“Only God is Great”
Compiled by Paul R. Blake

“Only God is great.” That was the solemn and unexpected declaration of Jean-Baptiste Massillon as he began his sermon at the funeral service of King Louis XIV. The king, who liked to be referred to as Louis the Great, had ruled France from 1643 to 1715 with absolute power and incredible splendor. His funeral was held in a magnificent cathedral that was lit by a single candle alongside the elaborately ornate coffin. When it was time for Massillon to speak, he reached out and extinguished the flame. Then he broke the silence with the words, “Only God is great.”

We recognize and admire some of our fellow humans who are considered to be great thinkers, great scientists, great inventors, or great achievers in every field of public or private endeavor. In many ways they excel beyond most people, but they still have the same needs as everyone else. They experience aches and pains. They have troubled minds, hungry hearts, weak moments, and flashes of temper. They cannot avoid illness, stave off death, nor guarantee life beyond the grave.

Only God is truly great – great enough to meet all our needs, great enough to forgive all our sins, and great enough to carry us through the dark valley of death into eternity, to be with Him forever. So declares the psalmist: “Among the gods there is none like You, O Lord; Nor are there any works like Your works. All nations whom You have made Shall come and worship before You, O Lord, And shall glorify Your name. For You are great, and do wondrous things; You alone are God. Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth; Unite my heart to fear Your name. I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart, And I will glorify Your name forevermore. For great is Your mercy toward me, And You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.” (Psalm 86:8-13).