

I.N.I.

Thirteenth Sunday in Pentecost

August 26, 2012

Is. 40:25-31

In Christ Jesus, Who is the only Lord and Savior of mankind, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

One of the reasons for our coming to God's House on a Sunday morning is to be strengthened, to receive strength from God to face the myriad number of problems and trials in our life. Problems brought about because we live in a sinful world or problems we bring upon ourselves because of our own sins. On this Sunday morning there are 40-50 of you sitting at the feet of our Savior, bringing your sins, your burdens, your cares, your worries, your fears, your sorrows and laying them before Him.

Some of you may be facing illnesses (short or long term) that are bothering you; others may be upset over family problems (marital, children/parent relationships); others may be facing problems with people at work or with classmates or teachers; still others may be in an emotional rut, feeling little if any joy in the same everyday routine of life and depression is beginning to set in; others of us may feel the pressure of having to succeed or perform well in our particular callings; some may be worrying about our loved ones who are aged, or away from home; others of us may be realizing that our own sinful ambitions, pride and materialism has been creeping up and taking over more and more of our time and trying to get control of our hearts and lives.

The list of troubles, problems and trials could be as long and as varied as there are people here this morning. And the wonderful thing about them all is that **THE LORD KNOWS ALL ABOUT THEM!** He knows our problems and trials we face; He knows our frame, our makeup--that we are but dust; He knows our every weakness; He knows our failures and our faults. **HE ALONE KNOWS!**

WHO IS LIKE THE LORD!

Chapter 40 begins the second half of this precious book of the prophet Isaiah. In this second half the LORD through Isaiah brings words of comfort and peace to the troubled people of Israel. Destruction and ruin had been prophesied. Deserved destruction and ruin because of the people's unfaithfulness. Yet Isaiah is telling the people, even though they have been unfaithful the LORD, JEHOVAH is ever faithful and therefore ever trustworthy. Yes, the nation will be going through a crisis, but it won't be the last one. What lesson should they learn in advance of the next crisis? This lesson:

WHO IS LIKE THE LORD?

Can there be anyone like JEHOVAH? Is anyone equal in strength, power, wisdom or might? All of the verses we read in our Scripture reading clearly show God's majesty and pre-eminence over everything in this world; over the glory and majesty of man; over the glory and majesty of creation; over the rulers of this world. **NO ONE AND NOTHING CAN COMPARE OR EVEN COME CLOSE TO EQUAL GOD!** For the faithful few in Israel as well as the faithful few of this world today, that message is of great comfort.

In our text the LORD through the prophet draws for us three examples of why He, The LORD God of heaven and earth is in a class by Himself that no one can approach.

I: HE CONTROLS HEAVENLY BODIES

We read vs. 25-26 **TO WHOM THEN WILL YOU LIKEN ME, OR TO WHOM SHALL I BE EQUAL? SAYS THE HOLY ONE. LIFT UP YOUR EYES ON HIGH, AND SEE WHO**

HAS CREATED THESE THINGS, WHO BRINGS OUT THEIR HOST BY NUMBER; HE CALLS THEM ALL BY NAME, BY THE GREATNESS OF HIS MIGHT AND THE STRENGTH OF HIS POWER; NOT ONE IS MISSING.

What a marvelous spectacle the LORD paints for us. Tonight lift up your eyes and look, look at the stars, the moon and the planets. Who put them there? **GOD DID!** Who directs them in all their courses? **GOD DOES!** The uncountable number of heavenly bodies, fixed in their places, in unimaginable distances from us, wandering through the heavens is truly a mind boggling wonder. And we don't even know where the universe ends. It surely shows God's omnipotence!

But in this picture the LORD also draws for us a picture of His care and providence. The words **BRINGS OUT** in the Hebrew pictures a shepherd who each day leads his flock of sheep out of the sheep pen into the open pasture land, calling them by name and leading them in perfect order to their proper place. Not one is missing! So also God knows all of His stars and planets. He leads them out every night into their appointed places to appear to mankind to glorify Him. The infinite number of stars is counted exactly and known only by Him. **WHAT POWER, WHAT WISDOM, WHAT MAJESTY!**

What comfort these words bring to us in the midst of our afflictions and trials, troubles and concerns, doubts and despair. Every single circumstance in our life, be it earth-shattering or ever so insignificant, it is still the object of God's omnipotent and loving concern. Not only are all the stars numbered by God but the very number of hairs on our heads are known by God as well.

