



This is your God!

(Is 40:10-26)

I remember in my early sermons to this church that one of the few bits of teaching in Spurgeons that impressed me were two questions that should sum up what our theology should be like. Our faith can be defined by these questions:

What sort of God?

So what?

The sort of God that we have determines how we are going to live our lives. For the Muslim extremist, his god is one that is vengeful and destroys the unbeliever and his main weapon of destruction is jihad - holy war - and the most noble form of jihad is suicide. Those that kill the infidel have the highest places in heaven.

What about our God? The Jews who were reading Isaiah 40 had a low view of God. He was the one who put them into captivity. He was the One the Babylonians mocked that their gods were more powerful. Not a good idea!

And we have the message - God is coming - prepare the way! What sort of God comes. He's our God and He's like this! To the exiles this was a hard place. Some said that God can't or won't work here. They gave up and became Babylonians. . You can hear them – rubbish, God doesn't work like this. What about the other gods we have put our trust in? Our God doesn't work like this anymore. We're strangers in a strange land. Let's live how we live and not expect much from God.

And it reverberates down the years – revival? In Britain in 2006? Look at the decline. It hasn't happened in years so why now? This is Norfolk. And if God can't do something then why make an effort to please Him? Why bother about commitment? Why try to make big leaps of faith? He doesn't work here. So why bother? What's He going to do about it? Not a lot I bet because He doesn't do much does He?

The aspirations of churches reflect their God. Someone once said Blessed are those who expect nothing, they will never be disappointed!

What sort of God do we have?

Right then, here's yours as He presents Himself to us in Scripture

He's powerful - v10 *See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power. He's a powerful God. he creates, he overthrows, He changes lives.* This is your God!

He's caring - v11 *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. He's that powerful, but He's a God who cares for those who are His.* What an amazing God! Amongst all the bits about powerfulness we see a tender God. This is important. never exaggerate one thing in favour of another. The God who is powerful is loving and tender. The God who is

loving and tender is righteous, powerful, vast and whatever else. Balance your picture of God. I feel for some of you this morning you need to temper your picture of God. For many believers, He's such a tender shepherd that we forget that He is a God who is powerful and uses it on a routine basis in the universe and in His Church.

He's the source of righteousness and knowledge - 12 (C) Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens? Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket, or weighed the mountains on the scales and the hills in a balance? 13 (C) Who has understood the mind of the LORD, or instructed him as his counselor? Isaiah asks some questions here. 14 Whom did the LORD consult to enlighten him, and who taught him the right way? Who was it that taught him knowledge or showed him the path of understanding?

Who taught God anything? You know the answer - nobody.

He's vast - the totality of this passage is that God is creator and everything is small-scale compared to Him. If you've ever been up in an aircraft you'll know about this. Everything that seems big on the ground looks small from up there. We just read how small things are to God.

Lets look at us - 14 Whom did the LORD consult to enlighten him, and who taught him the right way? Who was it that taught him knowledge or showed him the path of understanding? 15 (C) 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. 16 (C) Lebanon is not sufficient for altar fires, nor its animals enough for burnt offerings. 17 (C) Before him all the nations are as nothing; they are regarded by him as worthless and less than nothing.

What a God! How awesome. This is your God! Now compare who you are and what you find valuable to God. The prophet asks lots of questions in this passage. Here's one.

Incomparable To whom, then, will you compare God?

18 (C) To whom, then, will you compare God?

What image will you compare him to? Men make idols out of metal and wood. As I've said previously, we make idols out of our things - houses, cars, people, items, money. We worship them alongside God rather than instead of. We'll even spiritualise the whole thing by suggesting how God has blessed us with these things. But how does God see you?

21 (C) 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? 22 (C) 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. 23 (C) He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing. 24 No sooner are they planted, no sooner are they sown, no sooner do they take root in the ground, than he blows on them and they wither, and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff.

What sort of God? He's all powerful, all knowing, vast, incomparable. So what? A He comes, he makes all these claims, he sends His Son to die in your place, you take His gift of eternal life, His Spirit lives in you?

Surely this God is world-changing, life changing, town-changing, nation-changing. Do you believe in that God? Do you believe He's all the things He says?

