



[Pastor Steven Billings](#)

Sermon for Epiphany 5

February 7, 2021

With Wings as Eagles Isaiah 40:21-31

²¹ Do you not know? Do you not hear? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? ²² It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in; ²³ who brings princes to nothing, and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness.

²⁴ Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows on them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble.

²⁵ To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One. ²⁶ Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name; by the greatness of his might and because he is strong in power, not one is missing.

²⁷ 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”? ²⁸ Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. ²⁹ He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. ³⁰ Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; ³¹ but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

Have you ever watched ants? They're always so busy – running around, building their little ant hills, dragging bits of food to and fro. You never see an ant kicking back in his little ant recliner, in front of his little ant TV, drinking a little can of ant soda. They're busy, working, molding their little world. And for what? The rain comes, floods their colony, and they have to start all over again.

Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? God sits above the circle of the earth, and to Him we look like ants – busy, working, molding our little world. And flood and fire come along and knock our little houses down and we start all over again.

How we inflate our own sense of importance! We spend our lives, our time and energy, trying to make a difference in the world and yet most of us are only a generation or two from being forgotten. Buildings collapse. Relationships dissolve. Political efforts can be overturned by the stroke of a pen. Nothing we do lasts forever. Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when the wind



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blows, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble.

We make our plans and the Lord scoffs at them. “The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples” (Ps. 33:10). James writes: “Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit’— yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes” (Jam. 4:13–14). As Isaiah wrote earlier in this same chapter: “The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the LORD blows on it; surely the people are grass” (Is. 40:7).

Who are we compared to God? He’s the one who stretched out the heavens like a curtain, and spread them like a tent to dwell in; who brings princes to nothing, and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness. People *are* like grass. We’re here for a while and then we’re gone. Even the most powerful among us, the wealthiest, the most influential, are eventually brought to nothing. We all go down to the grave.

But God – He goes on forever. “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever” (Is. 40:8). Lift up your eyes and see: Who created all this? He who brings out the starry host by number, calling them all by name; by the greatness of his might and because he is strong in power, each and every one of them is there; not one is missing.

And yet people deny that He even exists. They make up all kinds of tales about how the universe came to be. It’s all a fantasy! With their billions of years they paint themselves as fools. The Creator has told us how things came to be. Let’s remember what the Bible is – it’s the very communication of Almighty God to us. And if someone disagrees with it, who’s wrong? If Scripture is in conflict with the imaginings of men, which one has to be adjusted? You stand in opposition to God, I won’t. You want to have an argument with God as to how He did things? Good luck with that. You can have your billions of years; I’ll stick with God and His Word.

And even if some do admit there is a God, they say, “He doesn’t really know what I’m up to. Why should He care if I get a little out of line now and then?” Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. His understanding is unsearchable. He knows your life and the way you live it (Job 34:21; Ps. 69:5; 90:8). He knows your thoughts. We see this multiple times in the Gospels, where Jesus knew the thoughts of those around Him (Matt. 9:4; Mark 2:6-8; Luke 6:8). Whatever it is that you’re involved in, whatever sins you think you’re getting away with, you need to understand: God knows it all.

But this is not all God knows. He has known you since before you were born. David explains in Ps. 139(:15-16) – “When I was made in the secret place, my frame was not hidden from you. 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.” Do you think your conception was a surprise to God? No. Paul writes



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to the Ephesians that God “chose us in him before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4) God knew you, not only before you were born, but before the creation of the world! He knew everything there was to know about you.

But chiefly He knew that you would need Him. Just as you were no surprise to God so Adam and Eve’s fall into sin was no surprise to Him. He knows our propensity to sin, our susceptibility to temptation. David also wrote in Ps. 103(:14) – “He knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.” He knew Adam and Eve would sin, and He knew that you and I would sin, and when our ancient ancestors fell, He already had a plan in place. He told the serpent: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel” (Gen. 3:15). He had already planned that His Son would be born as the Seed of the woman and that He would crush the devil’s head, which He did. When Jesus died on the cross as the atoning sacrifice for our sins, Satan was defeated and forgiveness was obtained for us. This verifies what David said of Him in Ps. 103(:10ff) – “He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his mercy toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.” “As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more. But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting.” Oh, hallelujah!

Beloved, I’m happy to tell you that this is not the end. This is not all there is to it. For, as God has taken care of our greatest need, so is He involved in caring for our lesser needs. In today’s Gospel we see the mercy our Lord Jesus had on those suffering in His day. He spent great time and energy healing the masses coming to Him. At the beginning of the next chapter we see Jesus make the connection. The paralytic having been brought to Him – having been lowered through an opening that had been made in the roof! – Jesus proclaimed that his sins were forgiven. *But He didn’t stop there!* He didn’t say, “Your sins are forgiven, now let your friends carry you away.” He proceeded to cure the man’s paralysis, saying to him, “Pick up your bed and go home.”

Nor does He say to us, “Your sins are forgiven, your eternity is secure, but, as for the rest of your earthly life, you’re on your own.” No, He has plans for your life. He says through the prophet Jeremiah: “‘I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope’” (Jer. 29:11)

Beloved, we may be looking at some tough times ahead. And even if the difficulties don’t come soon, they will come; that’s life. How are we going to get through them? Well, I’ll tell you: the Lord already has a plan. This God, who has named every star, to whom we look like ants, who knows everything about you and what lies ahead for all of us, has already provided everything we need to handle anything that comes our way. He’s given us His own Son who gained salvation for us through His death and resurrection. But more



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than that, as He says through the Apostle Paul: “If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?” (Rom. 8:31–32). With His help there is no storm we cannot weather, there is no river we cannot cross, there is no suffering we cannot endure. If we but lean on Him, trust in Him, wait for Him, we can do all things through Him who gives us strength (Php. 4:13). As He says in our text: “They who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.” In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen