This afternoon we are starting a new series in which we are focusing in on God.

Why does it matter what we think about God? Why does it make a difference? Our world is full of opinions about God – Who are we to say they are wrong and we are right?

I want us to see over the next few weeks that everything that matters in life hangs on who God is!

So we need to make sure that we know the truth about who God is. And who better to tell us than God himself.

Earlier this week I was on the road above Gordons Bay – The work of the Creator was on display before me – Isn't that a magnificent sight?

The place we live in should cause us to sing praise to our great God.

But this view of God's greatness isn't enough.

We need more than seeing God through our own eyes.

We need to see God through God's eyes.

Isaiah understands this. In the passage we are looking at this afternoon Isaiah shows us the whole universe through God’s eyes.

When we begin to see God through God’s eyes, we see the
promises of God as more real, more weighty, more solid than anything else in all of life. And that’s thrilling.

Everything that matters in life hangs on who God is!

God is great – the more we realise this – the more it will effect the way we view life.

Does God's greatness effect the way you work? – Does it effect the way you look at the world? – Does his greatness effect the way you speak to your children? – Does it effect the way you view your time? – Does it effect the way you spend your money? – Does it effect the way you feel about yourself.

Everything that matters in life hangs on who God is!

Today we are going to see that God is incomparably great, he is in control, and he calls us to trust him and to place our hope in him.

**God is incomparably great**

A little while ago I found a cool website called “The scale of the universe” – It tries to give you an idea of the size of different things in our universe.

You can compare your own size – the average height of a human being – to the highest waterfall in the world.

You can compare the size of the earth to the size of the largest known star.

You can compare the size of the milky way galaxy – our galaxy – You can compare it to other known galaxies.

At the end when you click on the final title called “Universe” it ends by saying “There is just no way to accurately measure it's size.”
The universe is very very BIG.

As I looked at that scale it made me feel very very small.

And then as I read Isaiah 40 it made me realise that I haven't even begun to comprehend how GREAT GOD IS!

Look at Isaiah 40:12, “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?”

Measured the waters in the hollow of his hand.

With the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens.

When it comes to the Universe – “There is just no way to accurately measure it's size.”

God spoke it into being! Have you even begun to realise how great God is?

Verse 13 and 14 tell us the God knows all things – he doesn't need us – we can't teach him anything new. Have you begun to realise how great God is?

Imagine Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch a pail of water – Imagine that they didn't fall down – but while they were walking down the hill a drop fell out the bucket.

1 drop – Do you think they would worry about it?

A drop from a bucket is insignificant.

Look at verse 15: “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.”
All the nations – like a drop in a bucket – Insignificant.

The mighty USA – insignificant.

The great Chinese empire – insignificant.

South Africa – Insignificant.

As human beings we look at all we have done and we are impressed.

Plains – trains – and auto-mobiles are impressive.

Our medical advances are impressive.

The Hubble Telescope is impressive. But we can't even see to the edge of God's Universe.

Nothing is more impressive than our incomparably great God.

Look at verse 25: “To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?” says the Holy One. Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.”

Astronomers estimate that there are 400 billion stars in our Milky way galaxy. That is just our galaxy.

They estimate that there are 125 billion galaxies in the known universe.

The total number of stars in the universe is estimated at 10 billion trillion.

100 000 000 000 000 000 000 000 000 000 000 000 000 000 000

That's a lot of stars.

And did you see what verse 26 says? The God who created all these – the Holy One of Israel – calls them each by name – he ensures that not one is missing.
Nothing is more impressive than our incomparably great God.

But as his creatures we try to put God in a box. We try and find something to compare him to – and we end up creating idols.

As you begin to realise how incomparably great God is – it highlights how foolish any idolatry really is.

**The foolishness of Idolatry**

Look at verse 18: “To whom, then, will you compare God? What image will you compare him to? As for an idol, a craftsman **casts** it, and a goldsmith **overlays** it with gold and **fashions** silver chains for it. A man too poor to present such an offering selects wood that will not rot. He looks for a skilled craftsman to **set up** an idol that **will not topple**.”

