

“Have You Not Known? Have You Not Heard?”

Isaiah 40:21-31

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We’re going to talk about *GOD* today.

I feel woefully unequipped for this task. God is ... *GOD*. And I am ... well, *me*. One of God’s innumerable creations, a tiny speck in an incredibly vast and complex universe. The universe is some 93 billion light years wide (and growing); it contains over two trillion galaxies; our own galaxy, the Milky Way, contains hundreds of billions of stars. I am just one little creature, living on a fairly small planet that orbits one of those hundreds of billions of stars, in one of over two trillion galaxies. Who am I that I could possibly presume that I could *begin* to understand, or comprehend, or adequately describe *GOD*?

The prophet Isaiah, whose words we heard earlier, did not have as good an understanding of the vast universe as we do today. But perhaps he had a greater understanding of *GOD*.

“Have you not known?” he asks. “Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?” Isaiah begins with some questions, questions that signify that whoever is reading or hearing his words *ought to know* some things about God. The implication is that this is *essential* knowledge, *basic* knowledge; that there are some fundamental *truths* about God that ought to be widely known, widely discussed. Children, as soon as they have any ability to comprehend great ideas, should *know some things*. Parents should be teaching their children these things, so that the children will *absorb* them deep into their psyches.

What things? “It is *GOD* who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers.” God exists *above* the earth – figuratively, of course, not literally; God does not occupy *space* in this universe. God exists *outside* of earth, *apart* from earth, at a sufficient distance that God can behold everything that happens on earth. All the creatures on earth – all of us, all the creatures of the earth (both great and small), all the inhabitants of the sea, all the birds of the air, *all* of us are but like grasshoppers in the presence of a giant. God is *GOD* – and we are but God’s creations.

God “stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to live in.” God exists in a different realm, a realm that we cannot see; the heavenly realm. From heaven God can see this whole vast universe, ever last bit of it. When we look at the depths of the universe that we can see, with telescopes and microscopes, we can get a sense of the wonders and the complexity of this grand space that *we* live in; but when we try to look *beyond* this realm, towards God, well, all our technology comes to naught. Even our greatest minds and our most advanced science can not truly behold *GOD*.

God “brings princes to naught, and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing.” Our earth has witnessed the rise and fall of many great kingdoms and empires; many powerful rulers have come and

gone. Alexander the Great, Atilla the Hun, Genghis Khan, Julius Caesar, Charlemagne, Napoleon – the list is very long. Every ruler, every kingdom, every empire, comes – sooner or later – to its end. Some of the mighty empires fall violently; others collapse under their own weight. *GOD* outlasts them all. God even works to bring about the destruction of corrupt nations and kingdoms; there are numerous examples of that in the historical books of the Old Testament – and hints of it in the New Testament as well. Isaiah says, “Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows upon them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble.”

Is there anyone that can be compared to God? “Who is my equal?” asks the Holy One. No, there is not one. There is no one who has the sheer *power* and *might* that *GOD* has. There is no one who has the majestic powers of *creation* that *GOD* possesses. Look toward the stars and count them: can any of *you* create even but *one* of those stars? God is “great in strength;” God is “mighty in power.”

But surely, if God is so great, so powerful; if God reigns over this incredibly vast universe, surely God does not see all the *little* things we do? God can’t possibly be paying attention in *every* direction, all at *once*, right? “My way is hidden from the Lord,” right? No, says Isaiah; why would you even *think* that? The eye of the Almighty sees *everything*. God knows when you are making poor choices, when you are going astray from the path; God knows when you do so unintentionally, and when you do so deliberately. God is aware of all those times when you simply say, “I’m going to do what *I* want to do, and I don’t *care* what anyone has to say about it.” Even when you *think* you can get away with something, because you know that no one’s looking, no one’s watching; there are no security cameras in place monitoring your every move – *GOD* knows. *GOD* sees. God is fully aware – of not just your actions and words, but also what is in your *heart*. God knows when you *willfully* turn your back on God.

