

**Isaiah 49:5-6**

**<sup>5</sup>But now the LORD,**

**who formed me from the womb to be his servant,  
to turn Jacob back to him,  
so that Israel might be gathered to him,  
so that I will be honored in the eyes of the LORD,  
because my God has been my strength—**

**<sup>6</sup>the LORD said:**

**It is too small a thing that you should just be my servant  
to raise up only the tribes of Jacob  
and to restore the ones I have preserved in Israel,  
so I will appoint you to be a light for the nations,  
so that my salvation will be known to the end of the earth.**

Grace to you and peace from God our father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus, dear brothers and sisters in Christ. What kind of being is God? Have you ever asked or wondered that? Have you ever had to try to answer that question? What kind of being is God? As things happen in this world that cause that question to be asked, maybe you've had to answer it. Maybe you were the one asking it.

How would you answer it? What would you say? He's all powerful, the creator of heaven and earth. He's holy, without sin. Everything he does is perfect and flawless. He is just, all his judgments are right and true. That's who God is and up to this point that's how Isaiah has described him. Listen from Isaiah 40: **See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power...Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens?**

**Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket,  
or weighed the mountains on the scales  
and the hills in a balance?**

<sup>13</sup> **Who has understood the mind of the Lord,  
or instructed him as his counselor?**

<sup>14</sup> **Whom did the Lord consult to enlighten him,  
and who taught him the right way?  
Who was it that taught him knowledge  
or showed him the path of understanding?**

And the answer, of course, is "no one." That's just who God is. And who are we? Isaiah continues in chapter 40: **Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket; they are regarded as dust on the scales;**

<sup>17</sup> **Before him all the nations are as nothing;**

**they are regarded by him as worthless  
and less than nothing.**

We are not powerful, perfect or holy. We're weak, frail, and sinful. We have nothing to offer God, nothing that he needs from us. He is the creator, we are the creation, created in perfection, but we rebelled, and have been rebelling since, with every sinful thought, word, and action.

What would you expect God to do with beings such as us? Wrath? Punishment? It should be a scary thing to think about the question, "What kind of being is God." Maybe we don't want to know!

In our sermon text this morning, from Isaiah 49, Isaiah answers the question, and don't worry, it's all good! These words before us this morning give us such a wonderful glimpse, not into his power and might, his perfection and justice, but his love. A love that blows us away every time we see it.

You see, the situation of our weakness, our frailty, our sin, gave God the perfect opportunity to show just what kind of being he is. Through Isaiah, God is explaining what his servant, Jesus, was coming into the world to do: To turn back Jacob to him, to gather Israel back into the fold. And that fit with the picture God's people had been given of the Savior. There were few non-Jews that had been privy to God's plan of salvation. They weren't allowed in the temple. They didn't participate in the sacrifices. They didn't celebrate the passover or understand the blood of the lambs, bulls, goats, and rams paying for sin. They didn't have the vivid and vast history and culture based on the salvation for the Jews through a promised Savior. In fact God had gone to great lengths to keep his people separate from the other nations in order to protect that promise, to protect the Savior.

Here in our text Isaiah is looking ahead, seeing God bringing forth his servant, the Savior, from his chosen people. That promise, that culmination, that Savior is the fulfillment of the Jewish people and didn't need to be protected anymore. It didn't have to be separate any longer. Look what he says: **It is too small a thing that you should just be my servant to raise up only the tribes of Jacob and to restore the ones I have preserved in Israel, so I will appoint you to be a light for the nations, so that my salvation will be known to the end of the earth.**

That's the kind of being our God is! Saving the millions of people descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was not enough. Only God can talk that way, that saving millions of people is too small a thing. But

to him it *was*. It *was* too small a thing because he had made the promise to Abraham saying that *all nations* would be blessed through Abraham's descendent, who we now know as Jesus.

As John pointed out in the Gospel reading today: Jesus walked by and he said, "Look, the Lamb of God who takes away... the sin of *his people*, the Jews? No! The sin of *the world*!"

It was too small a thing with you not included in his saving work. So for you also Jesus came into the world. For you he lived perfectly, died innocently, and rose victoriously. For your sins he shed his blood. For your eternity he gave up his life. For your guarantee, so you could be comforted and live in peace, he rose again.

*That's* the kind of being God is! All powerful, perfect, holy, yes. But gracious, merciful, loving and generous beyond any grace, mercy, and love we have ever seen or known.

Don't these words from Isaiah just sum up so perfectly who our God is? Don't they just give you a wonderful picture of his being? It is too small a thing...salvation for some — millions even. No! My son is worth salvation *for all*!

It's true, this revelation fills us with peace and comfort, but that doesn't mean this life is always easy. It doesn't mean that we won't face challenges and at times not know where to go, where to turn, what to do. And at times these problems can seem insurmountable. Looming overhead, they may seem so big that they threaten to tear everything down, unraveling everything that gives us comfort and peace, causing us to raise the question, "What kind of God would allow this? What kind of God would put me through this..."

But know this: The God who said it was too small a thing to save only millions of people is the same God who sees your life unfolding before you today. He sees the challenges, the obstacles. He sees how hard it is for us to see his guiding hand, his protecting power. But today we have a glimpse of it.

If saving millions of people was a small thing, what else is too small a thing to him? Cancer, strokes, Alzheimer's. The challenges of finances, relationships, or just trying to figure life out, or dealing with *how* it turned out. As we try to do the right thing, staying faithful to God and his Word in this mixed up world.

Look the Lamb of God, John said. The Lamb God sent to be sacrificed for the sins of the world. God's one and only Son. That's how God took care

of our greatest problem: sin. He gave up his Son. Do you think he won't be with you through all the other problems and challenges of this life? Of course he's with you! Compared to sin, death, hell, the devil, those things *are* small. He'll see you through. He already knows the solution. He already knows the outcome. Put your hope in him, trust him!

I never realized it, but the season of Epiphany, at least the first few weeks, are some of my favorite of the Church Year. In these weeks the theme has been repeated: Jesus is revealed to the world. In the season God takes the truths of Christmas, that the Savior is born, and says, The Savior was born *for you*. Again and again we get to focus on that wonderful truth.

Today is no different. Marvel at these words before us. **It is too small a thing** to secure salvation only for some. God has secured salvation for all, for you and me.

View the rest of your life through this perspective, under this mantra: It was too small a thing for God not to include me in salvation. It's too small a thing of him not to help me now. The things we deal with, that we have been enduring, these challenges and obstacles that define us and make life what it is at any given moment, to us, they're huge. But not to God. If it was too small a thing not to include us in his plan of salvation making us heirs of eternal life with him, it's way too small a thing to not see us through the challenges and obstacles of this life.

How does he do that? Every obstacle and challenge we face, it's as if the world were telling us, "God doesn't care. God is angry with you. God has forgotten you. God will not see you through." Through his Word and sacraments God answers every doubt caused not only by the world, but the devil and our sinful flesh. He's promised to keep us safe, to see us through, to provide for our needs. and to work even the worst situation we could ever face, for our good.

How can we be sure? That's the kind of being God is! powerful, perfect, just and true, merciful and gracious, loving and kind, using all he is and all he does for us and our future with him. God give us faith to trust his work for our salvation, and his work to bring us safely there. In Jesus' name, Amen!