Then why isn't this nation changed? Why isn't this community of Swaffham changed? Why isn't this church fellowship changed?

This is your God - powerful, vast, all-knowing - or is he a double-glazing salesman. he sells you dreams and all you want is nice windows! We have our agenda, we believe what we want to believe, we have our little tinpot gods and we'll do what we think. Yes, Isaiah 40 may be in the Bible - but we don't really believe that stuff do we? Our actions and our lives tell the world whether we trust a world-changing God or a double glazing salesman.

What sort of God? Someone who can't be trusted? Each time we don't believe that our neighbours can know Christ so we don't tell them, we affirm to ourselves that God can't save them. Each time we have no motivation to speak to someone about the Lord, we affirm that we don't believe that the Spirit can speak through us. Each time we can't be bothered to pray for the lost, we affirm that God can't save them because we can't be bothered to go and ask.

It isn't just a case of who we think God is, but on who on earth do we think t WE are to act out in our lives what we think - that He isn't powerful enough to save, He isn't powerful enough to change our town and our society? Sadly actions speak louder than words!

And through this passage we find out who we are

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So try this – do you know how small YOU are compared to God?

If you've been to the Mediterranean, you'll know that at night it's very noisy. It isn't the discos and nightclubs - it's the grasshoppers. They sit out there rubbing their legs together and it can be deafening. They are tiny but make a lot of noise.... but they can't do much more than annoy you. And God says - you're like them. Small, noisy and irritating.

The questions to you are these:

Can you control nations?

Can you change creation?

You know, we think we are so clever that we can do these things. So we invade Iraq and what happens? Do we control nations? ROFL.

Can we change creation? You mean like climate change? Ho, Ho.

Can you do any of this? Can you change lives? Can you change nations?

God can. here is the God who's coming. he says *"Prepare the way!"* Why? Because He is a life- changing, world changing Go and we are His people and he is going to work these things out . And this can be Britain in 2007.

Here we are in Swaffham in 2007, a struggling church fellowship feeling insecure, worrying about our future, worrying what's going to happen. Then if that's you then I ask you the question - what sort of God do you have?

If He's the God of Isaiah 40, then He's the God who is going to make me respond by saying that He is worth following, He is worth making sacrifices for, taking risks for.

If you don't believe anything can be changed and you feel like giving up, then maybe you should start wondering what God you haven't because he isn't the one that wrote this.

The repeating history of awakenings and revivals is that they start when people ask themselves "What sort of God". The read passages like this and say "So what". So what! We have a God who's wanting to revisit this nation, this county, this town in power - so let's do something about it.

These last three main Sunday sermons have been significant for me. I believe that the Lord has been calling me to restate who I am and what I stand for as a Minister and as a believer. I've done it in the full knowledge that there are those who share my expectation and my sentiments.

Then there are those that don't. I'm not really after a theoretical debate here. God doesn't leave us that option. Read Isaiah 40. Here is your God! If you believe in any other sort of God, then it's not the God of the Bible.

So what? Because for the people, there was a reckoning coming. Be prepared or be pushed aside. Let me tell you a Baptist story. There was a group of Baptists called the General Baptists. They were the oldest Baptists, founded in 1612. They flourished in the seventeenth century and many came to Christ. They prided themselves in their noble past but by the eighteenth century they dabbled with a belief called Unitarianism - a belief that there is only one God and that Jesus was just a man and the Holy Spirit is just a force. To those that remained Trinitarian, they were down at heel.

Wesley's revival came and nothing much happened to the General Baptists. They did their own thing. they were comfortable in their view of scripture and in the things they did. Enter Dan Taylor who was converted in Methodism but drawn to the Baptists. He started to show the Baptists the word of God and preached and taught. And what happened? Nothing happened, most General baptists were happy to dismiss him. Many didn't and founded a grouping called the New Connexion which grew and prospered. Why? Because they opened the word of God and found in there their God - and trusted Him.

This is the way of revival. Here is you God? So what? So follow Him, so seek Him, so obey Him and make the difference. And if we don't? the general Baptists stayed in their comfort zones. They're history. They were finished by the end of the eighteenth century.

The Lord is coming! Be prepared or become extinct. That's the message for church fellowships up and down the land - and that's the message for us too.

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