

“Look Up!” – October 1, 2017
by Wayne J. Schneider – Soli Deo Gloria

Look Up!

Isaiah 40:21-31

I have always appreciated the art of Vincent Van Gogh. His “Starry Night” captivates me and reminds me of my childish wonderment at celestial beauty. Behind our house was an empty lot and on summer nights I would lay back in the wild flowers and stare at the stars. Can you recollect the first time you looked into the dark night and became aware of the stars? It is a humbling experience.

When we consider the heavens and all that is there and realize that God knows our name, it gives us perspective, especially in times of trouble. The prophet Isaiah understood the difficulty of “perspective keeping” when facing life’s trials. He is writing following the Jewish exile from their homeland. They knew deep pain; they experienced being beaten down and they had forgotten that God was still with them.

They started questioning if God even knew of their predicament. Isaiah understood because he knew their hearts, and he challenges their forgetfulness. He writes to the people and asks an essential question: “*Why do you say, O Jacob, / and speak O Israel, / ‘My way is hidden from the LORD / and my right is disregarded by my God?’* (v. 27).” The prophet knew that God had not forgotten them, and Isaiah offers words of encouragement and comfort. The key concept for the people to recall is the identification of the God they served.

So Isaiah calls to the Israelites and tells them to look up at the stars. “*Lift up your eyes on high and see: Who created these? He who brings out their host and numbers them, calling them all by name; because he is great in strength, mighty in power, not one is missing.*” (v. 26)

Isaiah knew that God’s people needed a renewed perspective and that

gazing at the heavens would give them one. Since God created everything and knows everything by name, appreciating this again brings a wondrous truth and the awesomeness of God home again.

If the God who calls you by name, who has your identity tattooed on the palm of his hand, is it possible that this God could be of assistance in your time of struggle? Isaiah looks to the stars and asks us to remember the strength and magnificence of our God. *“He does not faint or grow weary; / his understanding is unsearchable. / He gives power to the faint, / and strengthens the powerless.”*

What a breathtaking promise to a discouraged, beaten down people. God longs to be your strength, to give you what you need when you think you can no longer continue.

When you look at your life’s circumstances what do you see? Do the problems you face appear to be so overwhelming that there is no end to them? Does the future look hopeless? Are you feeling alone and powerless? Isaiah tells us to look up, lift your eyes heavenward.

The good news is you are not alone. The prophet reminds us that we never have to ‘go it alone.’ When we are feel abandoned, when we are in despair, at the end of our hope, it is the best time to receive the gifts of God. Our God IS mighty, and filled with powerful love. It not possible for God to forget you. Jesus said, *“Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. And even the hairs of your head are counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.”* (St. Matthew 10:29-31)

Sometimes it is difficult to see the tree because of the hugeness of the forest. This is when we most need to remember. Look around you and remember that your God created everything and so much more. And yet, God both knows who you are and what you need. The wisdom of God is unknowable. The power of God is without limit. Remember to whom you belong and rest wholly in God. Look upon the stars and receive again the gift of perspective. Alleluia. Amen.