

Pastor T.C. Arnold  
4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter  
Isaiah 40:25-31  
May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2014

God is GREAT!! Indeed He is... and such a statement goes without saying to a bunch of Christians gathered in the Lord's sanctuary on a Sunday in the middle of Easter. The prophet Isaiah reminds us of this fact because sometimes we need reminding. God is great and God is God. Isaiah says of the Lord, *"To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name, by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power not one is missing."* God says, lift your eyes and see all the stars in the sky. Who made them? Who can count them? Only our great and powerful God does this!!

Back in the time of Isaiah, some 700 years before Christ, Isaiah had words from the Lord that reminded the children of Israel of who God was for them. In that day the Babylonians and the Egyptians viewed the stars as visible representations of their gods. So did the Canaanites – those Gentiles that lived in the very land that God had given His chosen people. They looked to the stars for guidance and believed they had special "god-like" powers. They look so vast in number and so unbroken in their ranks. And like in many other things, Israel wanted to be like their neighbors. They, too, started worshipping the false gods of the stars in the heavens.

Remember, God told Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky and the grains of sand by the sea. In other words, no one will be able to count them. They will be vast in number and when one talks about numbers so large they can't be counted, there along with it comes an aura of strength. The people who were misled believed the strength came from those things that are bigger than life, more than can be counted or comprehended. But that, of course, was wrong.

Of course, what is bigger than what we can't count or comprehend is that which has made what we can't count or comprehend. We look not toward the "created" for guidance. Rather, we turn to the "Creator." Anything else is called idolatry. This is the worship of something that has been made rather than worship of the maker. And while the ancient Egyptians, Babylonians and Canaanites were very good at making idols out of what God made, there can much said about how we, too, are good at it as well.

For the people of this age, instead of revering what we cannot comprehend – like the ancients in their idolatrous ways – we rather put out trust in what we can. It's idolatry none-the-less. The commandment of "Have no other Gods beside me" calls each Christian to account for what we have treated, said or even thought to be more important than God at any time in our life. Often times such things that we treat better than our Lord are the things we love so much. We say we don't love our things, our time of play, our work or whatever we fill in the blank with more than God, but we don't act like it. Our idols are made by us, maybe even created in our heart of lust and placed in prominent places. At times, they are more important to us than God.

Admit it, and I like you am guilty. We are guilty of having a heart for the things we have, or something we don't have (like that new car), or even for someone we don't have. Our idol, these things God made, become more important than the maker Himself. Am I wrong about how we are? I don't think so. We fall in love with that which we *can* number. We like and can relate to that which we comprehend and can relate to. "That person just gets me," we say. "That over there, is what I like. I can identify with that. That is so me," we say. Are those

words sinful? Not hardly. The heart that follows those statements beyond mere words is what is sinful. We have done that. We need to repent.

Sometimes our hearts turn to what it fancies, what it knows to be sumptuous – even when it isn't ours. This is natural for sinful man. These are the things we know, we get, that get us, and we are comfortable with. What is beyond us and our understanding sometimes frightens us. Or, maybe because we don't understand, we keep it distant – in the realm of the unknown.

For example, God can be a lot like this for us at times. In other words, we don't always "get" God. His work and ways can be very foreign to us – incomprehensible at times. It's not too far of a stretch for us to see this happening in our own lives. How can such a loving God stand idle and do nothing when such misery and pain befalls our lives? How can God seem to look the other way when the most difficult of our days are coming to pass? It doesn't make sense – we don't comprehend. Therefore, in our minds, God is either not as strong or powerful as He says He is, or, He doesn't care as much as He says He does.

Hear again what Isaiah chapter forty says: *"Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable."* An "unsearchable understanding" means that God both loves His people and has the power to save them. It means that His plans unfold in ways that we would not and could not imagine. God being "unsearchable" means that while we could look to the skies and be able to count the stars, our Lord has each of them numbered – He knows what He has made. He comprehends the incomprehensible – which means He knows what to do for you and me when we have no idea. The Creator is still more marvelous than the created. And while we tend to depend on that which God created for guidance or satisfaction, the Lord says, depend rather on me. I made and have numbered all that which you cannot even begin to understand.

God the Creator of even that which is beyond our comprehension says, *"They 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 be faint."* They who will trust in the Lord, wait for what the Lord has in store. That's hard for us. Like we said before, it's easier to trust in that which we can wrap our understanding around. But God says, trust in me and wait. He says His timing is better. He knows what He is doing – even when His time seems so out of wack. The text says that God gives power and God gives strength. He does, according to His good and gracious will.

God is greater than the stars. He showed that He is by dying and coming back to life. No star, no group of stars in the skies, could do such a thing. God is greater than what fancies our hearts. His love is better than the love of anything or anyone that could possibly be given to you in return (even mom's love). God's strength and promise is forever. It never fails. It never falters. Nothing that God made is better than the one who made it. And God made you – calling you His own. His love will not fail you. That is a promise you can depend on. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.