

A hand is shown from the bottom left, reaching upwards with fingers spread. The background is a soft, warm sunset sky with a blurred horizon line. The overall mood is contemplative and hopeful.

# Today

refresh, refocus, renew

May/June 2026

WHAT'S ON  
**YOUR  
MIND?**

**ALSO: 'COMFORT, COMFORT MY PEOPLE'**

Dear Friends:

So many messages today compete for our attention. Each day, our minds are bombarded by all kinds of ideas and information. In the midst of this we need to know what it means to honor and love God with our whole mind—and how this helps in so many good ways to shape what we think, say, and do. In May, missionary and teacher Kent Van Til explores how we can do this, and he helps us to see from the Bible's teaching that God's Holy Spirit guides us to learn about, know, and love God with our whole mind and even our entire being. By asking, "What's on your mind?" the May devotions invite us to pause and reflect on becoming like Jesus and even to "have the same mindset as Christ" (Philippians 2:5).



In June, with the help of Pastor Hernandes Dias Lopes, the Portuguese-language minister for ReFrame Ministries, we focus on Isaiah 40 and the theme of bringing comfort to God's people. This passage provides a deep well of spiritual insight and truth for our daily lives. The magnificence of God as our Creator, his powerful sustaining hand over all that he has made, and his compassionate, tender, and nurturing care over his children call us to seek comfort in God alone. Only God can be our unmoving and enduring rock for finding true meaning and security.

May you be refreshed, refocused, and renewed!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kurt Selles". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Kurt Selles

# Today

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**“What’s on Your Mind?”**  
**Kent Van Til**



**“Comfort, Comfort  
My People”**  
**Hernandes Dias Lopes**

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**ReFrame  
Ministries**

is the new name of  
Back to God Ministries International

# june

## **‘Comfort, Comfort My People’**

**Hernandes Dias Lopes**

I am grateful to God for the privilege of writing these devotions based on Isaiah 40. I hope that the reflections here will be a balm for your heart. The words here from the prophet Isaiah, inspired by the Holy Spirit, were written for the comfort of God's people.

In our present day we need comfort also. There is so much perplexity and anguish in the world around us, often marked by blatant injustice and atrocious suffering. And the comfort we need comes not from people or institutions but only from God.

May the majesty and the loving care of God remind us that although we are weak, God is strong. Although we are sinners, God is forgiving. Although we are needy, God is powerful to supply, in Christ Jesus, all that we need.

Hernandes Dias Lopes is the Portuguese ministry leader for ReFrame Ministries. He also serves as director of Luz Para o Caminho (“Light for the Way”), an organization formed in partnership between ReFrame and the Presbyterian Church of Brazil. Rev. Lopes travels around the world to preach and teach the Bible. He and his wife, Udemilta (Tinha), live in Sao Paulo, Brazil, and have two children.

**COMFORT: AN ORDER FROM GOD**

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.

—Isaiah 40:1

The book of Isaiah is sometimes called “the gospel of the Old Testament” because it announces the good news (gospel) of the coming of God’s servant, the Messiah, who is Jesus Christ. In chapters 1-39, Isaiah writes about history. And in the rest of the book he delivers a message of comfort, restoration, and hope.

Comfort has its source in God. Only the Lord can bring peace to the human soul. Only God can forgive sins, and only in God do we find redemption.

True comfort does not come from earthly things. It does not come from people. Comfort comes from God.

We cannot find full comfort in various therapies or in self-help psychology. True comfort cannot be found on a couch or in a gym. We do not find our greatest comfort by enjoying the most splendid vacations or

the most appetizing pleasures. Comfort cannot be acquired with money or inherited from parents. Real comfort is the work of God. God is both the source and the giver of this gift.

Isaiah the prophet is ordered to comfort the people of God. But how? Not with flattering words or deceptive praise. True comfort can only be experienced when we turn to God, the inexhaustible source of grace. God alone can cancel our debt and forgive our sins. True comfort can only be found in God.

God of all comfort, only you can fill our deepest needs. Throughout this month, help us to find our only comfort in you by hearing from and living into your Word. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

## THE COMFORT OF FORGIVENESS

Proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed,  
that her sin has been paid for. . . . —Isaiah 40:2

God's people had ignored his law and had closed their ears to the words of his prophets. As a consequence, the people were taken into captivity and exile. Because they would not listen to the voice of grace, they heard the crack of the whip of discipline.

But the same God who disciplines his people restores them by his mercy. God called Isaiah to speak tenderly and with assurance to his exiled people, proclaiming that their time of captivity was over and that their sins were forgiven. What a comforting message!

Because God loves his people, he disciplines them. And along with disciplining his people, God also forgives them. God forgives his people, and he also restores them.

There is no remedy for guilt except in God's forgiveness. No medicine can calm a heart

tormented by guilt. No therapy can stifle the desperate cries of a conscience plagued with remorse for wrongdoing. Only God's forgiveness can lift the heavy burden that crushes us.

