4-10 February 2024 You are not forgotten by God

Isaiah 40: 21-31

# **21**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**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**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.

**25**“To whom will you compare me?  
    Or who is my equal?” says the Holy One.  
**26**Lift up your eyes and look 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.  
Because of his great power and mighty strength,  
    not one of them is missing.

**27**Why do you complain, Jacob?  
    Why do you say, Israel,  
“My way is hidden from the Lord;  
    my cause is disregarded by my God”?  
**28**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.  
**29**He gives strength to the weary  
    and increases the power of the weak.  
**30**Even youths grow tired and weary,  
    and young men stumble and fall;  
**31**but 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.

**Bible notes**

For half a century the people of Judah had lived in exile. After the horror of the Babylonian war, defeat and capture, the prophet Jeremiah told them to make a life for themselves in their new surroundings (Jeremiah 29:7), which they had done. But it wasn’t home. And having done what God asked them to do, they now feel abandoned, disregarded, alone in the world. This section orbits around verse 27. A new prophet has arisen who is telling the people of Judah to lift their eyes and look. Something extraordinary is about to happen. God is coming to deliver them and set them off on a journey home. But how can this be? Babylon is, like all empires, impregnable and disregards the Judahites even more than God. But the wheels of history are turning, Assyria is rising and Babylon is about to be swept away. When that happens, these sorrowing exiles need to be ready to make the long journey home. How can this be? Because of who God is. God is the all-powerful creator who brings empires to dust and stoops to rescue God’s people. So, the prophet tells them to get ready: God will strengthen them for the journey if they look to God. The great words of verses 29-31 will be true of them and a new chapter of their history will open.

### ****Reflection****

Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.

How should we balance activity with quiet? People often feel abandoned, weighed down by life’s burdens and they need us to be there for them. How do we ensure that we ourselves are not overwhelmed by life’s needs? By taking a leaf out of Jesus’ book: he was fully engaged with the needs of people but then he was off and alone with God. He could do the former only because he did the latter. We need to renew and refresh our walk with God in the busy-ness of church activity.

**Questions for reflection**

*You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues arising from this week’s Bible passage.*

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**Questions**

* Why are bees so important to human survival?
* How can we make sure no one feels insignificant and forgotten?
* What helps you to know you are known and loved by God?

Prayer

 Adapt to your local context.

**A prayer of praise**

After each line: **And we praise you.**

Almighty God,  
you show your strength by lifting up the weak;  
you show your compassion by supporting the helpless;  
you show your tenderness by reaching those in darkness;  
you show your faithfulness by remembering all your children.  
Wherever we are, night or day, in wonder and gratitude.  
**Amen.**

## **A prayer to end the Bible study**

The Lord builds up his people; (one hand on the other)  
**he gathers the outcasts.** (make a gathering gesture)  
He heals the broken-hearted, (hands on heart)  
**and binds up their wounds.** (grip biceps)  
The Lord lifts up the downtrodden; (raise hands)  
**thanks be to God.**