***Isaiah 45:9-10 Woe to him who strives with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth! Shall the clay say to him who forms it, ‘What are you making?’ Or shall your handiwork say, ‘He has no hands’? 10Woe to him who says to his father, ‘What are you begetting?’ Or to the woman, ‘What have you brought forth?’***

The last few weeks, we’ve been looking at surrendering to God, submitting to God, and serving God. God is God and we are not. Too often, we allow self to get in the way of the Spirit and this causes us to strive with our Maker. In the times we are tempted to strive, as though we know enough to strive, we must remind ourselves that God’s ways are not our ways and His thoughts not our thoughts. His plan spans all of history, not just the vapor that we call our life. God graciously allows us to be a part of His plan. In Job 38:2, we find God asking Job - *“Who is this who darkens counsel By words without knowledge?* Often, we darken counsel, murmur, gripe, complain, even accuse, without the full knowledge of the plan of God. Woe to us when we do it. It’s a slippery slope giving a doorway to the devil that he will surely walk through.

Our God is a personal God, intimate in the details of our lives. He knows that questions arise in our hearts. The questions are not the issue. The attitude of the heart is the issue. In Luke 1, we find Gabriel coming to both Zacharias and Mary. Both ask almost the same question, yet Gabriel sees unbelief in Zacharias and belief in Mary. The difference is the attitude of the heart. One believes, one does not. When we bring our questions before God, we bring them in belief, seeking how we might serve Him by carrying out His will. Belief is all about the Spirit. Unbelief is all about Self. God looks upon the heart and knows whether our counsels are darkened.

Isaiah prophesied the coming of the Medo-Persian empire back in Isaiah 13. King Cyrus, named in Isaiah 45:1, is king of the Medo-Persian empire and will be born 150 years after Isaiah’s prophecies. The Jewish people didn’t like these prophecies. They murmured against them leading to our scripture this morning. Verse 9 starts - *Woe to him who strives with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth!* Woe – this is a stern warning. It’s saying be very, very careful when we take it upon ourselves to question the plan of God, when we strive or contend with Him. When we say to Him, “I know better.” Paul says in Romans 9:20 *But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, “Why have you made me like this?”*Is any man or woman wise enough to contend with God? We are wise rather to surrender and submit to His will, asking in belief for clarification, but then being about His business. The potsherd can argue with other potsherds. Strive with the others made of dust if you like, but God knows our purpose and our purpose is perfectly in line with His plan. We must believe it to be so.

Verse 9 finishes - *Shall the clay say to him who forms it, ‘What are you making?’ Or shall your handiwork say, ‘He has no hands’?* Paul reflects this in Romans 9:21 *Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?* Shall that which is being made question He who is making it? Shall we question God from a place of criticism and unbelief, telling the Maker how this all should be made? He decides honor or dishonor, ease or hardship, not based on our vapor of a life, but on the plan He has made from the beginning. Shall we criticize? NO! The Maker knows how the made will be made, meaning us. The made have no such knowledge; therefore, we trust the One with that knowledge. It says - *He has no hands –* meaning, He has no ability to do the work. What a terrible thing to say to God.

Verse 10 *Woe to him who says to his father, ‘What are you begetting?’ Or to the woman, ‘What have you brought forth?’*Woe – again, be very, very careful – or as Haggai 1 tells us – Consider our ways. Surrender and submission are our daily calls to answer, even when we don’t understand, even when we don’t agree, even when it’s painful and humbling. We surrender and submit because of who we know God to be. He is trustworthy. We can never understand the sacrifice He made in His own Son to save us while we were yet still sinners. We don’t wait to see what’s in it for us to serve. We serve because Jesus came as a bondservant to give His life and serve us. If we only submit and serve when it all is going our way, to our liking, well, we’re not surrendered or submitted at all. We’ve not come to the end of Self, which means the battle with God, the striving, is ongoing.

This week, let’s get clear in our hearts – Is He the Potter, the Maker, the One worthy of belief and trust? Do we truly believe that our lives are proceeding to a perfect plan? Or do we think He needs our questions, our counsel, our striving to get it right? Do we believe He has no hands? How we answer gives us great insight into the state of our hearts. He’s either trustworthy with all or He’s not trustworthy at all… the state of our questions reflects the state of our heart.