Have you been forgiven by God? Do you enjoy the peace that "transcends all understanding" (Philippians 4:7)?

Now is the time of grace. If your heart weighs heavy with sin, now is the opportune time to turn to God in repentance and seek his forgiveness.

Lord God, speak to our hearts with your restoring mercy. Lift the weight of our guilt, forgive us, and lead us from discipline to renewal, bringing the peace that only you can give. In Jesus, Amen.

## THE WAY OF REVIVAL

“In the wilderness prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”—Isaiah 40:3

The prophet Isaiah looks ahead, pointing to a prophet who would prepare the way for the coming Messiah. John the Baptist was that prophet, and the Messiah was Jesus Christ.

John presented the Messiah, Jesus, as the true light that comes into the world and enlightens every person. John also said of Jesus, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). John came baptizing with water, and he presented Jesus as someone greater than himself, who would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. John did not feel worthy even to untie the straps of Jesus’ sandals. John lived by this principle: “[Jesus] must become greater; I must become less” (John 3:30).

The church cannot produce revival; however, it is up to the church to prepare the way for

the Lord so that he may transform lives. Revival is the work of God, and preparing for it is our responsibility. Revival is a supernatural work of God, and we need to make a way straight in the wilderness for our God. Our lives must be the unobstructed road by which the Lord reveals himself to the world.

In what ways have you been a path through which the Lord has revealed himself? Prepare the way of the Lord!

Lord Jesus, make us a people who prepare your way with humility and faith. Help us to become less so that you may become greater among us. Clear our hearts of every obstacle so that your light may shine through our lives. Amen.

## A PROFOUND TRANSFORMATION

“Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain.”  
—Isaiah 40:4

This passage in Isaiah describes the content of John the Baptist's preaching, as shown in Luke 3:1-5. It is not about the topography of the land; it is not about road construction, as found in the Roman Empire. The prophet is speaking of the profound changes that need to take place in our lives for revival to come. “Every valley” refers to the dark places in our lives, the secret archives of the heart. Those valleys of darkness and sin need to be filled in and brought up to the light.

The mountains refer to pride, haughtiness of spirit, and arrogance. The arrogance of the human heart needs to be broken down by the plow of God's Word. The crooked paths speak of double-lives, of people who are hypocrites. When people are two-faced, they are not who they claim to be. The winding paths of their

twisted lives need to be straightened out.

The rough paths refer to things that are out of place in our lives. These paths need to be realigned with the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God. When spiritual reformation takes place in our lives, revival will come, as we will see in Isaiah's words that follow.

Spiritual reformation happens before spiritual revival. We need to repent and seek God's help in aligning our lives with his way. Then powerful revival will come.

Lord, search our hearts and reshape us. Fill our hidden valleys, humble our pride, straighten our crooked ways, and realign all that is rough. May your transforming glory be revealed in us. Amen.

## THE REVELATION OF GOD'S GLORY

"The glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all people will see it together."  
—Isaiah 40:5

As we noted yesterday, spiritual reformation happens before spiritual revival. First, with God's help and grace, his people seek to live in his way, and then the Lord visits them with revival. Without valleys filled in, mountains leveled, crooked paths made straight, and rough places made smooth, there is no revelation of God's glory or salvation for all people. Sin must be confronted, confessed, and forsaken before revival can come.

Preaching about revival without urging people to turn from their evil ways is the same as putting the cart before the horse. It reverses the order of things. Revival is the demonstration of the glory of the Lord. It is the revelation of the presence of God. Of course, God is present everywhere, but he reveals his presence in glorious power when people seek him in repentance and

faith, with the help of the Lord himself. And when God reveals himself and manifests his glory, hearts melt, knees bow, and lips confess to the Lord.

How we need a visitation from God! We may enjoy prosperity and wealth, but is God still present among us? In many churches there are signs that God's glory has departed. We need to seek God's help in aligning our lives with his way. May we desire the unmistakable presence of God more than the air we breathe!

Lord, cleanse our hearts and straighten our paths. Confront and remove every sin that gets in the way of your glory. Visit us with true revival, melt our hearts, and fill us with your life, we pray. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## THE FRAGILITY OF LIFE

“All people are like grass, and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field.”  
—Isaiah 40:6

Our text today emphasizes two solemn truths that point to the same fact. There is no room for human vanity. Human pride is nothing but utter foolishness.

Our bodies are as fragile as grass. We have physical weaknesses that cannot be disguised. Time carves wrinkles into our faces, and make-up cannot cover it. Our legs become weak, our knees wobble, our hands droop, our eyes blur, and every gray hair that sprouts on our heads is a reminder of the shortness of our lives.

We also have emotional weaknesses. There are times when we despair of life itself. We cry, we moan, we sob, assailed by anguish. We have moral and spiritual weaknesses as well. We promise to walk in righteousness, and yet our feet often stray down winding paths. We are ambiguous and contra-

dictory people. The good we want to do, we do not do; and the evil we hate, we practice.

