

“No Comparison!”

“*To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One.*” *Isaiah 40:25.*

Do you remember the story of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*? I know that this story might be the furthest thing from your mind at this time, but humor me, and try to pull up some details about this story in your mind. Even if you don’t recall the whole story, you might remember the repetitive things Goldilocks does. After wandering into an unfamiliar house, Goldilocks discovers three bowls of porridge. One big bowl, one medium sized bowl and one small bowl. Both the big bowl and the medium bowl weren’t to her liking, but the small bowl was, and if you know the line say it with me, it was just right!

Moving on to the next thing, she continued the same pattern. She found three chairs: a big one, a medium one and a small one. After trying the big chair and the medium chair, she wasn’t satisfied. So, she tried the smallest chair, and this chair was just right! Finally, Goldilocks decided she needed to take a rest. She finds a big bed, a medium bed and a small bed in the house. Again, trying all three beds, she ends up sleeping on the smallest bed because it was just right!

This simple story shows us the same, simple comparison with three different items. Each time the goal of the comparison is to find the fit that is just right! While this process might feel a bit childish and beneath us, at times, it’s a process that becomes very handy for us throughout our lives. For example, we likely go through this process to pick out the clothing or shoes that fit just right! Maybe this process served us well as we picked schools. Or perhaps this was our process as we picked churches. I imagine that this process has been used for relationships with people as well! All in all, we’re pretty well-trained at searching and finding the things that are just the right fit for us.

So, it shouldn’t surprise us when we find ourselves doing the same thing with God. Like so many other things in our lives, we want the God who is just right for us. While the sentiment behind this idea sounds appealing, the reality of this concept is utterly flawed. Finding the God who is just right for us is an impossible task! Everything that we could compare God to is stained by sin and so our results will divide us into factions following after man-made idols that we’ve called God! Yes, we may have even found ourselves saying things to this effect, “Well, the God I believe in would never do this or that! Or “My Jesus is okay with this or that.” All the while, this or that thing that we say our God wouldn’t do or that we say our Jesus is okay with are things that are driven by our own sinful, personal passions or our own sinful, cultural concessions and not by the Bible!

The truth is that for us, sinners, searching for the God who is just the right fit, we end up with a god who is just as sinfully flawed as we are. Our comparisons that lead us to a god who is just right for us are laced with the comforts and pleasures of the sinful flesh. The hard reality is that for sinful human beings like you and me, the God we need often doesn’t feel or look or sound just right to us. Especially with eyes and hearts that are marred with sin, the gods we so often choose for ourselves never will compare to the God we need.

God, the Holy One, the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, speaks to this very dilemma in the words of the prophet Isaiah before us today. The Holy One says, “**To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him?**” (*Isaiah 40:25*). To be clear, this question isn’t a challenge to discover the perfect comparison. For the people of Isaiah’s day and even for us today, the purpose of this question is for us to realize that there is nothing that compares to the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth! Isaiah’s words from the Lord reveal to us the extreme distance between all of creation and the Creator. God Almighty is so far above His creation that they are like grasshoppers to Him. The closest we might come to understanding this separation in size is by what we might observe between us and ants!

For God Almighty, the heavens, that is the sky, the planets, the galaxies, etc., are like a curtain in His hand or a tent that He could setup for a temporary dwelling. Outer space, famously labeled by Trekkies as the ‘final frontier’, that continuously provides new and ongoing discoveries for today’s smartest scientists, is something He can hold in His hands! Even the stars that we try to simply observe and document with the latest technologies that we have, reveal such a gap between us and the Holy One, who numbers, names and places the stars with His power!

Perhaps the timeliest example we hear in Isaiah’s words before us today deals with leadership. Rulers, princes, government leaders, are nothing compared to Him. The everlasting God has authority and power to

cutoff all of these manmade power structures with a mere breath! These leaders and entities that caused such great angst and turmoil for the people in Isaiah's day and continue to overwhelm our thoughts and emotions today are merely grass to be cut down in the eyes of the Holy One. Nothing in all of creation, no matter its hold on us, compares to God, the Creator of the ends of the earth!

At times, words like these might evoke comfort and assurance for us. But without fail, we forget these claims of God Almighty and are lead away from believing that God Almighty is just right for us to instead struggling with the same complaint as the people of Isaiah's day. **“My way is hidden from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God?”** (*Isaiah 40:27*). Losing sight of God's promises, we too wonder if God has forgotten us or if He is ignoring the trials and temptations we are experiencing! And suddenly, we find ourselves believing that our problems and struggles have outgrown the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. Satan, this sinful world and our own sinful flesh do everything they can to convince us that the Holy One, God Almighty, isn't just right for us and so one way or another we move on until something else feels just right to our sinful selves.

Yes, in our sinfulness the Holy One never feels like the God who is just the right fit for us. And that's exactly why Jesus came! He came to forgive, renew and restore us from our sin so that we might be the right fit for Him! Thanks be to Jesus, our God wasn't looking for people who were just right for Him on their own! Instead, Jesus took on flesh, lived, died, rose and ascended so that through Him we might be a people just right for the everlasting God! Because of Jesus, someday, there will be no comparison between what we experience now this side of heaven and what will experience in heaven at our Savior's, the Holy One's, side!

It's this good news about Jesus and His work that provide concrete fulfillment to the promises that conclude our Isaiah reading today. In Jesus, we see how God's unsearchable understanding unfolds for our blessing and benefit. In Jesus, we recognize that the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, still cares for and sustains His creation. In Jesus, we have sure and certain hope that our waiting in Him won't be in vain and that at His return our strength will be fully renewed and our weariness will be completely removed. Jesus' fulfillment of these promises in the flesh assures us that we will continue to witness evidence of the restoring and renewing impact of these promises both now, and when He comes again.

Holding on to Jesus' fulfillment of these promises, our relationship with God avoids comparison. Our relationship with God isn't distracted by things that appear to be a better fit for the moment. We cling to our Savior whose love and care are continuously molding us to realize that God is making us just right for Him. Through faith in Jesus, we know that whatever we have in this life doesn't compare to what God has in store for His people in eternity.

Dear friends in Christ, instead of viewing our relationship with our God through the Goldilocks' comparison seeking the fit that is just right, I commend to you different words written by a seasoned and long suffering hymn writer, Paul Gerhardt. Gerhardt experienced much suffering and trial in his life and despite those experiences, he wrote hymns that expressed tremendous faith in the everlasting God. Some of his hymns are in the hymnals in front of you. However, there's one hymn titled, *Why Should Cross and Trial Grieve Me*, hymn 756, that has a line that has stuck with me for a long time now and is a great expression of faith in our incomparable God.

This is the line Gerhardt wrote, “He who knows all our woes, knows how best to end them” (*LSB 756, stz. 2*). You see, Gerhardt understood that God knew his struggles and challenges intimately and he also knew that the Lord knew how best to handle them. Despite the pain and suffering he endured, Gerhardt trusted that He wasn't forgotten by God and that God's understanding of his trials was best. By the power of the Holy Spirit, Gerhardt spoke these words about the relationship Jesus had with him, instead of settling for something that felt just right. And by the same Holy Spirit, it is my prayer dear brothers and sisters in Christ, that we too can say the same thing about our relationship with our incomparable God and Savior, Jesus. He who knows all our woes, knows how best to end them. Amen.

In Christ,

Pastor Dan