

The Shepherd Warrior

Isaiah 40.1–11

Sermon

Have you ever wished you could start over? Maybe failed 1st quiz in a class & wanted to hit reset button, or had terrible 1st half in a game & wished you could go back and begin again, or said something you imm longed to retract. At some pt we all wish we could start over again.

We are in a sense starting over today. Isa 40 (p. 500). Last school yr we studied Isa 1–39: the K & the city. § Some very diff psgs, confrontation re things peo of Judah/Jeru wasn't doing right, promises of judgment. Seemed we were going to end on a high note: Hezk's trust in G & the defeat of Assyria (chs 36–37). § But followed imm by failure: Hezk's reliance on Babylon & threat of judgment (chs 38–39). No doubt many wished they could go back & start over, or at least wipe out the past & start fresh. Precisely what next section of Isa does. New section (chs 40–55) brings renewed hope & starts right here. § [Read text.]

Intro to series (The Serv & the City). § Named series bc of key rev in these chs: four Serv Songs (blue). Not only subseries in this sec: sec also presents case against idolatry in four parts (red). § What's coming: Bab captivity (39.5–7). § Isa's concern: would destruction of Jeru also destroy faith in 1TG? Ergo preventative maintenance. § Sec an attempt to turn people away from idols to the true God by directing them to his glory & his Serv. Along the way G will make three contrasts: idols & himself (chs 40–44), Babylon & Isr (chs. 45–48), sin & atonement (chs. 49–55). In sum this sec a word of hope to his peo: you can trust your G. § Some: "Why give such attn to this 2,700 year old text? In 1st place, not even written to you, so why would you care? More imp, even if it did offer a msg of hope to those peo, what relevance would it have for you? Why believe B at all?" Fair q & while ans that q isn't pt of today's

msg, I think today's psg might illustrate why we bel. In this case, offer short answer: one reason we bel is that Scr gives an accurate description of life as we exp it. More you read it, more trustworthy you find it.

Take its description of **humanity**. § Double ill (6): *grass, flowers*. Going to emph transience, we'll get to that in a sec. But think about pix themselves. Took fam on a picnic in CP recently, lawn near Delacourt Theatre. Passed through fence & some of our kids almost imm took shoes off, walked barefoot in grass: coolness, refreshment, comfort. Peo are like *grass*: relats meant to be a blessing, bring joy, solace, comfort, ease. & *their faithfulness like flower*. *faithfulness* common OT word to describe G's love ("loving kindness, steadfast love"). Ergo refers spec to love of peo for others, promise-keeping/faithfulness, or gen goodness to each other. At our best human love like a flower: simplicity, brings beauty & color to life. & if you think I'm reading too much into this, that the image is only neg, I'd suggest you consider what ills he could've used: could have said, "All peo are like chaff & all their faithfulness like a thorny bush" or "Peo are like weeds & all their faithfulness like poison ivy." No, there is something **beautiful** about grass & flowers & that's illustrative of humanity at its best.

But not all pos, still **broken** (7–8). § At one level our brokenness has to do w our transience (*wither*, 7a, 8a). Don't last forever, our lives will be cut off, & even our best deeds, closest friendships, & greatest loves will perish w us. Ergo Watts: "Frail as summer's flower we flourish, blows the wind & it is gone." Death a real prob for humanity. Ill of Larry King's interview in *NYTMag*: "I can't get my head around 1 min being there & another min absent." More than that: our misdeeds (*fail*, 7, 8; *sin* in 2). Not everything that comes from us is flowers & beauty, lots of thorns & ugliness. Make demands of those beneath us, get angry at peo we don't even know, destroy the reputation of those we hate, excuse our transgressions while condemning same flaws in others, put ourselves forward at expense of others. Meanwhile we show up on Sun, continue

our relig show, pretend we're better than we are. No wonder Peter quotes this psg to Xians as he does: § 1Pet 1.22–2.1. Love ourselves more than others, hurt those who love us, & emit a stench that almost entirely overpowers sweet aroma of human love. & there comes a time in everyone's life—maybe today/5 yrs from now—when you wish you could go back & change something you did bc now you see mess you made, wish there were away you could repair damage. Ergo broken.

But I say this a psg of **hope**. What hope could there poss be for peo who have such potential for beauty but by our lack of love make such a mess of G's good world? who like peo in Isa's day indulge ourselves while widows & orphans starved? who go through relig ritual while rejecting G's command to love? **Coming of L** (3–4). § § Envisions G coming from east, from Jordan Valley through Jericho up to Jeru. Jordan Valley sits below sea level, ergo 15 mile long, 3,100 ft uphill climb from Jordan to Jeru ([Beyer](#), 164). Not an easy journey. Ergo image of v. 4: when G decides to come, nothing will stop him.

When he comes, comes as **warrior** (10a). § Tremendous pic of strength, G as mighty warrior, powerfully exerting his will, needing only his *mighty arm* to enforce his rule. Particularly meaningful imagery for Isr under Babylonian captivity. They would see power like never before when Nebu would come, destroy Jeru, & send peo hundreds of miles into exile. If they'd ever be freed, it would have to come from someone more powerful than Babylon. Ergo warrior image. G of power.