Besides being fragile like grass, all the glory we achieve has a fleeting beauty like that of the flowers of the field. The heat of the sun makes the delicate flower wither and dry. Our glory is fleeting, and our accomplishments pass away. Our achievements are lost in the dust of time. We are too small, too fragile, too young!

But, thankfully, that doesn't have to be our end. In the Lord we can trust that our destiny is safe with him.

O God, remind us of our frailty and free us from pride. In our weakness, be our strength. In your glory, fill us with your life. Anchor our hearts in you alone. Amen.

## THE VAPOR OF LIFE

“The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the LORD blows on them. Surely the people are grass.”  
—Isaiah 40:7

Again we find the shortness of life compared to grass that sprouts in the morning, flourishes briefly, and is scorched by the sun in the heat of the day. Our life is brief, as fleeting as morning mist that disappears as the sun rises. Our life is as unstable as a cloud that dances with the wind in the heights. As Psalm 103:15-16 puts it, our life is like “a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more.”

Even if we live long and reach a very old age, in the light of eternity our life is short and uncertain. We do not know the length of our days. We have no guarantee that we will be alive tomorrow. Our health does not guarantee us a long life. The strength of our muscles does not protect us from danger. Our intelligence does not shield us, and our aca-

demic achievements cannot hide us from death.

The money we earn cannot lengthen our days or free us from death. We are vulnerable and powerless. We cannot stand on self-reliance. We are absolutely dependent on God. He must be our refuge. Only in him can we rest.

Is God the refuge of your life? In what ways have you found peace in him?

Father, remind us of the brevity of life, and free us from self-reliance. In our vulnerability, be our refuge. Help us to rest in your eternal strength, trust in your care, and find peace in your faithful presence. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## THE ETERNAL WORD OF GOD

“The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever.”  
—Isaiah 40:8

The prophet Isaiah contrasts the briefness of human life with the eternity of the Word of God. We are born, grow, mature, and die, but the Word of God remains forever. We come and go from history, but the Word of God remains alive, sovereign, and victorious from generation to generation.

Many have tried to discredit the Word of God, but its truths endure. Many unbelievers and skeptics have tried to stand against the credibility of Scripture, shouting with arrogance and claiming it is false, but the Word of God is the anvil that has broken their hammer every time. The Word of God has overcome all the fires of intolerance and remained victorious. It is inspired, inerrant, infallible, and sufficient. It does not need to be updated or redefined.

Heaven and earth will pass away, but the Word of God

will not pass away (see Luke 21:33). It is the truth. It is the sword of the Spirit. It is a lamp to our feet and a light for our path (Psalm 119:105). It is more precious than much refined gold and sweeter than honey.

The Word of God restores the soul, enlightens the eyes, gladdens the heart, and gives wisdom to the simple. It is living and active. It is powerful. God's Word endures forever!

Lord God, remind us that although our lives fade, your Word stands forever. Plant your eternal truth in our hearts. May your Word guide our steps, strengthen our faith, silence our doubts, and anchor us in your unchanging victory. Amen.

## THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD

You who bring good news . . . lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; [saying] . . . "Here is your God!"  
—Isaiah 40:9

The good news that must be announced with a shout is that the Lord has come to make himself known. Knowing and glorifying God is the reason for life itself. The prophet announces: "Here is your God!"

Who is this God? This is the Lord who made covenant promises long ago with his people. This is the God who keeps promises, despite the failures and sins of his people for many generations. Though the people had to be disciplined, they remained the people of God. Similarly, the Lord does not give up on us, despite our unfaithfulness.

This is the God of all grace. He is rich in forgiveness and abounding in mercy. He is the faithful God who keeps his word, for he has proclaimed restoration. He loves, and he disciplines. He disciplines, and he forgives. He forgives, and

he restores. The prophet presents God to the people so that they may know him.

The people who know God are strong and active. Our greatest need is to know God. He is eternal, unchanging, all-knowing, all-powerful, transcendent, and sovereign. He is holy and just, faithful and true, kind and merciful. God is our creator, provider, protector, redeemer, comforter, and reward. He is our joy, peace, righteousness, refuge, and strength. In him we have eternal security, full life, and a sure salvation.

Lord, help us to know you. Be our strength and joy. Reveal your holiness, mercy, and power, and anchor our lives in your unchanging love and salvation. In Jesus, Amen.

## THE REVELATION OF GOD

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

—Isaiah 40:10

Having introduced the Lord to his people, Isaiah describes the majestic revelation of God.

First, he is the Sovereign LORD, the Lord Almighty. The Lord is neither a pagan deity nor a tribal idol; he is the one, true God, clothed with power and majesty. Since he is all-powerful, nothing is too difficult for the Lord.

Second, the Lord has control over the universe, history, and nations, for his mighty arm rules over all things. Kingdoms rise and fall, but the Lord remains King over all. He is the one who gives life and takes it away. He is the one who exalts and brings low. He is the one who raises up presidents, prime ministers, and other rulers on the earth, and yet before him they are like nothing, no more than a drop in a bucket (Isaiah 40:15-17).

