

Title: Behold Your God! Pt.2
Text: Isaiah 40.12-26
Theme: The incomparable God
Series: Isaiah #33
Prop Stmt: There is no one like God.

Read Text:

Have you ever thought or said, “God, I don’t think that you have any clue about what is going on in my life, and if you did, then obviously you don’t care, cause right now, my life stinks and I can’t do a stinking thing about it.” Isaiah knows that his people are going to be saying that. He anticipates that (27 - read), so everything that he states in this chapter is building up to address that challenge. I love Isaiah 40. Isaiah 40 makes me feel so puny. Puny is good when you are standing next to God, because God loves to take care of puny as long as you love to admit that you are puny. Isaiah is still calling people to “Look at God” so they can compare him to the “gods”. The comparison is so totally unfair, that it would be completely laughable if it were not so tragic.

I. **God is beyond understanding** (12-20)

A. **God’s glory in greatness is incomparable.** (12-17)

Every ancient civilization had its stories that attempted to explain the origin of the world and reasons for its times, seasons, and events. Many of us take it for granted that people believe in one God who created the heavens and the earth. If you have done much traveling beyond this country, you will find that although there are places where that is the dominant belief, there are many nations where that is not the belief at all.

Here was Isaiah, the prophet of the tiny little nation called Judah. She was surrounded by nations and empires much more powerful than she was and these empires had a claim, by virtue of their success to say that their gods were the best. In anticipation of the day when tiny Judah would be overrun by the Babylonians and the people wondering, if God was indeed God after all, Isaiah writes.

1. **He is beyond compare in the universe.** (12-14)

These questions are humbling to answer, which certainly is the design of them. Isaiah asks, “Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand?” Consider the fact that there are around 350 quintillion (18 zeroes) gallons of water on the earth. If you were able to make a box of water that went from here to I-94 to the east, and from here to 13 mile road to the north and straight up for one mile, you would have 1 cubic mile of water which is 1,101,187,878,912 gallons of water (1 trillion, 101billion, 187 million, 878 thousand 921 twelve). That is only one cubic mile and

there are 321 million cubic miles of water on the earth. "Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand?" The answer is – no one, but God.

Who has marked off the heavens with a span? Who can measure the heavens? Let's get some perspective. Let's say that the distance between the earth and the sun (for comparable purposes) is about 15 feet. The sun is the closest star to us. The next closest star (Proxima Centauri) would be in San Antonio, Texas. If you could reach the sun in two steps, then with those same steps, you would have to walk to San Antonio to reach the next closest stars. The stars that are on the far side of our galaxy are 20,000 times farther away than that and the next closest galaxy (Andromeda) is about 25 times farther away than that. There are galaxies that have been observed that are 3,000 times farther away than that. And we have not yet seen the edge. The obvious answer to this question is that only God can mark off the heavens with span. No one else comes close!

Who has gathered up the dust and put it on a scale, or weighed the mountains and the hills in a balance? Now, considering that the earth weighs about 13,227,735,730,800,000,000,000 (13 septillion, 227 sextillion, 735 quintillion, 730 quadrillion, 800 trillion pounds), if it were in a setting where it could be weighed. The truth is, the earth is floating around the sun in space. It is an enormous mass that floats presumably being held in place by the gravitational force of the sun. This brings up two obvious questions: 1) Why is the earth held in place by the gravity of the sun, but does not crash into the sun? (A similar question could be asked about the moon and its relationship to the earth). 2) What holds the sun in its place? Does the sun actually have a place? The sun is in its place because it revolves in relationship to the Milky Way galaxy, which is in place with what? Some astronomers believe that the Milky Way galaxy is on a collision course with the Andromeda galaxy. But, that is going a bit off course. My point is: this universe is frankly beyond our capacity to really comprehend.

These first three questions in this text are set-up questions for the next one. Can you measure God? If you cannot measure what God has made, then how can you measure the One who made it? If you cannot grasp the creation, then how can you measure, analyze, study, and grasp the Creator? We cannot comprehend the weight of the earth, much less the weight of God. But the weight of the earth, the infinite variety of planets, moons and stars, the size and complexities of solar systems and galaxies points to a glory that is fundamentally dazzling. If the creation is this splendid and this amazing in size, scope and detail, then what does this say about the Creator? All that we have in the creation is the expressive overflow of the beauty, the balance, and the largeness of life that the Father, Son and Spirit enjoy with each other. Seriously, what do we bring to the table? What counsel could we possibly give to God if asked? Did he consult you for ideas about how to plan out the creation? Did you advise God about what true justice is, or researched a topic that enabled you to inform him about a matter that he was ignorant about? Here we are, just puny little people, who rarely get beyond the limits of our own culture, much less have a working understanding of the peoples of this earth, or the ecosystems of

this world. No human being has traveled to another planet in our solar system. No human can calculate the size of space, and yet, we presume to sit in judgment on God? We presume to question his will, his plan, his law, his designs, his counsel and decrees? That is beyond moronic. When we do that, we are flaming idiots of the highest order!! Who do we think we are? Well, the truth is, we are not thinking.

