**February 7, 2021 Isaiah 40:21-31**

***Wings Like Eagles***

**Scripture:** Isaiah 40:21-31 NRSV

*(21)Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? (22)It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to live in; (23)who brings princes to naught, and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing. (24)Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows upon them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble. (25)To whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal? says the Holy One. (26)Lift up your eyes on high and see: Who created these? He who brings out their host and numbers them, calling them all by name; because he is great in strength, mighty in power, not one is missing. (27)Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God"? (28)Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. (29)He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. (30)Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; (31)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.*

**Notes:**

1. Life is ***tough***!!!
   1. What are you ***afraid*** of?
   2. God is in the business of taking ***difficult*** situations and making them ***right***.
   3. Elijah; so discouraged that he wanted to ***die***.
   4. Moses wanted to throw his hands in the air and ***walk*** ***away***.
   5. Jesus with his disciples, “Teacher, ***don’t*** ***you*** ***care*** that we are dying?”
   6. “Lord, our enemies are ***surrounding*** us, don’t you ***care*** that we are about to be crushed by this Babylonian giant?”
2. Those who ***wait*** for the LORD shall ***renew*** their strength.
   1. God can do ***anything***.
   2. God’s power is ***great*** and he loves and ***cares*** for his creation.
   3. On the cross He offered forgiveness for **our** sin and ***hope*** for the future.
3. With God on our side, we cannot ***lose***.
   1. Find new ***strength***,
   2. Take your ***hands*** off the controls and let ***God*** have them
   3. The Lord gives us the ***determination*** and ***energy*** to keep going.
   4. We serve an ***everlasting*** God; He never grows ***tired***, is always there

**Script:**

I read something this week about the Los Angeles Police Department. They would demonstrate the effectiveness of their issued bullet proof vests to rookie officers by placing it on a mannequin and firing several rounds into the vests. The rookies were then told to check the to see if any of the rounds had penetrated the vests. Every time the vests would pass the test with flying colors. The instructor would then turn to the rookies and ask, “So who wants to wear a vest and let us test how it works on you?”

How many of you would put in a vest and allow a marksman to take a shot at you? Yeah, me neither; and I don’t blame you. You cover my entire body with the bullet proof material and I would still not allow somebody to take a shot at me. Why? Because it is one thing to say, “I have faith”, and its another to actually act on that faith.

There are many things in this world that can threaten our safety and security. Our plans, goals, and the things we desire in life can very quickly be threatened by powers beyond our control. Our freedoms, our securities, and our livelihoods have all been under attack. We have seen a lot of this in this past year. And, it has many of us wondering if our time left on planet earth quickly coming to an end. Others are praying Lord Jesus come soon; and still more wondering how they will endure the times ahead. We might lose our jobs; our financial security is in jeopardy. And how quickly we may lose our friendships, and loved ones. Our sense of well-being is in held in the balance, because of potential health problems. Our feelings of peace and calm are influenced by pressures outside of our control; we are threatened by terrorism, natural disasters, and for the past year Covid 19.

At times like these it’s easy to panic. It’s easy to take our eyes off of God’s faithfulness and begin to look around for other forms of power and security. But throughout scripture God has shared the same message to His people, “Trust me.”, “Put your faith in my promises”, and “rely on me.” Today we find a passage from Isaiah which encourages us to put our entire faith in the one who made us and created this world for us. Turn with me to Isaiah 40:21-31 and share in the reading of our sermon passage for today.

*(21)Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? (22)It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to live in; (23)who brings princes to naught, and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing. (24)Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows upon them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble. (25)To whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal? says the Holy One. (26)Lift up your eyes on high and see: Who created these? He who brings out their host and numbers them, calling them all by name; because he is great in strength, mighty in power, not one is missing. (27)Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God"? (28)Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. (29)He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. (30)Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; (31)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. Isaiah 40:21-31 NRSV*

Isaiah is writing this message to God’s people. Asking if they do you not really fathom the power of God? Then in verse 27 he asks why they question God; why they are wondering why it seems that God is always hidden from them and that justice is never served on their behalf. Have you ever felt that way, can you relate with the peoples doubts?

When this is written, Judah is a very small kingdom surrounded by a much larger and stronger Babylonian empire. Babylon had a fierce reputation with a fearsome army known for destroying any nation that stood between them and what they desired; and Judah was smack dab in the middle of their path. The people of Judah felt vulnerable, weak, and threatened. It would have been difficult for them to ignore the danger and perils that confronted them.

They knew in order to defend against such an enemy they would need an advantage, so they began to make alliances with neighboring pagan nations; bowing to these pagan nation’s idols and praying to their gods. Knowing their history, one would have to wonder why they would do such a thing. This was Judah. They were the people of God. Why on earth would they turn their back on God and seek out other sources of power?