But if peo in exile would've thought long about it, no doubt drawn conc that coming of Mighty Warrior G not nec good news. After all, hadn't peo of Isr already proved they broken/flawed/sinful? So if he were to come, execute his judgment, establish his rule, wouldn't G's judgment on Babylon extend to them too? How can broken peo take comfort that the Warrior G is on his way? A word of hope bc G is more than mere power, more than sheer justice, more than a Mighty Warrior. Powerful

& **compassionate**, strong & loving. § Ergo 2nd image to describe G: *shep* (11). G isn't just a Mighty Warrior, he's the Shepherd Warrior. He does come to execute justice & establish his rule, but when he comes, he comes for his peo. § Pt of 10b: what is G's *reward/recompense*? Not what but who: § the *reward* he is fighting for is his *flock*. He lowers his mighty arm w power on his enemies so that § he can gather his peo in tenderness & love w those same arms. & that's precisely what G would do for those exiles in Babylon: he would come in power, destroy Babylon, & raise up a new king who would send Jews back home. No doubt on that long journey back to Jeru, peo reflected on these words & exp'd tender shepherding care of their Warrior G. "He is trustworthy."

And yet. Even after return from Babylonian captivity, still unanswered qs: "we've returned from east, crossed Jordan, went through Jericho, entered Jeru. But where is the L? § Prophecy about him, not just us— about his coming, not just our return. When will the L come? § When will his glory be revealed & all peo see it tog?" We know Jews asked this q bc 100s of yrs after Bab Cap, Essenes prayed this psg, expecting G to **fulfill** promise. That fulfillment eventually did come, 100 yrs after Essenes § when a strange prophet w a msg of repentance was asked, *Who are you?* & he replied *I am the voice calling in wilderness, "Make straight the way for the L"* (Jn 1.19–23). That man was J the B & he saw himself as the forerunner of the L, the one to clear pathway, one called to prepare peo. & it wouldn't be long before the L came, & he came in the pers of J. § Ergo J the B's words: *Behold the Lamb of G!* (1.29). & in the face of X *the glory of the L* is revealed. In him you see strength of a warrior, speaking truth to power, confronting relig leaders about their hypocrisy, overturning thieves in Temple. & in him you see compassion of a shepherd, healing all who were sick, reaching out to the marginalized, defending the weak against the powerful. Watch him care for his disciples, feeding them & teaching them & hear voice of G over him: *see! he tends his flock like a shepherd!* Watch him reach out

to Jews & Samaritans & Gentiles & hear voice of G over him: *see! he gathers the lambs in his arms*. Watch his discs beg him to send the annoying little children away & watch J rebuke the discs & bless the children & hear voice of G over him: *see! he carries them close to his heart*. Watch him care for women, those whom society relegated to second class status, & hear voice of G over him: *see! he gently leads those that have young*. Friends, J is Shep Warrior of Isa 40. The glory of the L has been revealed in him. In X G has come for you. True, still waiting for this prophecy to be altogether fulfilled (5): § not everyone has seen glory of the L in the face of X. But more & more peo are seeing it. We're living in an era when G delays fulfillment so that you can see him for yourself.

See friends, it's precisely in J the Shep Warrior that you can start over (gos). Bc of what he did you can be released from the bondage of your brokenness. J lived the life you haven't lived so that you could be regarded as perfect/holy/righteous. & he died the death you should've died so that you could be set free—so that you could become part of J's *reward/recompense*, one of his *flock*. Friends, the only hope for beautiful but broken humanity comes on the other side of § our *hard service being completed & our sin being paid for* (2). *double* in dual form (as in Arabic, e.g., hand), payment corresponds exactly to sin. No comfort until the brokenness is resolved, no hope until the sin is removed. & the hope of the gos is that J has completed the service, he's paid the price—& you can go free. You can start over.

What it looks like when you start over §: **theo vision**. Don't mean to be cheesy or cute, but this wheel really does summarize what it is G is making his peo to be. Gos makes us a peo of faith, hope, love. From that flow these nine values we're going over in SS. Gos makes each of us this kind of pers, makes our ch this kind of community. **Exercise**: this afternoon take the wheel & go through each of value and ask yourself, "How does this psg make me a pers of, e.g., sound doc?"

Prime pump. Gos makes you a **pers of faith**, part of that is a pers of sound doc (8): if word of G endures forever & we are his peo, we're going to give ourselves to this word, spend time in it, read it, prioritize it, study it, learn it, memorize it, meditate on it, sit under it, let it govern us. Also a **pers of hope**, part of that is nobility of work (6): look at your work/art/management/performance/research as you do a flower—beautiful & therefore meaningful/worthwhile/valuable, but transient & therefore not ultimate/not worth sacrificing your integrity/not means by which you attain eternal glory. Makes you a **pers of love**, part of that is soul care (11): following our Savior in his tender care for the broken, his concern for the weak, his reaching out to the marginalized, his heart for the lost. So much more, this is just a start.

Not just a start, a fresh start. § Diff bet gos & relig. Relig says, “Turn over a new leaf & you’ll make your way to G. Work hard, discipline yourself, be more spiritual.” But gos says, “G comes to you, he takes 1st step, he does everything that needs to be done, & by his grace he picks you up in his arms, carries you, & empowers you to follow him.” Grace means you can start over bc J has come for you. Take comfort, abound in hope, rest—for J is the Shep Warrior.