

“God is God. Thank God!”

Isaiah 40:21-31 – Rev. Rebecca Littlejohn
Vista La Mesa Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), La Mesa, California – February 7, 2021

*Holy God, bless the speaking and the hearing of these words, that we might be comforted by your
majesty and your compassion. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

Before we begin for real, I need to ask for your help. Since we’re here in the Park within shouting distance of one another, I like to make things as participatory as possible. So this sermon has a call-and-response bit built in. It’s not hard; it’s just the title. Whenever you hear me say “God is God,” I want you all to call out **“Thank God!”** I might even hold my hand up when it’s time. Now I know you’re not really a shouting people, so why don’t we have a practice round? Today the title of my sermon is “God is God.” **“Thank God!”** Alright, good job! Let’s get started.

Do you have a favorite constellation? I know we’re all supposed to be able to find the Big Dipper and maybe the Little Dipper, but I’ve always assumed most people like Orion because it seems the easiest to find to me. But my favorite is Pleiades or the Seven Sisters. Partially because they’re also pretty easy to find, if it’s dark enough, and partially because I like the idea of stars having sisters. Does anyone else have a favorite constellation?

There’s also that thing where you can name a star for someone on an official registry. Has anyone ever done that? I’ve never been clear about whether they let you

have a star that's easy to find or not. I think I would be a little sad to "have" a star I couldn't ever find. But then again, I've been missing my little black purse since I moved to California, so maybe some things just don't want to be found.

I ask all this because there's a whole section in our scripture reading today that seems to me like it could be about stars. Let me read that part again: "Lift up your eyes on high and see: Who created these? He who brings out their host and numbers them, calling them all by name; because he is great in strength, mighty in power, not one is missing." Now, one could argue that this is about "the heavenly host," which most commonly refers to a bunch of angels. But I think you could also say that it's about the stars in the sky. After all, you can't just look up and see angels on any given night, but you can see the stars, as long as it's not too cloudy. When it comes right down to it, the distinction between angels and stars is probably most appropriately very fuzzy anyway, so maybe it's both. For our purposes, since we're much more accustomed to looking up in wonder at the stars, I'm going to say this verse is about the stars in the sky. In fact, let's say it's about the stars in a very dark sky, with basically no light pollution at all, because that's how you get a lot of stars. And what does the verse say? It says that God puts them there, numbers them, calls them by name, and makes sure, through divine might, that none of them go missing. The stars. God is shepherding the stars in the sky and knows all their names. It's a beautifully poetic measure of the vastness of God. I can only keep track of about 14 stars, so I'm glad I don't have to do it. Aren't you glad God is God? **Thank God!**

There are other measures, in these 11 short verses, of the majesty and power of God. The bit about princes being brought to naught actually compares them to grain crops. “He blows upon them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble.” After all, compared to God, the inhabitants of earth are “like grasshoppers”. All of it comes together to paint a very impressive portrait – numbering the stars, ending princes, stretching out the heavens like a tent.

It's good to be reminded of how big God is. Far too often, we squish God down into a size we can handle, and then when we need a big God, we're in trouble. When we make God human-sized, we tend to forget that God is God. **Thank God!** And then we get confused and end up acting like we have to depend on ourselves for salvation. Far too often, we think of life as something to be accomplished. We set goals and feed ambitions. We feel driven to succeed. Sometimes we even claim to want to “save the world.” We see problems all around us and feel compelled to solve them. We see people having struggles, and we think we need to fix them. And when things get really bad – and let's be honest, that's pretty much where we are right now – when things get really bad, if we've forgotten how big God is, it's easy to lose sight of hope.

But rejoice, my friends, because here is the good news: we don't have to be God. Why? Because God is God! **Thank God!** We don't have to be God not just because our God is big enough to number all the stars and keep them in order, but also because of what Isaiah tells us in the second half of this passage. That God, the

Creator of the ends of the earth, who is so big earthly princes are like grass, also “gives power to the faint and strengthens the powerless.” Are you tired? Let me rephrase – Have you been exhausted lately? This passage is about you! This big God who sees us as the size of grasshoppers must really love tiny things, because this incomparable God is going to lift you up – you! weary, old you. It’s okay to be tired, because God is God. **Thank God!** It’s okay to feel faint and need to rest, because God is God. **Thank God!** It’s okay to struggle against unjust rulers and feel like your efforts are going nowhere, because God is God. **Thank God!** It’s okay to feel like life is confusing and doesn’t make sense anymore, because God is God. **Thank God!**

Maybe the stars are angels. Maybe they’re like those angels who appear all through scripture commanding us to “Fear Not!” Because when we take the chance to go outside after dark, and we turn our eyes up to the sky and see those stars, how can we help but remember that God is God? **Thank God!** When we look at the wonder and the vastness, and remember these verses about God calling all of those billions of stars by name, but also renewing our strength, us little grasshoppers down here, how can we not take heart? Let us wait on the Lord, my weary friends. Life is hard, and there is only so much we can do about it. I know we will each do our part, but God is God. **Thank God!** And this tragic and beautiful mess that is life on earth is in God’s beautiful and mighty hands. That’s what I know. That’s what I’ve heard. God is God. **Thank God!** Hallelujah and Amen!