But does it always seem that way? NO! Sometimes it seems as if God has turned His back on us, has forsaken us, has left us all alone. The people of Israel also felt that way. We read God speaking to them in verse 27 **WHY DO YOU SAY, O JACOB, AND SPEAK, O ISRAEL; MY WAY IS HIDDEN FROM THE LORD, AND MY JUST CLAIM IS PASSED OVER BY MY GOD?** With such a God as the LORD how could Israel, how can any of us ever have misgivings about our God's loving concern for us; about His directing our lives for our eternal welfare?

But how often haven't we also complained: **MY WAY IS HIDDEN FROM THE LORD!** In other words, "God is not even aware of what is happening to me. He doesn't even know what is going on in my life, for if He did, He surely would do something." How often haven't we complained: **MY JUST CLAIM IS PASSED OVER BY MY GOD:** In other words, "My standing as a child of God doesn't seem to make any difference. I'm in worse shape than the unbelievers who seem to flourish and prosper and have less problems and cares than I. God just doesn't care."

So instead of confronting the problem with God's help, we blame God and become bitter toward Him.

So God asks, **"WHY DO YOU SAY THESE THINGS, O JACOB? WHY DO YOU SPEAK THIS WAY AND HAVE THESE FEELINGS, O ISRAEL?"**

Why? Because of the littleness and weakness of our faith. Because of our own vainglory and pride. Because of our not thinking things through by faith. Because of our doubt of God's love and concern for us. Because of our not taking God at His Word, because of our not implicitly trusting in His promises. Ultimately, because of our sinful heart!

II: HE NEITHER FAINTS NOR IS WEARY

We read verse 28 **HAVE YOU NOT KNOWN? HAVE YOU NOT HEARD? THE EVERLASTING GOD, THE LORD THE CREATOR OF THE ENDS OF THE EARTH, NEITHER FAINTS NOR IS WEARY, THERE IS NO SEARCHING OF HIS UNDERSTANDING.**

How often do we have to be told? How long before we get it into our head and our heart? The LORD is the very source of our strength, not the reason for our problems. He is eternal. He alone is

the Creator. He neither faints nor grows weary of all that He does. No one can fathom His understanding of all things. Have we heard? Of course we have.

We have heard these promises made to us. **GOD IS OUR REFUGE AND STRENGTH, A VERY PRESENT HELP IN TROUBLE...BE STRONG AND OF GOOD COURAGE, DO NOT FEAR NOR BE AFRAID; FOR THE LORD YOUR GOD, HE IS THE ONE WHO GOES WITH YOU. HE WILL NOT LEAVE YOU NOR FORSAKE YOU...**Jesus, our Good Shepherd says, **MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE, AND I KNOW THEM, AND THEY FOLLOW ME. AND I GIVE THEM ETERNAL LIFE AND THEY SHALL NEVER PERISH; NEITHER SHALL ANYONE SNATCH THEM OUT OF MY HAND...** Again our Savior promises, **I WILL BE WITH YOU ALWAYS EVEN TO THE END OF THE WORLD...DO NOT WORRY ABOUT YOUR LIFE, WHAT YOU WILL EAT OR WHAT YOU WILL DRINK; NOR ABOUT YOUR BODY WHAT YOU WILL PUT ON. IS NOT LIFE MORE THAN FOOD AND THE BODY MORE THAN CLOTHING?... THEREFORE DO NOT WORRY, SAYING, WHAT SHALL WE EAT? OR WHAT SHALL WE DRINK? OR WHAT SHALL WE WEAR? FOR AFTER ALL THESE THINGS THE GENTILES SEEK. FOR YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER KNOWS THAT YOU NEED ALL THESE THINGS. BUT SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND ALL THESE THINGS SHALL BE ADDED TO YOU.**