2. He is beyond compare in history. (15-17)

What is a nation in comparison to God? They are like a drop in a bucket. Our nations, (our nation) are like a grain of sand at the beach, our largest armies, our most sophisticated weapons, our marble-encased buildings, our spectacular monuments, our transportation systems, medical advancements, technological achievements all may be impressive to us, but are so unimpressive in comparison to him.

Nations may look imposing to you, but to God, they are nothing. The word *coastlands* is a reference to lands that sit on the edge of the continents. In other words, even the far away lands and nations and all of their culture, history and lore are like fine dust that does not even count on a scale in comparison to him?

Lebanon (16) was a land known for her forests, which boasted massive cedar trees and rich animal life. The point is, that this land with all of its abundance could not provide enough wood to burn, or sacrifices to offer that would be acceptable to God? God is so great, what sacrifice could ever be offered that would satisfy him? What worship could we ever give that would be fitting for his glory?

Verse 17 is more than an interesting statement. This verse represents a foundational truth for all of life. Simply put it is this: God is god and we are not and we will never be. He is Creator and we are creation. He is on a level that is completely different than us. He is of a nature and substance that is wholly unique and separate from us. He is not to be confused with the creation (pantheism). He is not the sun, the moon, the stars. No, he (22) sits above the circle of the earth. He is other. He is infinite and we are finite. While all of the nations of the world are not nothing, they are like nothing, in comparison to Him. They are a grain of sand next to a Mount Everest. They are a drop of water next to the ocean. They are mere breath in comparison to the entire atmosphere. Therefore, Assyria and all of her gods and armies, Babylon and her deities and culture, and Persia with all of her goddesses and might do not even merit a weight on God's scales. In their cumulative effect that do not even move the scale.

The true God of this world is transcendent. He is over all. He reigns unthreatened and unmoved. He is so big he cannot be measured. He is so permanent he cannot be replaced. He is so wise he cannot be outsmarted and cannot be fully known. He is so vast and so complete, he cannot be taken from, nor added to. He has no equal. So...

B. How can you compare God to an idol? (18-20)

Think about it? Do you see why it is absolutely insane to create an idol and call it a god, and/or to craft an idol and say that it represents the true God? How can an image, an idol accurately capture all that God is, when all that God is cannot be captured? An idol is crafted, meaning that it is created. An idol is given meaning by the one who makes it. The one who makes it is the source of definition and significance for the idol. Seriously, does this make any sense at all?! Do you see what is going on here? Here is a craftsman who is creating the creator. Here is a builder who is building the one who controls the weather, or fertility, or war. How can the creation create the creator? That is the heart of idolatry and it turns everything inside out. Instead of being made in the image of the Creator, idolatry is the making of the god in the image of the creation. The creation is going to rebel against the Creator, and put the Creator in his place. The creation is going to replace the word of the Creator with the word of the creation. The creation will give significance to the Creator, instead of the Creator speaking, defining, establishing boundaries and giving meaning to life and to the creation. Idolatry always leads to nothingness and despair. God is kind and gracious to warn us to stay away and he is right to be righteously jealous of his own glory.

If the craftsman uses gold, he is attributing value, and if he adds some bling to it, then he is attributing some pop. Of course, the poor person (20) does not have the same quality of god that a rich person has. The poor person has to be careful that when he is out in the woods looking for a tree to chop down, in order to get some wood from which to create a god, that he picks a tree that is known for being a hardwood and resistant to rotting.

Imagine two men out in the woods on such a hunt. The one says to the other, "Hey, I'd stay away from that Ash tree. Uncle Joe used that for his idol, and it had termites in it and they ate up his god. Joe was in therapy for a few months after that. It is always easier on everyone if you can find a god that will not rot.

Verses 21-26 follow a similar pattern to what we have seen in verses 12-25. There are two sets of questions each followed by some pronouncements. While the themes are not exact repeats, there is the emphasis of the idea that God's greatness is so vast, that we really do not possess any means that will adequately measure him.

