

What do the Heavens Show Us?

Isaiah 40:26-31

When our son Andrew was in college, he was asked by a friend to go home with him for spring break. This invitation allowed Andrew to spend a week on a large cattle ranch in Nebraska. There Andrew got to ride horses in wide open country, use four-wheelers to round up cattle, and experience many other unique activities. One experience, which is pertinent to today's text, was what Andrew experienced when he looked up into the evening skies. Andrew came home and said that he never knew there were that many stars in the sky until all the artificial lights were gone and only the lights from God's creation could be seen.

In our lives we often lose sight of what the heavens have to show us, because we are distracted by the artificial lights of this world. The truth we consider this morning is that what we focus on is significant to how we deal with the situations of life. When we set our sights on the situations and circumstances of this life we are filled with feelings of helplessness and loneliness.

At the time of our text, the people of Israel were captives in the land of Babylon. They were in a strange land under adverse conditions. In this situation Isaiah notes that the people were complaining: "My way is hidden from the Lord; my cause is disregarded by my God." It is evident from these words that the Israelites were filled with feelings of hopelessness and loneliness when they focused on their situations and circumstances as captives in Babylon.

But notice the instruction God gives them through the prophet Isaiah: "Lift

your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these?... Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.”

What the Lord teaches us here is that when we set our sights on the heavens we are filled with the reality of God’s presence and eternal care. My mother recently shared with us that she loves to look at the moon in the evening sky. She does so knowing that the same moon she looks at is the one her loved ones see as well, and that God Who created that moon cares for her loved ones as He cares for her. Based on this morning’s text, let us hear from God what the heavens can reveal to us as we gaze upon them.

The heavens show us that the Lord is the Creator of our individual lives. Isaiah said of the Lord: “He brings out the starry host one by one.” The stars in the sky are not the haphazard result of some big bang event. Each star has been uniquely created and placed there by God.

So it is with us. No human being is an accident even though some parents may make such a claim. God is still the giver of life, and He blesses each person with uniqueness in a certain time frame and place on earth. The Lord speaks of this in one of the most beautiful passages that address our human existence. David wrote in Psalm 139: “I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from You when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for

me were written in Your book before one of them came to be” (verses 14-16). As we look at the heavens, the Lord declares the uniqueness of our existence as people created by Him.

The heavens show us that the Lord’s care is very personal. Isaiah wrote: “He brings out the starry host one by one and calls them each by name.” Long before the stars were named by man, God Himself had given a name to each star He had created. Each star from His creative hand is precious in His sight.

So are you. A few chapters after our text the Lord speaks through Isaiah and says: “This is what the Lord says – He Who created you, O Jacob, He Who formed you, O Israel: ‘Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine” (Isaiah 43:1). We are precious to Jesus. Through the waters of Holy Baptism He has claimed us as His children. He knows each of us personally. In Isaiah 49:16, God speaks and says: “I have engraved you in the palms of My hands.” Think about it! The Creator of the heavens and the earth, of you and me, named us as His children and extended His palms on the cross of Calvary to die in our place that we might have life in His name.

The heavens show us that the Lord’s care never wavers. Isaiah wrote: “Because of His great power and mighty strength not one of them is missing.... He will not grow tired or weary.” The same power and strength God used to create the stars and all the rest of His creation, is the strength and power by which He now sustains and preserves His creation.

As God so cares for the stars, so he also cares for each one of us. In one of

His teaching moments, Jesus said to His disciples: “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your heavenly Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows” (Matthew 10:29-31).

The heavens show us that the Lord governs with incomprehensible wisdom. Isaiah wrote: “His understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”

With this point we return to the problem the Israelites were dealing with at this time: If God loves us and has the power and strength to help us, than He must have deserted us as we are in the midst to this captivity in Babylon.

Has this thought process of the Israelites ever entered our minds? When we start to focus on our situations and circumstances rather than on God, we will doubt, question, and even believe that God had deserted us.

What we need to keep in mind is that when God governs our lives with His eternal wisdom, what He sees as our needs are not always the needs we envision. We look for comfort and ease in this life. The Lord looks for the strengthening of our faith and us treasuring Him and the glory that awaits us in heaven.

As a result, the Lord often allows us to encounter trials and troubles, hardships and difficulties, so that we will grow in our faith and truly rely upon Him

for all things. Notice that God in our text does not promise an easy life. Rather He promises that His strength will empower us when we are weak, and our energy will be renewed in the abundance of His grace. This is precisely the purpose the Lord had for Paul's thorn in the flesh. The Lord made Paul a better Christian through his thorn in the flesh. Paul was strengthened in his faith and empowered with God's grace and Spirit. The wisdom of God that designed the heavens, designs our lives so that our strength will be renewed in Him and we will run and not grow weary, we will walk and not be faint.

With the wonder things that the heavens reveal to us about God, it is important for us to put these revelations into practice. Let us consider three ways to do this.

First, we are to keep our eyes on Jesus. Let us not be distracted by the glittering things of this world or by the trials and troubles of life we encounter. It is so easy to get focused on the here and now that we do not "lift our eyes and look to the heavens." Behold how the heavens speak of the creative work of God and how He has made us a special part of His creation. Note from the cross that the Lord's love never wavers, but He always cares for us.

Second, we are to rest in the assurance of His strength. He promises that "those who hope in Him will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." God help us to rest in Christ that we may join Paul in saying, "I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

Third, we are to trust in His restoration power. Through His Word and in His Sacraments he refreshes and renews us in the truth of His grace, the blessedness of his mercy, and the completeness of His love. He says, “Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him and He will bring it to pass” (Psalm 37:5).

Right now our focus is on something or someone. Let our focus be on the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth, Who cares for the stars and for each one of us. Amen.