

July 5, 2026 – Online Isaiah 40

Pre-service Music

[Strength Will Rise \(Everlasting God\) - Chris Tomlin | LYRIC VIDEO](#)  
[They That Wait Upon the Lord | Isaiah 40:28–31 | Powerful Christian Worship](#)

**==Order of Service ==**

Call to worship – WW 25 **GMT20260621-150452 – start at .03 to 4.40**  
Intro to worship in the midst of chaos – looking at Isaiah 40  
Isaiah 40:10-31

[\*\*The Lord's My Shepherd - Stuart Townend \[with lyrics for congregations\]\*\*](#)

Prayers – WW 26-27 **GMT20260621-150452 – start at 4.48 to 14.21**  
Reflections on the questions of today's world –  
Isaiah 40:12-20  
Isaiah 40:21-29

[\*\*Have You Not Known? arr. Heather Sorenson by GSBC Sanctuary Choir\*\*](#)

Isaiah:30-31  
**GMT20260621-150452 – start at 14.30 (omit 16.35-17 I SNEEZED!) to 21.03**  
Reflection on waiting

[\*\*They That Wait Upon the Lord \(solo version\)\*\*](#)

After the waiting **GMT20260621-150452 – start at 21.10 to 31.57**

[\*\*Father in Heaven \(take off credits at end\)\*\*](#)

Prayers of intercession – WW 28 **GMT20260621-150452 – start at 32.0 to 37.36**  
Lord's Prayer  
Benediction

[\*\*They That Wait Upon the Lord | Isaiah 40:28–31 | Powerful Christian Worship\*\*](#)

*Many of you will know that when I lead an in-person service,  
I like to engage the congregation in hearing and responding to the scripture with me.  
Long ago I realised that many of us 'turn off' unconsciously when scripture is read:  
"I already know that one... I don't need to listen again."  
But the secret about scripture is that God can continue to speak to us  
Even when God is using words we have heard many times before.*

*Now when I'm prerecording an online service, hearing back from those watching  
Doesn't really work, at least not right away (though some of you do email me later).  
But today's service is the result of a comment someone in the congregation made recently  
At an in-person service I was leading.  
In that service, we were talking about the beauty of God in creation  
When someone interrupted to say, "But what about all the evil in the world?"  
There are many passages of scripture which speak to that question,  
But a few days after that service, I came across Isaiah 40,  
And I noticed within it some thoughts we could explore together.  
Today's service is based on Isaiah 40, then –  
But I've used the words of the Message paraphrase  
as perhaps those are less well-known, so we will listen more carefully...*

*We'll begin with verse 11, where Isaiah is addressing a people  
Who wonder where God has gone –  
can't God see how good they are --- and how much they are suffering?  
Is God asleep? Or powerless? Or just doesn't care?*

*Isaiah starts with dual images: the power of God's might and the power of God's love.  
powerful warrior and gentle shepherd –  
Protecting, caring, nurturing*

*Tell the cities of Judah,  
"Look! Your God!"  
Look at him! God, the Master, comes in power,  
ready to go into action.  
He is going to pay back his enemies  
and reward those who have loved him.  
Like a shepherd, he will care for his flock,  
gathering the lambs in his arms,  
Hugging them as he carries them,  
leading the nursing ewes [mother sheep] to good pasture.*

*That passage reminds me of one of our favourite hymns and images –  
The Lord's my shepherd – from Psalm 23 – but it works here, too...*

[The Lord's My Shepherd - Stuart Townend \[with lyrics for congregations\]](#)

Prayers – WW 26-27 – some further images of God as powerful and vulnerable...

*Let's continue to listen to the prophet Isaiah speaking to his world and ours –*

*Reflections on the questions --*

*What about all the evil?*

*Where is God in all this?*

*Why doesn't God do something about this?*

*He speaks first of God as the Creator, infinitely bigger than all we can imagine:*

12-17 Who has scooped up the ocean in his two hands,  
or measured the sky between his thumb and little finger,  
Who has put all the earth's dirt in one of his baskets,  
weighed each mountain and hill?  
Who could ever have told God what to do  
or taught him his business?  
What expert would he have gone to for advice,  
what school would he attend to learn justice?  
What god do you suppose might have taught him what he knows,  
showed him how things work?  
Why, the nations are but a drop in a bucket,  
a mere smudge on a window.  
Watch him sweep up the islands like so much dust off the floor!  
There aren't enough trees in Lebanon  
nor enough animals in those vast forests  
to furnish adequate fuel and offerings for his worship.  
All the nations add up to simply nothing before him—  
less than nothing is more like it. A minus.  
18-20 So who even comes close to being like God?  
To whom or what can you compare him?  
Some no-god idol? Ridiculous!  
It's made in a workshop, cast in bronze,  
Given a thin veneer of gold, and draped with silver filigree.  
Or, perhaps someone will select a fine wood—  
olive wood, say—that won't rot,  
Then hire a woodcarver to make a no-god,  
giving special care to its base so it won't tip over!