Third, he is the God who

rewards. The Lord saves by his grace and brings rewards by his goodness. Scripture says, “God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them” (Hebrews 6:10). And “when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away” (1 Peter 5:4).

The Lord our God is sovereign, almighty, in control, and faithful to his promises.

Lord, you rule with all power and majesty over all nations and all time. Strengthen our faith. Help us to serve you with love, trusting that you see, remember, and reward us with the gift of full life with you. Amen.

## THE LORD OUR SHEPHERD

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.  
—Isaiah 40:11

The Lord is not only the almighty God of the universe; he is also the shepherd of his people. God tends his people like a flock, watching over them, caring for all their needs, gently leading them, and providing them with comfort and restoration.

In the New Testament, Jesus teaches that he is the good shepherd (John 10:11), and his followers echo that in calling him the great shepherd of the sheep (Hebrews 13:20) and the chief shepherd (1 Peter 5:4). As our shepherd, Jesus laid down his life for his sheep, rose again to live for us, and will return to live with us forever.

The prophet Isaiah, speaking of this good and great shepherd, offers three truths about the Lord's shepherding care. The first is that this shepherd provides for his flock, feeding

it, protecting it, and guiding it. The second truth is that this shepherd takes special care of his tender lambs, carrying them close. The third truth is that this shepherd gently and lovingly guides his sheep that need special care.

With the Lord as our shepherd, we will lack nothing. With the Lord as our shepherd, we will have all we need for everyday life, security in death, and our Savior's constant presence for eternity.

Lord Jesus, our good and faithful shepherd, nourish and guide us in your constant care. Lift us up when we are weak, comfort us when we hurt, and lead us with your gentle strength. In your name we pray. Amen.

## THE MAJESTY OF THE LORD

Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand,  
or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens?  
—Isaiah 40:12

From this section of Isaiah 40 to its end, the prophet asks rhetorical questions that highlight God's amazing power, ability, and majesty over all things. In relation to creation, knowledge, nations, and rulers, nothing and no one compares with God.

For example, who is able to measure the waters of the earth in just the hollow of his hand? Think of all the oceans, lakes, rivers, and other waters on this earth. To the Lord these are smaller than the hollow in the palm of his hand!

Similarly, the span of the Lord's fingers can mark off the heavens. Scientists say that the universe is more than 93 billion light years in diameter. This means that if we flew at the speed of light, it would take us more than 93 billion years to go from one end of the universe to the other. And

yet God can measure that mind-boggling distance with just the breadth of his hand.

What's more, God can weigh the earth's mountains and hills on a scale and gather all of the earth's dust in a basket. With these astonishing descriptions, the prophet Isaiah makes abundantly clear that our God is incomparably great. He is the creator of the universe and the sustainer of his work of creation. There is no one like him. He alone is God. And this God is our Lord and Savior!

Majestic Lord, you measure the oceans, the heavens, the mountains, and more as if they are small things. Fill us with awe at your greatness. Sustain our faith, we pray, and remind us that you are our Savior. Amen.

## THE UNFATHOMABLE SPIRIT OF THE LORD

Who can fathom the Spirit of the LORD, or instruct the LORD as his counselor?  
—Isaiah 40:13

Continuing with the description of the incomparable majesty of God, Isaiah highlights the fact that the Spirit of the Lord cannot be fully understood. There is no wisdom or knowledge higher than the Lord's. No one else has greater wisdom. God is all-powerful, so he is not dependent on another being. God holds all knowledge, so he knows everything, sees all things, and can search all things, even to the depths of our being.

God is the guiding light itself, so he cannot be guided. God is the light of truth itself, so he needs no one to teach him. He knows all things, so there is not an unknown way for him to be guided by another. God is the way itself. God knows all that is revealed and all that is hidden. For him, the unknown is nonexistent. God is not surprised by anything. Nor is he helped by anyone.

God is the one who helps us.  
God is the one who guides us.  
God is the one who carries us.  
God is the one who gives us life and breath and everything else, for in him we live and move and have our being.

From the Lord our God comes every good gift. In him we have all that we need to live a full, abundant life (John 10:10).

All-wise God, you need no teacher and depend on no one. Carry us in your strength, fill us with your truth, and supply every good gift we need for life. In Jesus, Amen.

## THE WISDOM OF THE LORD

Whom did the LORD consult to enlighten him, and who taught him the right way? Who . . . taught him knowledge, or showed him the path of understanding? —Isaiah 40:14

One of the pillars of Christian teaching is that God knows all things, understands all things, sees all things, and searches all things. Nothing is too complex for God to understand. There is no area of knowledge in which God needs instruction. God is the righteous judge and does not need someone to interpret the law to instruct him on how to judge. The wisest person doesn't compare with God. We cannot add anything to God because he is perfect in himself.

We cannot tell God anything that he does not already know. No one has had to teach God wisdom because he is the source of all wisdom. No one has needed to shed the light of understanding on him because he discerns all things with perfect clarity.

God's wisdom is evident in the work of creation. He made ev-

erything with a definite purpose, for his glory and for our good.

