

PUNY

(Isaiah 45:1-7)

Intro: When I was in Italy recently.

-I visited some of the largest churches in the world.

#St. Peter's Basilica.

*Rome.

*Vatican.

+Largest.

=Floor space.

=Volume.

=Highest dome.

+Paid for through the sale of indulgences.

=Pieces of paper that promised:

-Forgiveness of sins.

-Years off of purgatory.

-Heaven.

#All for a price.

=Martin Lutheran railed against these.

-Leading in part to the Protestant Reformation.

#Duomo (Cathedral) in Milan.

*More than 500 years in the building.

*2,239 human figures.

+Carved in stone on the outside of the building.

*Towering pinnacles on the peaks of the cathedral.

#Duomo (Cathedral) in Florence.

*Started in the 13th century.

*Completed only after Filippo Brunelleschi.

+Figured out how to put a dome on top of the transept.

-Why were these churches made to be so large?

#In the:

*13th.

*14th.

*15th.

*16th.

#Centuries.

#Before the advent of:

*Bulldozers.

*Back hoes.

*Cement mixers.

*Steel.

*Construction cranes.

- They were designed to remind us mortals.
- #As if we needed reminding.
- *In comparison to the majesty of God.
- *We humans are downright puny.

I. But We Don't Like To Think Of Ourselves As Puny.

A. Humans Are Creative People.

1. Building:
 - a. Cathedrals.
 - b. Bridges.
 - c. Skyscrapers.
2. Fabricating:
 - a. Airplanes.
 - b. Boats.
 - c. Buses.
 - d. Automobiles.
 - So that people like me.
 - #Can go and see these things.
3. Santa Croce (Holy Cross) Church in Florence contains the graves of:
 - a. Galileo.
 - b. Michelangelo.
 - c. Machiavelli.
 - d. Dante.
 - e. Rossini.
 - William Tell Overture.
 - f. Marconi.
 - Radio.
 - g. Enrico Fermi.
 - Quantum physics.
 - Nuclear energy.
 - h. Among others.
4. We wouldn't call them puny.
 - a. Some of the greatest:
 - Minds.
 - Talents.
 - #Science.
 - #Art.
 - #Philosophy.
 - #Literature.
 - *In Italy.
 - *In the world.

- b. In comparison to them.
 - I might be puny.
 - You might be puny.
- c. But we're not likely to think.
 - These creative geniuses.
 - Their work.
 - #Puny.

B. Think Of The Great Wealth That Humans Have Amassed.

- 1. Wealth of art.
 - a. Uffizi Museum.
 - Florence.
 - b. Vatican Museums.
 - Rome.
 - #Why the Roman church owns all these priceless treasures.
 - *I'm not sure.
 - #But there is nothing puny about the artwork.
 - *In the great museums of the world.
- 2. Wealth of financial capital.
 - a. Medicis were the Wall Street bankers of 14th-16th century Florence.
 - b. With their great wealth.
 - They built:
 - #Palaces.
 - #Churches.
 - #Convents.
 - #Monasteries.
 - They bought:
 - #Bishoprics.
 - #Cardinal red hats.
 - #Papacy itself.
 - *Three times.
 - *Three of the Medicis became Pope.
- 3. In the eyes of the world.
 - a. This wealth:
 - Art.
 - Architecture.
 - Financial capital.
 - b. Anything but puny.

II. But What Are We In The Eyes Of God?

A. Our Wealth.

1. "Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor or not?"
 - a. Jesus is asked.
 - b. Matthew 22:17.
2. It might be both:
 - a. Lawful.
 - b. Necessary.
3. But all of a sudden our wealth is puny.
 - a. Not only do we want no new taxes.
 - b. We would prefer:
 - Fewer taxes.
 - No taxes at all.
4. Just make sure:
 - a. Our national defense is strong.
 - b. Our roads and bridges are in good repair.
 - c. Our social security checks keep coming.
5. What we have is so puny.

B. When It Comes To Giving To God The Things That Are God's.

1. Our thinking can really be puny.
 - a. I'll give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's.
 - But only because I have to.
 - b. Then I need to make sure.
 - My needs.
 - My desires.
 - #Taken care of.
 - c. If there is anything left.
 - I'll give a little something to God.
2. Puny thinking forgets:
 - a. All that we have.
 - b. All that we are.
 - Belongs to God.
 - #In the first place.
 - All that we own.
 - #Belongs to God.
 - *Not just what we decide to put in the offering plate.
 - #We are simply the stewards.
 - All that we are.
 - #Belongs to God.
 - #Made in the image of God.
 - #Redeemed by the blood of Christ.
 - #Claimed in the waters of Holy Baptism.

- C. Our Puny Thinking Is A Symptom Of Our Sin.
1. There is nothing puny about our sin.
 - a. Cuts us off from God.
 - b. Alienates us from one another.
 - c. Ultimately leads to death.
 - Physical.
 - Spiritual.
 2. What we are able to do about sin is puny, indeed.
 - a. Can money fix it?
 - Some have thought so.
 - #Roman church of Luther's day.
 - *Sold indulgences.
 - #Medicis made their fortune in banking.
 - *Charging interest on their:
 - +Investments.
 - +Loans.
 - *At a time when the papacy condemned usury.
 - +Practice of loaning money at interest.
 - *As far as the Roman church was concerned.
 - +Medicis were:
 - =Unrepentant sinners.
 - =Cut off from the grace of God.
 - +But:
 - =Church here.
 - =Convent there.
 - =Monastery over yonder.
 - All was forgiven.
 - Grace of God if the Price is Right!
 - #That's puny thinking.
 - b. Can human effort fix sin?
 - Some have thought so.
 - People of Israel at the time of Isaiah 45 were in exile in Babylon.
 - #Punishment from God for their:
 - *Disobedience.
 - *Unbelief.
 - #Could they set themselves free?
 - *No way.
 - *God had to send them a Messiah.
 - +Not:
 - =New Moses.
 - =New David.
 - =New Josiah.

- +Puny little Cyrus.
- =Persian.
- =Foreigner.
- =Non-believer.
- Given:
 - #Power.
 - #Honor.
 - #Wealth.
 - *Not for his own sake.
 - *To liberate the Israelite exiles.
- So that:
 - #Israel.
 - #Cyrus.
 - #All the nations.
 - *Might know.
 - +Yahweh is God.
 - +There is no other.
 - =Everyone else.
 - =Everything else.
 - Puny by comparison.

III. God Sends Us A Messiah.

A. Jesus Became Puny For Us.

1. God's Messiah.
 - a. Anointed one.
 - b. Chosen one.
 - Left the glory of heaven.
 - Gave up the majesty of his divine status.
 - #Not only becoming human.
 - #But enduring the treatment of a common criminal.
 - *Arrested.
 - *Tried.
 - *Convicted.
 - *Sentenced.
 - *Executed.
2. You can't get any punier than that.

B. For The Sake Of The World.

1. So that we might be:
 - a. Liberated from sin.
 - b. Empowered to believe.
 - c. Enriched for the sake of the world.

2. Through common things as puny as:
 - a. Water and Word.
 - b. Bread and wine.

Concl: Not through:
-Material wealth.
-Human accomplishment.

But by the grace of God.
-Puny.
#Becomes not so puny after all.