*Here Isaiah is talking about the popular understandings of what a god was –*

*Something one could 'worship' in order to get what one wanted –*

*If we followed a certain set of rules, then we could get what we wanted...*

*Essentially: we could control God... if we just knew and followed the right rules...*

*It was like that with their gods – and with their oppressors –*

*They were learning how to 'suck up' to those in control –*

*So that their gods and their rulers would act in their favour...*

*But Isaiah is saying God is much more than we can ever fully comprehend –*

*And so certainly more than we can control –*

*Rather, our God is a god of goodness who wants to bless us –*

*But needs us to follow God's way of Goodness....*

*Not for us to 'suck up' to, so that God will bless our evil,*

*but for us to recognise and follow God's Goodness.*

*Let's keep listening:*

<sup>21-24</sup> Have you not been paying attention?  
Have you not been listening?  
Haven't you heard these stories all your life?  
Don't you understand the foundation of all things?  
God sits high above the round ball of earth.  
The people look like mere ants.  
He stretches out the skies like a canvas—  
yes, like a tent canvas to live under.  
He ignores what all the princes say and do.  
The rulers of the earth count for nothing.  
Princes and rulers don't amount to much.  
Like seeds barely rooted, just sprouted,  
They shrivel when God blows on them.  
Like flecks of chaff, they're gone with the wind.  
<sup>25-26</sup> "So—who is like me?  
Who holds a candle to me?" says The Holy.  
Look at the night skies:  
Who do you think made all this?  
Who marches this army of stars out each night,  
counts them off, calls each by name  
—so magnificent! so powerful!—  
and never overlooks a single one?

*Recently my sister-in-law was visiting from the States  
And my husband and I were taking turns showing her around the sites  
Of London and Kent...  
Canterbury Cathedral and Leeds Castle, the Tower of London, and the Thames.  
On one day, Alfred took her to the top of 22 Bishopsgate Tower,  
The second tallest building in London.  
From there, they could look out over the city – and see the double decker busses  
Which looked like tiny toys from on high...*

*Perhaps that's something like what Isaiah is trying to do with us here:  
Give us a wider perspective of our situation and how God sees it –  
Reminding us of our smallness in the scope of all God's creation –  
Why should we think our situation is the most important?*

*In the more familiar version there are these words:*

<sup>21</sup> Have you not known? Have you not heard?  
Has it not been told you from the beginning?

*I came across a choral version of this text that you might enjoy hearing now:*

[Have You Not Known? arr. Heather Sorenson by GSBC Sanctuary Choir](#)

*When we start looking at our situation from God's perspective,  
Our own problems take on a different proportion –  
And yet, our problems still often feel HUGE for us!  
Isaiah goes on to address that personal complaint:*

<sup>27-31</sup> Why would you ever complain, O Jacob,  
or, whine, Israel, saying,  
“God has lost track of me.  
He doesn't care what happens to me”?  
Don't you know anything? Haven't you been listening?  
God doesn't come and go. God *lasts*.  
He's Creator of all you can see or imagine.  
He doesn't get tired out, doesn't pause to catch his breath.  
And he knows *everything*, inside and out.  
He energizes those who get tired,  
gives fresh strength to dropouts.

For even young people tire and drop out,  
young folk in their prime stumble and fall.  
But those who wait upon God get fresh strength.  
They spread their wings and soar like eagles,  
They run and don't get tired,  
they walk and don't lag behind.

*This is a text that has come to me many times in my life –  
The promise that God sees and God hears  
And God is able to act when we have patience to listen and wait for God...  
In God's good timing.*

*The words I have known more familiarly:*

<sup>30</sup> Even youths will faint and be weary,  
and the young will fall exhausted;  
<sup>31</sup> but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,  
they shall run and not be weary,  
they shall walk and not faint.