God's wisdom can be seen in both the macrocosm and the microuniverse. We see God's wisdom in the stars and in a drop of dew. We see his handiwork in the formation of the human body and in the complexity of a tender flower.

God is the counselor par excellence. He is the just judge. He is wisdom itself personified. Hallelujah!

All-wise God, deepen our awe of you. Teach our hearts to trust your judgments, rejoice in your creation, and rest in your knowledge that guides all things for your glory. In Jesus, Amen.

## SUPREMACY OVER ALL NATIONS

Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket; they are regarded as dust on the scales; he weighs the islands as though they were fine dust.  
—Isaiah 40:15

Here the prophet Isaiah portrays God's superiority over all the nations of the earth. The world's great economic and military powers are no match for God. Empires rise and fall, but God remains the Sovereign Lord over all. Armies develop weapons and conquer other powers, but then other, stronger armies rise—and fall. In the meantime God remains on the throne of the universe. In poetic language, Isaiah says that all these nations, with all their power, are to God “like a drop in a bucket” or like dust on a set of scales. And islands, with their charm and beauty, are only like fine dust that can blow away in a breeze.

God is incomparable in his power. He is unique in his wisdom. He is indisputable in his governing. He is infinitely greater than everything he has created. Nothing compares to

God. No one can equal him. In today's world we have more than 200 nations. Even all of them together cannot compare with God. God is greater than the universe. He is infinitely greater than anything that exists.

Despite his greatness, the Lord is the personal God who cares about each one of us. He knows your name. He loves you with an everlasting love and draws you to himself. He has never given up on loving you, and he wants you to have full life with him forever.

Sovereign Lord, humble our hearts before you. Though you rule the universe, you know and love each one of us. Draw us close, and keep us in your never-ending care. Amen.

## INSUFFICIENT RESOURCES

Lebanon is not sufficient for altar fires, nor its animals enough for burnt offerings.  
—Isaiah 40:16

After discussing God's incomparable supremacy, Isaiah emphasizes our human insufficiency to please the Lord. Lebanon is known in the Old Testament as a nation with great forests of beautiful trees producing the finest wood. The cedars and junipers of Lebanon were used in the construction of God's temple and the king's palace (1 Kings 5-7).

But even Lebanon's great trees were not worthy enough to burn on God's altar. And Lebanon's animals were not sufficient for a burnt offering to the Lord. The prophet Micah asked God's people, similarly, "Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil?" Quantity does not impress God. An abundance of offerings cannot buy the Lord's favor. Human resources are too small and limited to please the sovereign Lord of the universe.

Micah asks further, "With what shall I come before the LORD . . . ?"

And, by the guidance of the Spirit, the prophet answers: "He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

Lord, you are far greater than we can imagine, and you are beyond anything we can offer. Teach us to honor you by practicing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with you each day. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

## THE INSIGNIFICANCE OF NATIONS

Before him all the nations are as nothing; they are regarded by him as worthless and less than nothing.

—Isaiah 40:17

As he continues describing God in his majesty and superiority, Isaiah says that all the nations, in comparison, are “as nothing”—even “less than nothing.” This means there is no room for pride or any sense of self-accomplishment in the sight of God. When Isaiah wrote this passage, Babylon was the superpower in that part of the world. It conquered many nations and had dominion over them.

Looking back, we see that the empires of the past fell. The great realm of Egypt lay covered with the dust of centuries. Assyria lost its far-reaching empire. Babylon, greater than Assyria, would soon fall into the hands of the Medo-Persians, and later Persia would fall to the Greeks. That is how it goes: nations rise and fall. Strong today, weak tomorrow. A nation may be rich and powerful for

a time, but then it will crumble, fall, and eventually be forgotten—less than nothing.

Only God is never removed from his throne. Only the glory of God never fades. Only the power of God is never confronted by a greater power. Proud nations drink the cup of failure, but the Lord God will never face defeat.

Sovereign Lord, nations are as nothing before you, and yet you care for them and all people. Help us to trust in your unshakable rule. Root us in your eternal glory, un-failing power, and eternal reign that can never be challenged. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## NOTHING CAN COMPARE WITH GOD

With whom, then, will you compare God? To what image will you liken him?  
—Isaiah 40:18

Here again Isaiah uses a rhetorical question to highlight the greatness and uniqueness of God. The Lord is incomparable in his greatness. He rules over all creation without needing anyone to guide him. In comparison to the Lord, all nations are insignificant. Our trust, therefore, must be not in human power or governments but in the one who rules from the eternal throne in heaven.

Isaiah points out that God is not like any image or idol either. Since ancient times, people have carved or cast images to represent their ideas of gods that they believe have power over them. But the only true God is the Lord, who made heaven and earth. All other gods are false. They know nothing and can do nothing. People's idols are powerless, but God is all-powerful.

God is also incomparable in his care for us. He is the one who

provides for us and renews our strength when we are weary.

Nothing and no one compares with the Lord. He is the source of life, so his life is not derived from anyone or anything. He does not depend on anyone to rule or to protect himself.

