

Pentecost 21 / October 18, 2026

Isaiah 45:5-6

"I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know...that there is none beside me."

Equipped to Make the Lord Known

This passage from Isaiah is one of the most remarkable in the Old Testament. First, because it categorically denies the existence of any deities except the Lord. "I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God." This was shocking in a world where a multitude of gods was assumed and worshipped alongside each other. As he made a walking tour of Athens, the apostle Paul observed altars to various gods and goddesses. He even found an altar dedicated to 'The Unknown God.' One of the reasons Old Testament Jews and New Testament Christians were persecuted was because they acknowledged only one God, the Lord and worshipped Him only. Christians were accused of atheism, because they would acknowledge only Jesus Christ as Lord. Denial of the Roman gods was seen as treasonous against the Roman state, since Caesar was a god and injurious to the Roman Empire, because it could incite the gods to anger. The ancients were blinded to the truth of Lord by their worship of idols. What they worshipped as unknown, Paul and the Church made known through the gospel of Jesus, proclaiming Him as the only God and our only Saviour.

The second thing that makes these verses from Isaiah most remarkable is that they are not addressed to a Jewish king or even to a worshipper of the Lord. They are addressed to Cyrus, a pagan king. Cyrus did not know the Lord. He worshipped pagan gods. As a Persian king, he would have thought of himself as a god. Yet, not only does the Lord call Cyrus and equip him to make Him known as the only God, He also calls Cyrus *"His anointed."* The word anointed is the word we use for Christ. The term anointed or christened, was used to designate kings of Israel, in particular kings of the line of David. For God to refer to Cyrus as His anointed was mind boggling for ancient Jews. How and why would God use a pagan king who fancied himself a god, to make Him known as the only God and the world's only Saviour? It just goes to show that nothing is too hard for the Lord. It shows that He uses every and any means possible to make Himself known to the world as the only God and the world's only Saviour. Cyrus is long gone, but God continues to make Himself known in the world through the church as the only God and the world's only Saviour

in Christ Jesus. Even as He called and equipped Cyrus for this purpose in his time, He calls and equips believers in this time with His word and Spirit to make Him known as the only God and the world's only Savior, calling people to faith in Christ Jesus.

God accomplished His purpose of making Himself known as the only God and the world's only Saviour through Cyrus in several ways. First by giving Cyrus victory over the Babylonians and their empire into his control. Secondly, by moving Cyrus to allow all peoples taken captive by the Babylonians, including the Jews, to return to their home lands. Thirdly, by returning the temple vessels taken as plunder by the Babylonians and providing funds to rebuild the Lord's temple in Jerusalem. Israel was restored to the Promised Land. The Lord's temple was rebuilt and the sacrificial service reestablished. The line of David was preserved in the land of Judah.

In the fulness of time Jesus was born of Mary, anointed as the Christ, the son of David and heir to a kingdom that now extends throughout the earth and which will have no end. Through His sinless life and sacrificial death, Jesus fulfilled the work of the temple, making atonement for the sin, not only of Israel, but of all people. Through the gospel of Jesus proclaimed by the voice of the church, the Lord makes Himself known to the world as the only God and the Saviour of all who believe. He calls to the world today through the holy Christian Church, which He equips with His Spirit and word to make Him known as its God and Saviour in Christ Jesus.

If God could do such remarkable things through a man who did not even know Him as his God, consider what greater things the Lord is able to do through those who know Him as Lord and confess Him as their only God and Saviour through faith in Christ Jesus! Even as God called and equipped the pagan king Cyrus to make Him known, so God calls and equips each believer and each one of us for the same purpose, that we would make Him known in Christ Jesus as the only God in the world and the Saviour of all people, especially of those who believe. Even as He took Cyrus by the hand, so He takes our hands, calls us to Himself through the gospel, opens our hearts by the Holy Spirit, gives us faith to believe and opens our lips to confess to others that Jesus Christ is Lord to His glory.

In our lesson from 1 Thessalonians Paul speaks about the faith of the Thessalonian believers, chosen by God, called through the gospel and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Their faith in God and their testimony of Christ Jesus sounded forth both in their home region of Macedonia and Achaia and to areas far beyond. People everywhere were talking about how these people had turned away from

the gods of their ancestors to serve the true and living God and to await His return from heaven and their redemption from sin, the devil and eternal death. The church grows and spreads by living in the purpose for which God calls us; believing in Jesus as our only God and Saviour and telling others the good news that there is salvation in the name of Jesus and that everyone who calls on Jesus as Lord and Saviour will be saved in time and for eternity. The Lord equips us with His Spirit and His word to make Him known in Christ Jesus.

God equipped Cyrus to fulfill His purpose by giving him rule over the Persian Kingdom and military victory over the Babylonian armies. God equips us and all believers in a different manner, for we fight against a different enemy. As St. Paul says in the letter to the Ephesians, *"We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the highest places."* Sounds daunting! Cyrus had only to contend with flesh and blood enemies. Our enemies are the spiritual forces that inspire human warfare, hatred and strife. You might think Cyrus had it easier. But that's beside the point. The point is not the enemy and its strength and number. The point is the power of God at work in those who believe. The power by which we serve God, making Him known in the world as the only God and Saviour is the Holy Spirit working in the word, through us and all believers. Believers should never consider the strength of our enemies. We need only consider the power of God who is for us. As Paul said in the letter to the Romans, *"If God is for us, who can be against us?"* The Lord equips us with His Spirit and His word to make Him known in Christ Jesus.

God is for us in Christ Jesus. Even as He anointed the pagan Cyrus to be His servant, He has anointed us in baptism to be more than servants, but sons and daughters, beloved children adopted in Christ Jesus. Even as He empowered the swords of Cyrus' armies to victory over the armies of Babylon, He empowers us with the sword of the Spirit, His word, to do battle with and overcome the forces of evil, the gods of this world that blind people's eyes to the true and living God, who makes Himself known as its Saviour in Christ Jesus. God empowers us both to believe the word of salvation and empowers and impels us to speak that word to others. Even if our words seem to have no immediate effect, we must never forget or underestimate the power of God's word. It is like flowing water that wears down mountains of unbelief, even if it takes centuries and creates faith in the most unlikely of places, the human heart, our hearts. The Lord equips us with His Spirit and His word to make Him known in Christ Jesus.

At a time when all seemed lost, the Lord assured Isaiah of the power of His word to accomplish His purpose of bringing salvation to the world. He said, *"The word that goes forth from my mouth will not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I send it."* God sends His word to the world through the lips and lives of believers like you and I, so that from the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, people may know there is one God, the Lord, and one Saviour of all people, Jesus Christ the Lord. More than Cyrus we are called, equipped and empowered to make the Lord known in Christ Jesus as the only God, calling people to faith in the assurance that everyone who calls on the name of Jesus will be saved.

God who makes Himself known through the gospel of Jesus, called us faith in Christ, empower us with His Spirit and equip us to serve according to His purpose, making Jesus known to others as Saviour both through the words of our lips and actions of our lives. In Jesus' Name. Amen