

May 8, 2016
Isaiah 66:1-2

Easter 7C
Seeking the Small

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Risen and Ascended Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text for this morning comes to us from the prophet Isaiah the 66th chapter: *Thus says the Lord: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest? ² All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the Lord. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word. ¹*

Today the Seventh Sunday after Easter, the Sunday after the Ascension we look at how God seeks the small. This text from Isaiah is appointed for the Feast Day of St. Matthias and today we heard the story of Matthias, seemingly small and insignificant chosen to replace Judas. This is the only time we hear of Matthias. Today we see how Jesus looks after the small through the eyes of Isaiah. – Introduction for the people of God at Trinity and St. Paul.

Today, we remember Mother's...our own mom's, grandma's, and those that act as mom's to us. Some of us our moms are no longer with us on earth. Some of you desire to be mother's but aren't. Some of you know what it's like to bury a child, whether it's through a death in the womb or on the outside. I'm not one that typically brings these days into my sermons, because for some it can be painful. There's one thing that mother's in general are known for. They see the small things in life, especially when it comes to their children. Each day especially with little children they see small milestones in their small children.

You and I though, do we always notice the small things. When you are walking along the street do you pick up the penny? There's other small things, marbles, some Lego pieces, seeds, and some more valuable small things such as a diamond. I'm sure we've heard stories of people who have lost their diamond from their ring and search high and low for it...it's a small thing that people will notice.

Who do you look out for? How many times do you drive and see some insignificant person stuck in the ditch or even more embarrassing stuck at the end of their driveway in the snow drift? Have you noticed the homeless in Grand Forks, Fargo or even in a bigger metropolitan area? Maybe you have or you haven't? What have you done if you noticed these "insignificant people?" "Do you help the least of these brothers of mine?" As Jesus would say. Do you ignore them?

Do you try to make God small? Do you try to confine Him to His house? That's what Isaiah is recording here. Yahweh God is responding to the people who are really domesticating him by

¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2001). (Is 66:1–2). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

means of a handmade temple. Are you trying to make God stay in his “home?” Isaiah records Yahweh’s question: *“Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest?”* These people our idolaters that Yahweh is responding to...and frankly so are we. Oftentimes we attempt to make God small while making ourselves look grand.

We look for our own accolades and awards. We look for prestige and power. We look for wealth. Perhaps we are like the man in the Luke 12 who decided He was going to build bigger barns to store his wealth. Perhaps we just want to be our own god or we want to get to god on our own, like those that were building the Tower of Babel. It’s what you and I do. We are good at it. We are good at looking at the grand. Many times we are not humble. Being humble is hard to do. It’s what we are asked to do. Jesus says this in Matthew 18:4, *“Whoever humbles himself like this child will be called greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”*

We have a hard time looking past ourselves and the gods we create and attempting to make the true God small.

But look at who we have as our God. Yahweh God has created the grandeur. You can see it in creation. After all Yahweh God says, ²*All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the Lord.* Next time you are out in the fields, take a moment, stop and look at the vastness of creation. Next time you are in the woods or on the water look at the amazing work God has done for you. There I go again, looking at the grand. Next time you are in your garden, planting your seeds or your young plants, think about how God takes care of even those. Even a small seed, like a mustard seed can grow into something grand and great. That’s because God has taken care of it.

Yahweh God himself is the one that takes care of everything and looks out for all...even the tiny sparrow and the lily of field. Listen to Jesus himself when He says, ²⁵*“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious 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?”* ²⁶*Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?”*² God himself has given value to the insignificant.

As Yahweh God himself creates the grandeur, he doesn’t just look out for the grand of the world. Rather, as Isaiah records in our text the words of God: *But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.* This shows us that Yahweh God indeed looks out for the humble, for the insignificant, the ones that are afflicted, smitten in spirit, and trembling at His Word.

² *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2001). (Mt 6:25–26). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

Yahweh God looks to the small in the Old Testament, He chose Abraham a pagan to be the father of Israel. He chose David, a small shepherd boy to be king. He chose Rahab, a prostitute to protect His people and even be in the lineage of Jesus.

Yahweh God even looks out for the small of the world in the person of Jesus Christ. Throughout Christ's ministry He taught how important the small things were. He taught of the mustard seed, the sparrows, and lilies, he even taught of the woman searching for her lost coin and had a party once she found it. He taught through the woman who gave to the temple treasury her last two copper coins. He taught the Good Samaritan and how He himself comes to the marginalized, the small, the insignificant. Throughout Christ's ministry he practiced what he preached and went to the insignificant, the marginalized. He went to those that were suffering and in need. He went to the lepers. He healed the blind, the deaf, and the lame. He raised the dead, including Lazarus and two children, the son of the widow of Nain, and Jairus' daughter. Jesus Christ even told a tax collector, the wee little man, Zacchaeus, "I'm going to your house today." He lived out His life by looking out for insignificant, the socially oppressed. For he even ministered to prostitutes and other sinners.

Jesus Christ also went after you, a small, insignificant person who is a poor miserable sinner. He went after you because He loves you. He seeks out the small and He is the one who makes you humble. He makes you humble by becoming humble for you. He makes you great by becoming small for you. He became small as He was born as a tiny little baby. He became small as went to the cross for you. As St. Paul tells us in Philippians 2 ⁴ *Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.* ⁵ *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,* ⁶ *who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,* ⁷ *but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.* ⁸ *And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*³

He became small for you so that you can become great. As He humiliated Himself, God the Father exalted Him. ⁹ *Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,* ¹⁰ *so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,* ¹¹ *and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* ⁴ Christ Jesus is exalted as He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. So to, he promises to exalt you and resurrect you. He started that process through the simple and small means of Water and the Word. And continues that through simple and small things of Bread, Wine, Body, and Blood for your forgiveness. You may be small in the eyes of the world, but God has indeed made you great through His cross and resurrection, ascension, and promise to return.

IN Jesus Name. Alleluia! Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia! Amen.

³ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2001). (Php 2:4–8). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

⁴ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2001). (Php 2:9–11). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Risen and Ascended Lord and Savior. Amen.

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