But the flip side is also true. God sees all the *good* that you do, *that no one else sees*. For just as surely as God sees and knows all the things that you do and say that you would prefer that no one know, so too does God see and know all things that you do and say that *you never get credit for*. The faithful service you offer after day. The donations you offer so generously, without fanfare or a desire to be seen. The prayers that you offer on behalf of others. The simple things you do simply to brighten someone else’s day – *even if they’re not aware that you’re doing them*. The love that shines in your heart, even when you feel like the world or your personal circumstances are beating you down, day after day. God knows the *full* state of your heart. God knows – and values – your *faithfulness*.

“The Lord is the *everlasting* God.” God has no beginning, and no end. God existed before time began, and will still exist when time ceases to be. There is *nothing* that can bring about God’s end.

God “does not faint or grow weary.” All of us need time to rest, time to refresh ourselves, time to recharge, time to *sleep*. All of us need to replenish our store of water and nutrients day after day. But God does not need to rest. God has no need to recharge. God does not need to sleep. God has no need for food or drink. God *needs nothing* in order to exist. God just simply – *is*. When God reveals God’s name to Moses at the burning bush, the Hebrew words mean simply, “I am who I am,” or “I will be what I will be.” God just ... *is*. God has no beginning; God was not born; nobody *made* God. God has no end; God will not grow old; God does not have body parts that will decay or wear out over time; God will not die. God needs nothing by way of sustenance, and God generates no waste. God just ... *is*.

In the creation story in Genesis, we are told that God created the earth in six days, “and rested on the Sabbath.” God did not rest because God was *tired*. God rested because God was *done*. God’s

work of creation was finished. Now God could simply take a step back and *enjoy* what God had created.

God's "understanding is unsearchable." God's wisdom and knowledge are greater than all human wisdom combined. We have developed art, music, writing, and literature. We have learned how to generate fire, how to bake bread, how to plant and grow crops. We have created every manner of technology, from slingshots to nuclear bombs. We have learned how to fly faster than birds; we have even sent people to the moon. The human mind is *magnificent*; our creativity and invention are astonishing. Yet compared to the wisdom of *God*, all this is but so little. When the apostle Paul is contemplating the great mysteries of God's will, he reaches a point when he simply can not write any more, and he breaks down into song: "O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!" (Romans 11:33) There comes a point for each of us when we realize that – despite *everything* that we know, *all* the wisdom and knowledge we have gained over the course of our lifetime – we still know *so little*, compared to God.

"He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless." Just as God "brings down the mighty from their thrones," so too does God "lift up the lowly." For it is not God's *will* that the strong and powerful should tread all over the weak and powerless. Mary knew this, when she was great with child; her soul magnified the Lord, proclaiming that God has "scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts," "has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly," "has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty." The Israelites experienced this, when they were oppressed by the Egyptians, and their cry went up to God. It is not the will of God that tyrants should reign, and poor people crushed underfoot. God hears those who cry out from the bottom of the socio-economic ladder. God hears them; God sends them leaders; God fills them with the Holy Spirit; God *empowers* them with gifts, granting to those who follow God the strength to rise up and challenge the oppressive weight of the status quo. God does all this because God cares about *justice*; God cares about *equity*; God cares – and God *weeps* – when one portion of the human race is enjoying a life of luxury and ease, at the expense of another portion; or when wealthy nations have access to important medicines and vaccines, and poor countries do not. I have not counted how many the Bible talks about *justice* and *injustice* – but it's in the *hundreds*. Maybe the *thousands*. There are reasons why oppressed people across the world, in century after century, have found *hope* and *strength* in God.

God is willing to grant a portion of God's own power to those who follow in God's ways. "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." God doesn't give power to just *anybody*. God gives power to the people who *look to God for guidance and hope and strength*. When you're struggling, when you're going through a really hard time, when you feel beaten up or broken down, *you have a God who can help you*. You might have a strong and supportive family; you might have a great network of friends; you might have co-workers or colleagues or other people rooting for you or cheering you on, and all of that can make a difference, *but* there is Someone else you've got in your corner, Someone else who truly *cares* about *you*, Someone who can endow you with stamina and fortitude. God can help you keep going through thick and thin, when you're hurting, when you're discouraged, when you're just not sure you can take one more step. *Cry out to God for help*. Let God strengthen you.

You see, this mighty, majestic, transcendent, eternal, all-powerful God, isn't just a God *out there*. This mighty, majestic, transcendent, eternal, all-powerful God is also *right here* – by *your side*.

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