understand that the next nearest star, the next one, the closest one, is 26 trillion miles away.

So the next star over is 26 trillion miles away. But when God made the heavens, he simply marked it off with his hand, so to speak.

Now, as I'm prepared, as I prepare this lesson, my stomach began to get a little queasy thinking about how great God is.

[18 : 24] because he can deal with, he can handle the whole universe like we handle putting water in a recipe or how we handle cutting off a piece of wood with our saws and our tape measures.

But then this verse came up and Job comes along and says, these are but the outer fringes of his works.

How faint the whisper we hear of him. Let that settle in. These are just the things that we see. The oceans.

The stars. They are just the outer fringes of his works. And so, if that settles on you, you begin to feel what Isaiah felt in Isaiah 6 where he said, I'm undone.

God is so high. I am so little. Isaiah goes on, who has held the dust of the earth in a basket or weighed the mountains on the scales and the hills in a balance?

[19 : 38] Now, like, I'm not an expert on Hebrew measurements or anything, but from what I've read, the basket is not so much a bushel basket. It's literally one-third measure.

So, we could talk about a quart of milk. A quart is a fourth of a gallon. So, it's something like that. It's a third of a measure. So, the idea here in Isaiah is not this is a big, big basket and God can carry it. The idea is God can put all the dust and the hills and the mountains and everything and put it in his quart container. In his one-third container.

And then, he picks up all the mountains and puts them on the scales to measure them. And so, again, just like an ancient Israelite woman would go to the market and the guy at the market would pour out so much barley onto the scales.

Well, God picks up the mountains and the hills and he puts them on his scales just as easily. When I was a kid, and I'm sure this is true for most of you, but it's changed now.

[20 : 48] When I was a kid, when you went to the grocery store in the meat department, there was someone back there to help you and you would ask for, I want two pounds of ground chuck and he would scoop up some and put it on his scale and weigh it out and he would say, is that good?

And we'd say, yes, and that's good and he'd wrap it up and give it to us. Now, God measures all the mountains and the hills and his scales just like that butcher scooped up the ground beef and put it in the little basket.

And so, the world, as great and majestic as it is, as great and majestic as the whole universe is, the world, Isaiah is saying, it's not great compared to God.

So, boundless seas. vast heavens, high mountain peaks, they're nothing compared to God.

They're nothing compared to Jesus, the Son of God. He could have weighed Golgotha in the scale and instead he died on that mountain.

[22 : 08] Now, as you think about that, your heart should be stretching, should be stretching something of God's greatness and God's love.

God is infinitely greater than nature. He's infinitely greater than the nations. Look at verse 15. Verse 15 and we'll read 15 through 17.

Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket. They're regarded as dust on the scales. He weighs the islands as though they were fine dust. Lebanon is not sufficient for altar fires nor its animals enough for burnt offerings.

Before him all the nations are as nothing. They are regarded by him as worthless and less than nothing. So verse 15 begins with surely or behold.

It's a verb of command. He's saying pay attention to this. Look at this. And this is something I think we need to look at. Pay attention to. Here's a good place to remind you that Pastor John preached a sermon series on Isaiah and I don't know how many sermons were on Isaiah 40 but they're available online.

[23:27] Go back and listen to those sermons. And if you remember he said about this that if you're carrying a bucket of water and a drop falls out you don't rush back turn around and say I gotta refill my bucket because my drop fell out.

You don't even think about it do you? Because does the drop matter? the drop doesn't matter to you. It's not significant to you.

Remember last year? I don't know maybe maybe you don't aren't attuned to this but last summer I think it was everyone was doing the ALS water bucket challenge right?

Everyone was like hey I'm gonna dump cold icy water on my head and you can give money for this good cause. and so that's what they did everyone videotaped themselves getting ice water dumped on their heads no one I didn't see any videos where someone said I'm gonna dump a drop of water on my head because a drop doesn't matter a bucket might be something a drop is nothing and the nations are a drop in God's bucket then he says there dust on the scales the picture again is of the butcher and I say I want five pounds of ground chuck but you better dust off those scales bub because I'm not paying for it the dust right?

we don't say that because the dust doesn't matter the dust is nothing and to God the nations are like that insignificant he doesn't need to take them into consideration verse 16 Lebanon is not sufficient for altar fires now I don't know what your image of Lebanon is today but I don't picture it like it was back then in ancient Israel Lebanon was sort of like this wooded paradise that's where the cedars is of Lebanon that's where they all came from and so Lebanon was full of trees and it was full of animals and Isaiah says let's suppose that we take all the trees of Lebanon and stack them on our altar and then we take all the animals that we can find in Lebanon and put them on top of the altar for a burnt offering and he's saying they still won't be enough to match the dignity and the greatness of

[26:10] God you could do all that and say he still deserves more this is still not enough but again think of think of the goodness and the greatness of Jesus Christ who through his one offering atoned for the sins of all of his people millions and millions and millions of people with all of their sin his one sacrifice was enough and so were the whole realm of nature mind that would be an offering far too small far too small now verse 17 the nations are as nothing they are regarded by him as worthless and less than nothing so less than nothing you ask your kids what did you do at school today and they say nothing well what's less than nothing let me ask you a question how many of you would stop to pick up a penny if you saw it on the ground raise your hand if you can be honest you all would some of you wouldn't some of you would now what do you think