God is unique, singular, incomparable. Put your trust in him!

Incomparable Lord, unequalled in power and wisdom, turn our trust from human notions of strength and power to recognize you alone. By your grace and through your Spirit, anchor our hearts in your sovereign care. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## THE OFFENSE OF IDOLATRY

As for an idol, a metalworker casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold and fashions silver chains for it.

—Isaiah 40:19

God's people have always been surrounded by worshippers of idols that represent other gods—and all other gods besides the Lord are false.

Sadly, we have always been drawn to worship things other than the one true God. In the past, most idols were made of wood, stone, or precious metals such as silver and gold. But an idol can be anything to which we bow down. An idol can be a material thing, a person, a relationship, an ideal, a philosophy, a status or accomplishment, and more. Idols are a grotesque substitute for God and a crude representation of him. They are human works, not divine works. They are works or ideas forged by human imagination, not by divine guidance.

Idols are powerless. An image may have a mouth, but it cannot speak. It cannot see or

hear or walk. It cannot feel. Idols are inert and powerless. They can fall and break. To worship an idol is to become like it, without any understanding.

Idolatry is a distortion of the worship we are called to offer the Lord in spirit and in truth. Idolatry is an abomination to the Lord. The idea of worshipping something other than God is an offense—a great insult—to the Lord. God cannot be represented by any figure or thing or idea. Let's be aware of the deception of idolatry. Let's serve the Lord alone.

Lord, free our hearts from every kind of idol or false god. Teach us to worship you alone—in spirit and in truth, with undivided love and loyalty. Amen.

## THE FOOLISHNESS OF IDOLATRY

A person too poor to present such an offering selects wood that will not rot; they look for a skilled worker to set up an idol that will not topple. —Isaiah 40:20

As we noted yesterday, idolatry is an offense to God. Today's text describes how a person who cannot afford to use gold or silver might choose a special kind of wood and then hire a craftsman to carve it into an idol that they can worship.

An idol cannot do anything or even support itself, so how can a person trust it? Idols are fragile and lifeless in contrast to the all-powerful, living God. Idols are handmade from some kind of found material in contrast to the Creator God, who is spirit. If a person makes an idol and worships it, that would be like the creator worshipping the creature, revealing the foolishness of idolatry. Why would a person want to worship something that is lesser than they are?

The psalmist, after speaking of the uselessness of idols, says, "Those who make them will

be like them, and so will all who trust in them" (Psalm 115:8).

The French reformer and theologian John Calvin said that the human heart is like a factory of idols. We think of our favorite idols, and we bow down before them: money, sex, power, status, leisure, ideals, and more.

Let's be aware of the idols that we can too easily manufacture in our deceitful human hearts. Instead of being foolish, let's live by the wisdom of God.

Living God, free us from the idols that our hearts can create. Expose every false trust and tear down every lifeless substitute. Guide us to worship you alone and to devote our lives wholly to you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## THE LIVING AND TRUE GOD

Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood since the earth was founded?  
—Isaiah 40:21

Isaiah asks some more rhetorical questions here, and these emphasize that our knowledge of God is not something new or unheard of. Instead it's a divine revelation from the very beginning, since the creation of the world.

God's people, however, often act as if they are not aware of God. And ignorance of the knowledge of God is a highway to disaster, for we can perish if we do not know God. It is also important to emphasize that we can know God only because he has revealed himself: in creation, in human consciousness, in Scripture, and ultimately in Christ Jesus—all with the help of the Holy Spirit. Because God has revealed himself to us in so many ways, this knowledge is certainly available.

We can see God's handiwork in creation, for the created

world speaks eloquently about him. We can see God's purposes and the good news of his salvation for us in the Scriptures, which are inspired by the Spirit of God. We can see God's amazing grace in Christ Jesus, the Savior.

The God who created and established the universe has everything in his control. He rules over and sustains all things. Therefore we can trust in him.

Have you come to know the living God and how much he cares for you? He wants to give you full life so that you can live with him forever.

Lord, thank you for making yourself known to us. Help us to trust in you always. Lead us to grow in faith and to share the good news of your love everywhere. Amen.

## GOD'S GREATNESS

He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in.  
—Isaiah 40:22

Isaiah reminds us that God's reign is not only in heaven but is also established over the entire earth. God rules over everything and everyone. All of the world's inhabitants—although great in number—cannot be compared to the immensity of God. The Lord is greater than all things.

God is sovereign over the heavens and the earth. No empire or nation can compare to his reign. Before the greatness of God, humanity is tiny. No human being can be compared to God. Our strength is mere weakness, while God is all-powerful. Our wisdom is only foolishness, while God's wisdom is impenetrable. We need to place our trust in him.

God is the Creator and sustainer of the universe. He created the world with a purpose and maintains it to fulfill that

purpose. In the presence of God's divine majesty, the best we can do is bow down and worship the Lord in spirit and truth. The Lord of the universe loves and cares for us, and although we are small, he crowns us "with glory and honor."