II. **God is beyond compare.** (21-26)

A. **No man can compare to him in time.** (21-24)

B. **No man can compare to him in strength.** (25-26)

Instead of working through verses 21-26 in detail, I think it better to use the remaining time to think through what we have already covered, since these themes are repeated in verses 21-26 anyway.

1. Life has no essential meaning if we are the only ones providing the meaning.

Mankind is threatened by the truth that God existed long before we did and God made us, and God defines us. Our meaning, our identity, our purpose is rooted in God. If we reject God, in the attempt to rule our own lives, we throw away everything. Idolatry is simply the attempt at creating meaning and purpose and gaining power and influence apart from God. Without God, we have to look to the things that have been made for our security, instead of to the One who made it. But since there is no meaning, purpose, nor true power and influence apart from God, it will never succeed. You cannot find a secure identity from an insecure source.

For example, let's say there is a girl who feels lonely and rejected. She believes that in order to address that pain that she needs someone in her life that will love her and be with her. She sees young mothers with babies and she determines that having a baby will give her what she is missing. Do you see what has happened? This girl has determined that her meaning in life is going to come from a baby. Her identity, security and happiness are going to come from her relationship to that baby. Meaning, that her true identity in life is in her parenting. If something happens to her child, then what happens to her? If she ever loses that child, then there is nothing left of her. If her child does not succeed, if her parenting is flawed and needs to be corrected, if someone points out a problem with her, do you see how she is inherently threatened and so easily angered? Why? It's because her very identity has now been threatened because she has looked to the creation for her meaning instead of to the Creator.

On the other hand, here is a guy who is about 35 years old and his hair has formed a union and gone on strike. His hair is part of his image of a young, attractive, virile, healthy and desirable guy. His entire life is driven by his desire to promote that image. Anything that threatens his youthful appearance (like hair falling out), or his health getting bad shakes him to the very core. This is all that he has. Without this, he has no reason for being. He has looked inside of life for meaning and when it betrays him, he has nothing.

Do you see this? If you put your value on your ability to speak in public, to dress attractively, to write persuasively, to sing beautifully, then how do you handle it when something or someone threatens your ability to speak, or someone dresses better than you, or someone writes more powerfully, or gets more attention in singing than you? That which threatens your identity will do more than cause anxiety, you will be in bondage to fear. Thomas Oden said, "*Bitterness becomes neurotically intensified when someone or something stands between me and something that is my ultimate value.*"

Anything that you try to build your identity upon other than God is vulnerable to loss. When it is lost, then you are without a self. When we attempt to build an identity on something other than God, we will do anything to try to protect it from

falling apart. That is where so many addictions come from. The very thing that we think will save us, enslaves us. We do this in reaction against God whom we think will bind us, when in reality he will save us.

We create idols because we think that we can speak through them. We create idols because we imagine that these idols will give us whatever we want, and if we get whatever we want, then we will finally be somebody, be respected, be desired, and be respected. It is a lie. It is a lie that is believed in spite of such obvious evidence to the contrary.

Cynthia Hemiel wrote an article about a number of people that she knew before they became movie stars. They worked menial jobs, waiting for their chance. The break happened and they made it. But, Cynthia said, something very strange happened. Strange to what we would be tempted to think. Every one that she knew became more angry, more manic, more depressed and unstable than ever before. She said, *That giant thing they were striving for, that fame thing that was going to make everything OK, that was going to make their lives bearable, that was going to fill them with ha-ha-happiness had happened, and the next day they woke up and they were still them. The disillusionment turned howling and insufferable."*

2. Life can only have meaning if God provides it.

Only God can provide meaning to this life. Meaning, identity, value and purpose has to come from outside of life. We cannot conjure this up or fill this God-shaped vacuum with our own idols. They will betray us. We cannot make ourselves to be God. God is so immense, that we are completely at his mercy. This awesome, transcendent God is not only Sovereign over all; He is merciful to the needy, and gracious to the humble. You cannot rise to God, but God descended to you. He came in the form of Jesus Christ. Your attempts at finding value and meaning apart from him are sadly, sinful acts that reveal a rebellious heart. As a rebel you are under the sentence of death from the Omnipotent God. But this God is also gracious. He sent his Son to take your death in your place. His death satisfied the righteous demands of God for your sin, and providing the only way by which you can come to God. The very One whom we fear will get in our way of happiness is the only path to it. He is the only path to it, because there is no true happiness apart from him. He is life. He is joy. He is peace. He is security, identity, and he is all of these things forever.