Bill Gates would do he might pick it up but listen to this with a worth of 72 billion dollars at a 6% rate of return that would earn Gates roughly \$114.16 per second he is alive making it a poor investment for Bill Gates to bother picking up a \$100 bill if he sees it on the ground now a penny to my son is worth something because he doesn't understand value pennies and quarters and all that is the same but to Bill Gates a penny really is nothing it has no value it's worthless it's not even worth his time to pick up a \$100 bill if he dropped it he makes more money just standing there but before everyone's like man but before

God all the nations are nothing worthless less than nothing so now we're not talking pennies now we're not talking \$100 bills now we're talking nations non-existent less than nothing entirely empty now the point isn't to disparage the nations Isaiah isn't saying these things in order that people would the nations of the earth would be like I'm worthless or something like that the point is all this to say that this is this is your God this is the good news that we need to hear the good news that if we believe it will give us life and contentment and peace and freedom when we're living in the face of this big God who's not only so great but is so loving who's not only so awesome but he is my father now when those twin realities are in our heart that's the fear of the Lord and so we have this awe but it's an awe that draws out our love it's an awe that draws out our trust it's an awe that sets us free so here's the good news that will set us free from so many of the fears and the anxieties about our world and about people that we have anxiety could be in part a fear of the

Lord issue fear of man is definitely a fear of the Lord issue there's a lot of things that we could draw back and say what that person needs is to have a bigger view of God the picture of God their idea of God is just too small so do we need to get all in a tizzy about the election we should certainly care about it don't misread me don't mishear me but what I'm saying we're anxious we're fretting look at verses 23 and 24 yeah 23 he brings princes to not to nothing and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing no sooner are they planted no sooner are they sown no sooner do they take root in the ground and he blows on them and they wither and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff so the wind blew away the chaff you're down in the threshing floor you're throwing up the grain and the chaff is blown away the farmer doesn't miss the chaff the farmer doesn't run after the chaff well the earthly rulers are like chaff to

God supremely unconcerned supremely unimpressed rovers 21 says the king's heart is in the hand of the lord he guides it he directs it like a water course wherever he pleases now back in solomon's day king's law our king's word was law there's no you know what do we have separation of powers no separation of powers king is law maker judge jury congress supreme court so there's no constitution no supreme court no congress the king's word was law but solomon had to say to his fellow kings we are our own he directs our hearts like a water course like a little kid at a beach who makes a sand castle and then digs a moat around it and maybe steer some water from the lake into his little moat he made nebuchadnezzar eat grass alexander the great died at 32 napoleon died on an island far away from the whole world chewing on the ends of his own fantasies hitler died in a besieged bunker with soviet shells raining down on his thousand year reich but where are kings and empires now nations come and gone well we can go on he counts the stars he calls them by name so imagine a man running a beauty pageant and he calls out the contestants and one by one they come out to display their beauty beauty the lord calls out the stars one by one to display their beauty and he knows them each by name he stretches out the heavens like a tent to live in now all this is good news about our god and about our savior jesus christ because the one who died on the cross sits enthroned on high and yet his love was so great that he reduced!

[34 : 25] himself to the kangaroo court of the sanhedrin and pilate and herod and gave himself into the hands of sinful men and so his greatness the fact that nations are nothing to him kings he brings to naught he directs their hearts like a water course that truth is also combined in jesus christ with great love great mercy great compassion and so you can love and so what should we do well you trust him you fear him you love him you worship him again and when this settles on your heart this is that's where the fear of the Lord begins when these things not they get out of here and they become part of who you are they become how you live how you believe how you go into those situations where you're not just answering

Sunday school answer questions where it's well who is God he's sovereign well when I go into the situation I not only know he's sovereign because that's the right answer but that's the real answer of my heart he is great he is loving those are the real answers of my heart that's where the fear of the Lord begins to grow and so next time we saw this a couple weeks ago next time you're suffering under temptation with Peter with the fear of man you feel like you're on trial well remember the good news about God remember the good news about God Ed Welch wrote this when you have hung out in the throne room of the holy king you aren't as easily dominated by mere humans who are just like you when you're having communion and fellowship with this great God people can't dominate you that's what

Jesus was saying you can either fear men who can kill you or you can kill you and throw your body into hell now that can sound like really two bad options but what Jesus is giving us is the good news because with that second fear the fear of the Lord you get freedom and contentment and peace and joy your trust grows your hope grows!

so what Jesus is telling us in those things is the way to life it seemed like sort of a bad option to fear God who can throw my body and my soul into hell but Jesus is saying that's the good news that's the way forward that's the way to life so Isaiah 40 it's an invitation to hang out with this holy king to spend time with them and so again let me encourage you to memorize this to work through it verse by verse slowly if you need to hide this word in your heart because maybe here's the partial!

answer to your anxiety to your fear to your lack of rest to your lack of confidence to your lack of joy and so what you need to do maybe is spend some time in the middle of this great chapter and let its truths seep into your soul don't dip into it like a tea bag into some water just with one dip let it sit and let it soak and let its flavor fill you well our time is gone we are thank