Have you placed your trust in God? How have you surrendered the desires for your life to him today?

Sovereign Lord of the universe, we are humbled before your majesty. Teach us to trust your wisdom, to yield our desires to you, and to worship you. Amen.

## GOD'S SUPREMACY OVER RULERS

He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.  
—Isaiah 40:23

Isaiah points out the Lord's supremacy over the government leaders of this world. They rise to power and seem unshakable, but they are eventually overthrown and replaced.

Where are the pharaohs of Egypt? Where is Sennacherib of Assyria? Where is Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon? Where is Cyrus of Persia? Where is Alexander the Great? Where are the caesars of Rome? Where are the dictators who ruled with an iron fist? Where are the judges who made the courts a place of injustice and oppression? They have all fallen and will fall.

The Lord himself is the one who reduces them to nothing. No political power can stand against the Lord's sovereignty. No court, however respected, can annul God's decrees. Human power is limited. The powerful people of this age will fall. All who exalt them-

selves and crush the defenseless with inhuman brutality will be torn from the earth and will perish.

God brings down the proud and exalts the humble. History shows that one empire on the earth will follow after another. Great kings and powerful generals and clever judges will fall. "But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength" and "soar on wings like eagles" (Isaiah 40:31).

Sovereign Lord over all, you humble the proud and overthrow unjust powers. Teach us to trust in you, to defend the oppressed, and to wait on you with hope so that we may rise with renewed strength. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## THE FRAGILITY OF THE POWERFUL

No sooner are [rulers] planted . . . no sooner do they take root . . . than he blows on them and they wither, and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff. —Isaiah 40:24

The powerful people of this world tend to think they are strong and mighty, but they are fragile. They think they have the control of history in their hands, but they do not. Their stability is provisional. Their strength is temporary. Their wealth is volatile.

Their fragility contrasts with the omnipotence of God. Their instability contrasts with the eternity of God. Political rulers are fragile and temporary, but God is all-powerful and permanent. Scripture says people “are like a breath; their days are like a fleeting shadow” (Psalm 144:4), but God is unshakably the same “from everlasting to everlasting” (Psalm 90:2).

God controls the nations. He raises up kingdoms and overthrows them. He gives politicians and other leaders positions of power and takes them

down. Compared to the Lord, rulers on the earth are barely planted and rooted before they wither. All it takes is a breath from the Almighty to blow them away like chaff.

Rulers who try to defy God do not prevail. The arrogant may try to stand against the righteous God, but they will only be swept away.

Put your trust in God, our only true refuge and strength!

Almighty God, teach us not to trust in fragile human power but in your eternal strength. Humble the proud and uphold the faithful, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.

## THERE IS NO ONE LIKE GOD

“To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?”  
says the Holy One.  
—Isaiah 40:25

The Lord God is unique. There is no one like him. He is the Lord, “and there is no other.”

God is incomparably great. He is above and beyond all creation. He did not have to create the universe to be God; he was already God before the foundation of the earth. The Lord is not like idols made by human imagining; he is the one who gives life to all.

God is not vulnerable or fleeting like the rulers of this world. His throne is unshakable. His kingdom is eternal. He cannot be challenged or defeated by any enemy or coalition. God is the undefeated victor in all battles. He does not share his glory with anyone. He does not decentralize his power. On the contrary, in God’s hands are all power and authority.

The Lord is incomparably holy, separate from everything and everyone. In him there is no

fault. He is pure in who he is and perfect in all he does.

Moses declared, “Who among the gods is like you, LORD? Who is like you—majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?” (Exodus 15:11).

We can trust in God because his power is unlimited. His love is eternal, and no one can separate us from that love. His wisdom is perfect, and therefore none of his plans can be thwarted.

Lord, you are incomparable in holiness and power. You are the eternal, unrivaled God. We worship you. Help us to trust that you have perfect wisdom, unchanging love, and sovereign authority. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

## POWERFUL CREATOR

Lift up your eyes . . . to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one and calls forth each of them by name. . . . —Isaiah 40:26

Life's problems can weigh us down so much that we may feel as if we can't look up. But we need to lift our gaze to consider the greatness of God and the majesty of his creation. As Psalm 19:1 says, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands." In a similar way, Romans 1:20 testifies, "Since the creation of the world God's invisible attributes—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made. . . ."

When God summons the great multitude of stars, calling each one by name, not one is absent. The Creator not only made them but also named each one. There are more stars in the sky than we count. Yet God summons each one, calling them by name, and they promptly appear.

God knows every one of the trillions of living cells in our bodies. He knows every hair on our heads. He upholds all things by the power of his word. "In him all things hold together" (Colossians 1:17). He has created, preserves, and governs all things. All things exist for the praise of his glory.

In what ways are you discovering how great and powerful the Lord is? We can trust in him to handle whatever problems we might encounter.

Creator God, lift our eyes from our burdens to your majestic power. You sustain all things. Deepen our faith in you as we observe your care, wisdom, and amazing work each day in the world around us. Amen.