How often has He promised us? How much clearer can He say it in His Word? Yet it is beyond our understanding. It can only be understood and accepted through faith. Paul writes in Rom. 11:33-36 **OH, THE DEPTH OF THE RICHES BOTH OF THE WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE OF GOD! HOW UNSEARCHABLE ARE HIS JUDGMENTS AND HIS WAYS PAST FINDING OUT! FOR WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD? OR WHO HAS BECOME HIS COUNSELOR? OR WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM AND IT SHALL BE REPAID TO HIM? FOR OF HIM AND THROUGH HIM AND TO HIM ARE ALL THINGS, TO WHOM BE GLORY FOREVER. AMEN.**

WHO IS LIKE THE LORD?

Our God is not only the source of our strength but He gives to us His children the very strength we need.

III: HE GIVES STRENGTH TO THOSE WHO WAIT ON HIM

We read verses 29-31 **HE GIVES POWER TO THE WEAK, AND TO THOSE WHO HAVE NO MIGHT HE INCREASES STRENGTH. EVEN THE YOUTHS SHALL FAINT AND BE WEARY, AND THE YOUNG MEN SHALL UTTERLY FALL, BUT THOSE WHO WAIT ON 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.**

In the weakness of our sinful state the Lord gives us the strength of His powerful Word. In the weariness of our load of sins the Lord removes it and gives us the strength of the message of sins forgiven through His suffering and death on the cross. The Lord said to Paul who was weakened by his "thorn in the flesh;" **MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR YOU, FOR MY STRENGTH IS MADE PERFECT IN WEAKNESS.**

To all of us who are nothing without Him, Jesus says, **I AM THE VINE, YOU ARE THE BRANCHES. HE WHO ABIDES IN ME, AND I IN HIM BEARS MUCH FRUIT; FOR WITHOUT ME YOU CAN DO NOTHING.** Paul summarizes this truth in II Cor. 3:5 **NOT THAT WE ARE SUFFICIENT OF OURSELVES TO THINK ANYTHING AS BEING FROM OURSELVES. BUT OUR SUFFICIENCY IS FROM GOD.**

We have seen in these past Olympics that even the strongest of mankind, our youth tire, grow weary and faint. Even the strong, young men and women who have trained for years at times utterly fail in their physical endeavors; but not the LORD. He never falters or fails.

To whom alone is this promise made? To those who **WAIT ON THE LORD**. Does this mean to have patience, to wait for the LORD to accomplish His will in our lives? Yes, but it means more than that. The word literally means to **TRUST UNSWERVINGLY, TO EXPECT SOMETHING TO HAPPEN, TO AWAIT**. One who **WAITS ON THE LORD** is the child of God who with a repentant heart looks to the Lord Jesus alone for forgiveness and salvation and knows that he has it. It is the believer in Christ who knows that she has no righteousness of her own but trusts only and entirely in the righteousness of her substitute Savior. It is the one who not only believes he is forgiven but also lives it knowing that Jesus has given him the power to say “NO” to sin and his sinful flesh and to live for Christ alone.

The LORD promises us that **WE SHALL BE RENEWED**. This word has the idea of being revived, gaining new strength to make it through. Not just barely make it through, but with wings like eagles we shall soar, soar high over our problems and troubles, soar high over our worries and concerns. Christians don’t just barely survive from one day to the next. Christians don’t just barely make it through the problems of life and have to look forward to a lifetime of depression, boredom, loneliness day after day plaguing them. God will renew our spirit so that it soars.

David cried out **RESTORE UNTO ME THE JOY OF YOUR SALVATION**.

Knowing that Jesus loves me, that He died and rose again to forgive me of my sins of doubt and worry and all of my sins that burden and weary me, knowing that Jesus is even now watching over me as I pass through this vale of tears and sorrow and is leading me to a home He has prepared for me in heaven makes me strong again to trust in His promises and lets my heart soar with joy, confidence and loving obedience. That is our assurance!

WHO IS LIKE THE LORD?

We have the ultimate victory through Him who controls heavenly bodies, who gives us the strength to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint, to see this life through to the end, which will bring about the glorious beginning of life forever.

Amen.