

Who Is Super? No Match!

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Gates Presbyterian Church

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Isaiah 40:21-31 and Mark 1:29-39

How we love superlatives!

I think of superlatives and remember how my father was persnickety about the suffixes –er and –est. If I tried to use –est when I was only talking about two persons or things he would – sometimes not so gently – remind me that –est can only be used with three or more, that when comparing two, the suffix is *always* –er. I remember one time coming home from school and speaking of a young lady as the youngest in her family. My father commented that he thought she only had one sibling. When I agreed, he was emphatic that meant my friend was the younger.

And oh how we love those superlatives -

Strong	- est
Wealthy(i)	- est
Fast	- est
Great	- est
Tall	- est

Yes, there are those who make things of peoples' height! Chuck Goodykoontz and I go around and around on that – kidding of course, but there is one officer at the airbase at Niagara Falls who really “rubs it in!” A while back there were five of us standing in the hall – I was probably as tall as any of them, and “Bear” Griffith came down the hall, looked at us, and wondered aloud if he was amongst a bunch of hobbits!

Yes, today is the Super Bowl – supposedly all the more “super” because it is Number 40, which in roman numerals is XL – for extra large. It is true that 90 million people will view the game today, and it is equally true that the cost of a 30 second commercial costs a “super” 2.6 million dollars! Since I don't care who wins the game, I might actually enjoy the game more – particularly as I am anxious to witness “superior” athleticism.

As to the Super Bowl, the television cameras will, as ever, show us more than just the players and coaches on the field. We will get a chance to see their family members in the stands – in their sharing the glory and the agony the game will engender. While this is a super day for the Cowher and Holmgren families, there is an interesting twist when it comes to the Holmgrens. Four months ago, Kathy Homgren, Mike wife, and their daughter Calla, signed up for a medical mission trip to the Congo – that is where they are today. When asked about his wife's absence from the “big,” “super,” game, Mike was quick to point out how proud he was of Kathy – and, to quote, “she works very hard at a lot of things that are a lot more important than coaching a football game.”

Where is a cymbal rim shot from Tom Arcara when you want one!

As Christians, we know that the most significant, the “super” moment in history was the birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ. We recall, celebrate and re-create one of those most “super” moments when we gather at that table of our LORD in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Each of us gathered here today knows the answer to the question posed in the sermon title. We know there is no match for our God! How wonderful it is, however, to hear again some of the glorious words of Scripture that remind us of that – that make it abundantly clear!

Listen to another section of verse from Mark’s first chapter: Mark 1:20-39

As Jesus’ ministry commenced, there were signs and wonders that pointed to His superiority – to His wondrous reflection of God Almighty.

In words written 600 years earlier and read this morning as our Call to Worship, Isaiah’s glorious Chapter 40 includes these words:

It is [God] Who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers;
Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spread them like a that to live in; Who
brings princes to naught, and makes the nations as nothing.

So, if we “get it,” if we understand at some level of our being, that God alone is superior to all else, that there is “no match” for our God, then why, pray tell, don’t we “get it” all of the time. Since the beginning of time, nations have struggled for superiority, as though a certain people are entitled to be on top of some proverbial heap. For the Hebrew people, it was always somebody else whose nation ruled supreme – the Medes, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans – and since Jesus’ time, the Ottomans, the British,

When are we going to “get it,” that we are on this planet together, that it is vain if not blasphemous for one people to consider himself or herself better, more important, superior to all others. The arrogance of that comes face to face with the reality of *that* table, the reality of Jesus’ humility (Jesus, the Son of God! Humble!)

Last night, Sally and I were able to view the movie “Good Night and Good Luck,” which follows the interaction of CBS Reporter Edward R. Morrow and the junior Senator from Wisconsin, Joe McCarthy. By mixing actual footage of Mr. McCarthy with black and white film of actors playing the parts of the people of CBS, we are reminded of a tumultuous time in our history. In the end, the US Senate censored Joe McCarthy for his strong-arm tactics. In the end, he went too far and in trying to find communists among general in the army, he found himself contending with the most popular figure of his time: former General of the Armies and then President, Dwight D. Eisenhower. Before that, however, Edward R. Morrow, against the advice of many, took on Sen. McCarthy and his demagoguery. It is important to note that Mr. Morrow was also anti-communist. His complaint was that peoples’ lives were ruined by innuendo and assumption. Two important historical points need to be made. First, not ONE of the people condemned by Mr. McCarthy was ever determined to be a communist. Not one. Second, during the first years of his anti-communist campaign, for than fifty percent of the American people *approved of his tactics – even though it was clear that people were being considered guilty until proven innocent.* Are there parallels between the 1950’s and today? There are probably as many opinions as to that as there were back then.

More importantly, as we look back at Senator McCarthy's attempts at superiority – that he alone knew the truth of who was patriotic - we are reminded of true superiority when it came to sifting out the truth of a matter.

Think back on that truly superior being – Jesus the Christ. Think not only of the miracles that we read last Sunday and today – but think ahead to his debates with the Pharisees, the Scribes and even the Romans. Even though they sought Jesus' destruction, our LORD was always polite to his tormenters. Remember all of the debates – debates he clearly won by turning his enemies' words against them?

When it comes to a search for truth, especially eternal truths, we need to be careful, very, very careful. You and I are here this morning because we remember Jesus' words as found in the 14th chapter of the Gospel of John that put all of the human claims to “truth” in their proverbial place. Jesus said – “I am the way, the truth and the life.”

So – for those who look forward to tonight's game – enjoy – I certainly don't intend to put a damper on your fellowship, your viewing of the game, your assessment of those 2.6 million commercials (do you realize that last night there was an hour long prime time television program sowing the greatest super bowl commercials?) – but I suggest you remember, on this Super Bowl Sunday, that when it comes to truth, when it comes to power, and when it comes to majesty, there is no match to our God!

Amen.