Isaiah doesn't need to say more than this. Can you see how laughable these idols are?

Isaiah has given us a glimpse of God's incomparable greatness – How could you compare the one who measures the heavens with the to breadth of his hands – how could you compare Him to something made by human hands.

It is laughable!

Our world has some pretty impressive temples full of idols.

Buddhism – Hinduism – Islam – Christianity.

This is inside St Paul's Cathedral – A Christian building – I got shouted at for taking photos inside this place – because it has become an idol.

But these things aren't really our problem are they?

These are not the objects of our worship – No, we are much more civilised.
We worship sports – and careers – family – and homes – Actually we worship ourselves – Because – You're Worth it.

We look out on the shopping malls and restaurants and highways — is that what we have to settle for?

If the best we can expect is next summer’s holiday in Mauritius – or even just next weekend’s outing in the winelands.

If our hope is a comfortable, successful existence until we die.

If that is what you are living for, you are worshipping the idol of our day – it is called materialism. It's all about you.

Isaiah wants us to look beyond this world and all it has to offer – and he wants us to behold our God.

God is greater and more beautiful than you could ever imagine.

He is incomparably great – and he is in control.

“Do you not know? Have you not heard? To whom will you compare God?”

The people of Isaiah's day had forgotten this.

Look at verse 27: “Why do you say, O Jacob, and complain, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD; my cause is disregarded by my God"?

They were going about their day to day lives as if God was not there.

“My way is hidden.”

Doesn't this sound a lot like our world – living day by day as if God is not there – or if he is there, as if he is not great!

This easily becomes our attitude to.
Even as Christians we live as though God is not great.

This is seen in the fact that we worry. We worry about everything. We worry about our future. We worry about our finances. We worry about our families. We worry about our health. We worry about our country.

We go about life thinking that God has disregarded us.

Isaiah wants you to know that your great God is in control – You can trust him – You **must** put your hope in him.

**God is in control – Trust him in hope**

Look at verse 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.”

When you feel like you are without hope – out of control – this is a verse you need to remember.

You may be exhausted – but your great God does not grow tired or weary.

You may feel like you don't know what your next move should be – but your great God knows – his understanding is unsearchable.

Isaiah is speaking to people just like you.

You may say the right things about God, but deep inside you don’t really believe any more.

You’re looking at things through your own eyes. So the promises of God don't put a spring in your step and a sparkle in your eye.

**Why?** God just doesn’t look great enough for you to take
risks for him.

But God is inviting you to turn your perceptions around and see everything from his point of view.

Yes, you are dwarfed by creation; but creation is dwarfed by God. See it that way. See him that way.

When you feel threatened by world events and overwhelmed by your own problems, there’s another way to perceive it all.

God is calling you to, “Behold your God!”

He is incomparably great and he alone is worth hoping in.

Viktor Frankl was one of Europe’s leading psychiatrists. But from 1942 – 1945 he endured imprisonment in Auschwitz and three other Nazi concentration camps.

He saw what made the difference between the survivors and the dead, and it wasn’t a matter of physical health and strength.

What made the difference between the living and the dead was hope — something to live for beyond the barbed wire, something to look forward to, something to go home to after the war.

He wrote the following: “The prisoner who had lost faith in the future — was doomed.

With his loss of belief in the future, he also lost his spiritual hold; he let himself decline and became subject to mental and physical decay.

Usually it began with the prisoner refusing one morning to get dressed and wash or to go out on the parade grounds. No pleas, no blows, no threats had any effect. He just lay there, hardly moving.
If this crisis was brought about by an illness, he refused to be taken to the sick-bay or to do anything to help himself. He simply gave up.”

Life without hope in the Nazi concentration camps ended in death.

We won't survive either if we don't have something to live for beyond the barbed wire of this life. We’ll give up and just lie here. It’s a common condition. It's called despair.

But there is something beyond the barbed wire — the great God himself. And he is coming.

Look at the wonderful promises for those who look beyond the barbed wire of this life and behold God as the incomparably great one.

Verse 29: “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; 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.”

In verse 31 Isaiah is saying, “God enables those who hope in Him to do the impossible.”

They will soar on wings like eagles – impossible for us.

Run and not grow weary – walk and not be faint – impossible for us.

God is promising that those who hope in him will do the impossible.

We are very ordinary people – but the extraordinarily great God – is calling us to put our hope in Him – and he promises to do great things through us.
Our hope is not found in our own greatness – Our hope is not found in what we can do for God.

Our hope is found in Jesus.

Isn't it incredible to think that the God who measures the waters in the hollow of his hand – The God who marks the heavens with the breadth of his hand – The God who knows each star by name.

This great God decided that he would offer a sacrifice – one that would be worthy – one that would give us a hope – one that would display his incomparable greatness for all to see.

Our great God offered himself.

In Hebrews 12:2-3 we read, “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”

God's greatness is seen in creation – His greatness is seen in his rule – His greatness is seen in his complete control – But his greatness was most fully seen when he came to earth as a man – to die in our place – that we might have hope.

But, so what? How will any of this stuff make any difference to your life or mine?

I just want to introduce you to 2 people – perhaps you will identify with them.

Meet Phil.

Phil has anger issues. He believes in God – in theory he believes that God will provide for his needs – But life often presents him with a different view.
Things are constantly going wrong – Phil wants to be in control – but life just constantly feels out of control – and this makes Phil angry.

“Why is my job so boring? – Why does my car keep giving issues? – Why don't I have someone to care for – someone who will love me?

My life is completely out of my control – God if you are really so great why is my life going so badly?”

But then Phil read this passage in Isaiah 40 – and do you know what God told him? God said, “Phil, look beyond the barbed wire of this life – I am greater than you could ever imagine.

Not one breath from your mouth is outside of my control. Your job – your car – your love life will never fully satisfy you – because true satisfaction can only be found in me.

Phil, put your hope in me – I will renew your strength and keep you going – I will help you to soar – I will enable you to do great things for me because I am your great God.”

Do you know what has happened in Phil's life?

He still has a pretty boring job – his car still gives issues – He hasn't found the love of his life – but he is no longer angry about it.

Because he is trusting that his great God is in control – and every day as he is reminded of his great hope in Jesus – his strength is renewed – his joy is renewed.

God's greatness is on display in Phil's attitude even in the midst of the chaos of life.

Meet Amy.

Amy's prayer partner asked her the other day what she wants in
life. “I just want my children to pick up their dirty washing.”

Nothing wrong with that – it is a sensible request – but it was generating major conflict in Amy's home.

Amy's friend pushed a bit harder – “Amy, why has this become such an issue?” As they chatted, it became clear that Amy just wants a part of her life under her control – she wants to be god in her home.

As Amy read through Isaiah 40 it opened her eyes to the good news that God is great – he is in control – and his control can be trusted.

This truth has changed Amy's attitude at home – she still likes a clean house – she still wants the kids to pick up their clothes – which they still don't always do.

But her clean home is no longer her idol – This relatively small change in Amy's thinking has made a profound difference in Amy's home.

Her changed attitude is modelling to her kids that her hope is not found in her clean house – but her hope is found in her incomparably great God and in Jesus his Son – her Saviour – her Lord.

This hope renews her strength daily – to be a better mom – a better wife – a better neighbour.

Can you relate to Phil or Amy? Perhaps for you there are other things that distract you from beholding God in his greatness.

What are the idol's of your own heart? To whom or what can you compare God?

Everything that matters in your life hangs on who God is!
“Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.”

Let's give our lives to making his greatness known.

There are still many in your neighbourhood who do not know.

There are many in your workplace who have not heard.

You aren't going to tell them — unless you are convinced about God's greatness.

We all need to meditate on these things until they capture our hearts.

Nothing compares to our great God!

“Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you” (Psalm 73:25).