## THE MISTAKES OF GOD'S PEOPLE

Why do you complain . . . ? Why do you say . . . "My way is hidden from the LORD; my cause is disregarded by my God"?

—Isaiah 40:27

God's people were discouraged and feeling helpless. Despite the majesty God had shown for them in the uniqueness of his being and the greatness of his work, the people were mistaken in two ways.

First, they thought God had forgotten them. They began to doubt God's goodness and care. They were like deists, who imagine that God is distant and indifferent to our struggles.

Second, they thought God was being unfair to them. They believed they had special rights that were not being delivered to them. They accused God of neglect and injustice. They did not see God's loving care in his discipline. They ignored his commands and his call to love him with all their heart, soul, and strength and to love their neighbors as themselves (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18; see Matthew 22:34-40).

God's discipline is not done without love. Storms in life may come, but they do not nullify God's care. We are loved by God, and he graciously gives us life and offers us forgiveness despite our sins. We are chosen not on the basis of how good we are or what we have done. We are saved by grace through faith in the Lord and by the power of Jesus' sacrifice for us. Through Jesus we are freed to approach the Lord with humility and gratitude, no matter what our circumstances might be.

Loving God, remind us that you never forsake us. When we face hard times and even discipline, teach us humility and trust. Help us to rest in your grace and goodness. Amen.

## THE ETERNAL, TIRELESS GOD

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.  
—Isaiah 40:28

People get exhausted, but the Lord never grows tired. People are born and die, but God is immortal and everlasting. People are creatures, but God is their Creator. People have some knowledge, but God's understanding is beyond our comprehension. People dare to question God, but our arguments are unreasonable.

In our text for today the prophet Isaiah points out the eternal nature of God. He is before and beyond time. Time is in his hands. God is the one who was, who is, and who is to come. Further, Isaiah emphasizes the sovereignty of God. He is the Lord. He governs the universe, the nations, the church, and our lives.

God is the Creator of the ends of the earth, the master of the whole universe. Matter is not eternal. The world did not

arise by itself. Our world and its solar system and all the stars and galaxies we can see when we look into space—all of it has been created by God.

Isaiah also emphasizes that God is tireless. He is still at work today. He does not need to regain strength. He gives strength to the powerless.

In addition, God's understanding is unsearchable. His wisdom and knowledge are unfathomable. What a great, amazing God we serve! We can trust and obey him as we live each day in his care.

Eternal God, tireless and wise, strengthen us in our weakness. Help us to trust in your sovereignty, to rest in your care, and to obey your will. Amen.

## GOD GIVES STRENGTH

He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall.  
—Isaiah 40:29-30

The sovereign Lord of the universe, who does not grow tired or weary, gives strength when we are weak and exhausted. We are subject to many weaknesses. Our strength quickly withers and fades. Our muscles and minds grow weary on the hard journeys of life. Fatigue is an unavoidable reality for us. Even the most dedicated, energetic people have passed through times of discouragement and weariness.

From Moses to Elijah and from David to Hezekiah, the Lord's chosen prophets and kings felt weakened at times (see Exodus 3-16; 1 Samuel 19-24; 1 Kings 19; 2 Kings 18-20). We can often feel the same way.

But God is the source of our strength. God is our refuge and fortress. The apostle Paul agrees: "I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power

may rest on me" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

God is our sustainer, and he renews our strength when we stumble and fall. He forgives our sins and heals our diseases. God keeps us on our feet in the struggles of life. He fights our battles and gives us victory. The Lord gives us our life, and he supplies us the power to live. Only in him can we move forward, despite our weaknesses. We can trust in him.

Lord, in our weakness we ask that you renew our strength. Lift us when we are weary, uphold us in every challenge and hardship, and fill us with your sustaining power so that we may find strength and rest in you. Amen.

## HOPE IN THE LORD

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

The strength of human power and will is not enough to keep us on our feet. It's not enough to keep us going when we need to carry on. But renewal comes from the Lord, who not only gives us strength but also lifts our spirits, toning the muscles of our souls. God makes us soar like eagles, providing us with the strength and determination to continue running and walking through life as we serve him, depending on his strength, wisdom, and power.

It is interesting that Isaiah describes our actions here on a decreasing scale—soar, run, walk—rather than on an increasing scale. It may seem to us that he should say we are strengthened to walk, run, and soar. What is the writer's purpose here?

When we look back on the times of our lives, we can see that we soar like eagles once in

a while. And sometimes we are able to run like athletes. But most of the time we walk along, day in and day out. What drains our strength and wears us out the most is not the few times we soar or run, but the daily routines in which we walk. The eagle, with its powerful wings, rises to lofty heights. The fast runner reaches the finish line in record time. The walker treads along with perseverance.

But the one who renews our strength is the Lord. God is the one who strengthens our soul and empowers us to keep on in our mission in this world.

Lord, renew our strength each day. Help us soar in victory, run with endurance, and walk faithfully in our life with you. Help us to finish the race you have set before us. Amen.

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