

EAGLE'S WINGS

Epiphany 5 Year B

Is. 40:21-31; Ps. 147:1-11, 20c; 1 Cor. 9:16-23; Mk. 1:29-39

Gladstone 07/02/2021

Whether we are reading the daily paper, listening to the radio, or watching TV, the news is filled with what one might call, the fruits of discouragement—and even despair. Life is like a continuous newsreel showing the futile actions of people trying to live without a biblical hope, one that is solidly fixed on God as their defense and refuge.

Without question, we live in a strife-ridden world, one torn by wars, famine, disease and sickness, by natural disasters of gigantic proportion, by injustices and corrupt governments.

Because of things like this and the vagaries of our own individual human experience, there is also among many people, a sense of tiredness—a sense of being burdened or depressed by our circumstances and the circumstances of the world around us. Sometimes we get to the stage of emotional burnout where laughter is forced. Sometimes you feel like you wouldn't be able to lift a finger even if your life depended on it? When the events of the day seem to be surrounded by a damp heavy fog and lead weights seem tied to your feet. When you forget what its like to wake up with anticipation and bounce out of bed ready for the day ahead. When our prayers for deliverance seem to bounce of the ceiling. And God is silent.

Weariness—it can happen physically, it can happen emotionally, and it can happen spiritually.

In the Old Testament reading this week the prophet Isaiah depicts a mighty God enthroned in the heavens who looks down on humanity as so many tiny grasshoppers. His God...

brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing; he blows on them and they wither, and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff.

Turning his gaze to the night sky, Isaiah worships this God who...

brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.

But Isaiah's mighty God, so Absolutely Other, *does not* disregard the lowly, the insignificant, the obscure or the unimportant. Be assured, he writes, that your way is not hidden from God, for his might is matched by his tenderness. Unlike us, he never grows weary or tired; his empathy and understanding of our human frailties knows no boundaries.

Isaiah acknowledges that you might be weary and weak, tired and faint—that even vigorous youth sometime struggle, stumble, and fall—yet he assures us, “those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.”

On the wall of a building in a Nazi Death Camp were scratched these words:

I believe in the sun, even when it is not shining;

I believe in love, even when it is not shown;

I believe in God even when he is silent.

In last week's gospel reading from Mark, we read how Jesus taught with authority and then went on to demonstrate his authority in a much broader sense by casting an unclean spirit out of a man. In today's passage from the gospel according to Mark, which continues straight on from there, we find Jesus, first of all, healing Simon's mother-in-law—and then as the news of his healing power spread, people came from far and wide to receive healing from Jesus.

The next morning, very early in the morning, while it was still dark, we hear that Jesus got up, left the house and went to a solitary place—a quiet place, where he prayed. It must have been for quite a while, because we discover in the passage that Simon Peter and his companions went looking for him—and when they find him—they tell him that everyone is looking for him back in Capernaum—people with needs, people who want healing, people who want his touch, his word, his hope.

The passage concludes with Jesus telling his disciples, “Let us go on to the neighbouring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.” And so he does.

He travels through Galilee, preaching and healing and driving out demons—spreading by word and deed the good news of God’s kingdom—the news that God is near at hand, the news that God is coming to deliver his people, the news that God is forgiving, that news that God will raise up all who wait upon him, the news that God will give strength to those who turn to him—the news that God loves all people and wants everyone to draw near to him, everyone to repent and to believe in him, everyone to trust, to know, and to follow him so that he may shower them with the blessings that last forever, so that they may have peace in their hearts and live in peace with one another and with God.

And always—always, we find as we read the Gospel accounts—we see Jesus drawing aside from the crowds, that gather to hear him and to be healed by him, to go and to pray. Always we find Jesus leaving his disciples for a time and going to a quiet place by himself for a talk with God, for a time of waiting upon the Lord, for a time of maintaining his relationship with God—for a time of strengthening—a time of remembering—a time of being “re-attached” to the Father.

How about us? Do we remember why we are here in the first place? Do we recall the simplicity of what God wants of us? Do we recall the glory of what God has promised us? Do we recall how God has helped us in the past?

Do we remember where there is fuel for our tanks, food for our journey, supplies for our task, recovery for our soul, hope for hearts, and direction for our days?

Do we turn aside from the hustle and bustle—the tiredness and the worry—and allow God to inhabit us—to fill us—to restore us—to guide us so that we can get on and do what God wants us to do? So that we can be what God wants us to be? What God in his mercy and grace has made us to be?

The message of God for us today in the prophet Isaiah is precisely this. It’s a call to a people who are living in exile—who live in bondage—to take heart. It’s a call to them to remember who God is and how God has helped them in the past. It’s a call to them to come to God so that everything can be put into perspective.

It's a call to them to wait upon God, to listen to God—as well as to speak to God—so God can raise them up—so God can restore them to health—so God can unfold his plan for them—a plan in which their freedom will be restored, their nation rebuilt, and their cup of suffering replaced with the cup of eternal joy—so that they shall renew their strength, shall mount up with wings like eagles, shall run and not be weary, shall walk and not be faint.

In the same way, the Gospel message for today is that in Jesus, Almighty God has come near to us—to heal our wounds—to restore us to wholeness—to raise us up to worship God, to minister to one another and to continue Christ's work on earth.

As Isaiah says:

*...but those who wait for the LORD
shall renew their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint. (Is. 40:31)*

Praise be to God who raises us up on eagle's wings and restores us. May his Word—his Gospel—his promises—his direction, be heard by you, be loved by you, be clung to by you, day by day.

To God be all the glory, honour, majesty and praise. Amen.