*Waiting during the time of Deesh's adoption –  
A story I've told many times before  
about when we were trying to adopt our youngest son in India,  
and it seems nothing was going right –  
and yet we knew that we were doing what God wanted us to do...  
During that period of waiting there was much for us to learn  
About how God acts, about how God needs us to act  
About God's goodness and provision when we are willing to wait...  
About the difference between 'chronos' and 'kairos' time, as the Greeks would put it –  
Time as we know it by clocks and calendars and days and weeks and seasons  
And Time as God knows it as the 'right' time,  
when everything suddenly falls into place.*

*Waiting during chemo therapy...*

*Over the past several months, waiting through a tough season of chemo therapy  
As so many of you have done!  
For healing to take place in my body –  
Not being able to do all the things I usually did or wanted to do  
Or not being able to do them as and when I wanted  
But learning to wait and trust on God – that in God's good timing,  
All the things that truly needed to be done would be done...*

*Waiting for word about our retirement housing...  
Alfred and I are also waiting to hear from the Methodist Ministers Housing Society  
About where we are to live in a few months' time –  
That process has been going on for longer than my chemo!  
And still we haven't heard the final answer...  
But we wait and we trust for an answer*

*And Union Street waiting for everything to come together for its property renovations...  
Long months that have turned into years –  
Which has often reminded us of the Hebrew people  
wandering in the wilderness for 40 years!  
How long, O Lord, how long?*

*When I was waiting for God to act in that situation some 35 years ago  
with our son's adoption, there was a popular Christian song going around –  
I'll share it with you now.*

### They That Wait Upon the Lord (solo version)

*There one more bit that we can glean today from Isaiah 40,  
And that's about what we are to do with the strength that comes  
Through and after the 'waiting'...  
Sometimes the purpose of the waiting is so that God can strip away  
all the handholds we've made for ourselves –  
all the false gods, the idols, which we've imagined could save us:  
Working very hard  
Saving up our money – having secure 'reserves'  
Knowing the right people  
Knowing the right answers to the questions  
Eating the right food or doing the right exercises...  
None of these are bad in themselves,  
But when we put all our reliance on them,  
And we leave God out of the picture,  
So God allows us to wait and to watch and to listen and to learn...*

*And then suddenly – or gradually – in God's good Kairos time,  
Our strength returns.  
And with the return of our strength, the waiting will hopefully have shown us  
What we are to do with that strength –  
That we are to use it for God's good purposes.*

*Yet sometimes we've become so used to waiting*

*That we fail to hear the command to use that strength to get up and move –  
But there it is: we are to ‘mount up with wings...  
to run and not be weary... to walk and not faint’  
To recognise the resources we’ve been given  
And the job ahead for us...*

*At Conference this week, we will have conferred with God and each other on many topics –  
On Net Zero targets and how best to meet them – and therefore obey God’s command  
To care for the earth  
But many of us will think of all the reasons why we can’t do anything about it..  
Indeed, much of our focus as a church has been about  
what we can do with our church buildings.  
While we have managed to sideline the even bigger source of climate destruction:  
Our personal lifestyle habits –  
How we eat or travel or heat our homes or spend our money...  
Not long ago I did an online service about installing solar panels on our roofs –  
How many of us are actually using our ‘strength’ to amend our lifestyles  
So that we are part of the solution rather than the problem?*

*Our conference will have considered steps towards Reparative and Restorative Justice –  
On how God wants us to respect and value the contributions of all –  
Especially those whom we have forced to do our will  
While we as a society have not acknowledged their sacrifice –  
This is often referring to making financial reparative payments  
To those whose ancestors were slaves....  
To which many will say, ‘But it wasn’t me... that’s all different now.  
I don’t own any slaves...’  
But it’s only been about 10 years ago, when the UK finished paying off its agreed debt  
To slave owners who lost their slaves generations ago  
We have yet to repay any of those who were enslaved.  
Our Methodist Church can be proud of our Wesleyan support  
For the end of the slavery  
But we have conveniently ignored all the power and wealth  
Which has been ours as a result of slavery....*

*Our conference will have considered other topics:*

*Assisted Dying*

*Inclusive liturgical language*

*AI*

*Online church and HC*

*Palestinian and Middle Eastern issues of politics and genocide?*

*Interestingly, the document being considered on that topic*

*Is called ‘Kairos 2’, speaking again of God’s Kairos timing...*

*I’m proud to be part of a Church that sets aside time to talk about these and other topics*

*That concern our daily lives and those of others in our society.*

*The challenge is to not just leave those conversations for the Annual Conference*

*But for each of us to be involved in conversations – and actions –*

*At our local, personal, and community level*

*To use our waiting to inform our choices, and our God-given strength to face the challenges.*

**Father in Heaven (take off credits at end)**

Prayers of intercession – WW 28

Lord's prayer

Blessing

May God be with us in our waiting –  
Helping us to recognise and understand  
God's perspective on our being and our well-being  
And that of all God's creation.  
May God be with us in granting us strength  
And use the understanding we've gained  
To work for God's good purposes in the world. Amen.

[They That Wait Upon the Lord | Isaiah 40:28–31 | Powerful Christian Worship](#)