I have to admit that it is easy for us to sympathize with them. They lived in a very real world, filled with very real dangers. Who wouldn’t be afraid? They knew they needed help from wherever they could get it. They were also fully aware of the ruthless reputation of the Babylonians and how destructive they could be. They would be foolish to ignore the dangers surrounding them.

I don’t think that it is any different for any of us. While the dangers we encounter may come from a different place and of a different sort; we still face an enemy that wants nothing more than our total destruction. If we look closely there are many times when our happiness and inner peace are threatened, not to mention our physical wellbeing.

What has you on the ropes, what are you worried about, what are you afraid of? Maybe the joy has disappeared from your career. Perhaps the pace of your children’s activities is non stop and you feel you don’t have anything left after running them all week to enjoy some time to yourself. Maybe the spark is dulling in your marriage or other family relationships. Perhaps you are feeling suspicious about how other people are treating you. Maybe you are discouraged about the path your children are following. It is easy to become depressed and discouraged with the situations you face daily. Perhaps you are upset about the way you have reacted or the words you said in a difficult situation. You see the same old mistakes of your past being repeated again and you may be thinking I will never be truly right with God.

Whatever has you down, remember that God is in the business of taking difficult situations and making them right. God has plenty of experience with people just like you and me, people who are filled with guilt, fear, hurt, and pain. Remember Elijah and how depressed he was, how discouraged he was that he wanted to die. And then there is Moses who made every excuse he could think of to avoid doing what God wanted, the difficulties he had with the people on the exodus, ungrateful and always rebelling against God. Surely Moses wanted to throw his hands in the air and walk away at times.

Even Jesus with his disciples; out on the lake in the raging storm, they were deathly afraid that they were going to die and accused Jesus of not caring what would happen to them. They woke him saying “Teacher, don’t you care that we are dying?” (Mark 4:38). That is the question we ask sometimes when things get difficult for us; isn’t it?. And, that is the question the Israelites were saying in the Old Testament, “Lord, our enemies are surrounding us, don’t you care that we are about to be crushed by this Babylonian giant?” And that is where Isaiah pen’s the Lord’s response, listen to it in the Message starting with verse 27.

(27)Why would you ever complain, O Jacob, or, whine, Israel, saying, "GOD has lost track of me. He doesn't care what happens to me"? (28)Don't you know anything? Haven't you been listening? GOD doesn't come and go. God lasts. He's Creator of all you can see or imagine. He doesn't get tired out, doesn't pause to catch his breath. And he knows everything, inside and out. (29)He energizes those who get tired, gives fresh strength to dropouts. (30)For even young people tire and drop out, young folk in their prime stumble and fall. (31)But those who wait upon GOD get fresh strength. They spread their wings and soar like eagles, They run and don't get tired, they walk and don't lag behind. Isaiah 40:27-31 MSG

If you do not do anything else in response to this message today, I ask that you memorize verse 31, “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. (Isaiah 40:31 NRSV)” You see the problem with the people of Judah was that they thought God had abandoned them. Some even thought He was too weak or too far removed to be bothered with their problems. And so Isaiah gives them a reality check.

“What’s wrong with you guys? Don’t you know? Haven’t you heard? Hasn’t anyone told you that God can do anything? If he can create the universe, if he is able to not only make the stars but also knows how many there are and does a daily check on them even though there are millions upon millions of them. Because God’s power is so great and he loves and cares for his creation, it follows then that his love for you and his concern for you in the middle of all your problems is unquestionable.”

We need only look at the cross and there we can see just how much God loves us; it is on that cross that Jesus surrendered his sinless life so that we might have our sin taken away. He died for us, though we have done nothing to be worthy of such a sacrifice, there on the cross he gave us forgiveness for our sin and hope for the future.

One of the great movies of all time was the 1959 epic Ben Hur. One of the most remembered and talked about scenes in the film was the chariot race; where Charlton Hesston (Ben Hur) defeats his arch enemy. The scene took 5 weeks to film, required 15000 extras, and 18 chariots. To add to the spirit of authenticity, Hesston actually learned to drive the chariots he would use in the race.

After weeks of practicing, Hesston was nervous about the shoot. He confided to the stunt coordinator that he could drive the chariot, but wasn’t sure he could win the race. The coordinator smiled and said, “Chuck you make sure you stay in the chariot, and I’ll make sure you win the race.” You see, Heston had made the mistake of thinking that he actually had to win the race by his own power and skill. He had forgotten that the outcome had already been decided. It was in the script. He could not lose.

I believe that is what God is trying to get us to see in this passage from Isaiah 40. With God on our side, we cannot lose. The script has already been written, it was written in blood, the blood of Jesus, you might say. That same blood reminds us that we are God’s special and chosen people and that he will never give up on us. We might be scared out of our wits by events that threaten our safety. And, we may suffer for a time. We might be disappointed in ourselves or the way things are going. We might grow weary, tired, disheartened and exhausted. We might even be tempted to give up.

But we serve an everlasting God; one that never grows tired of caring for us and loving us. Even when we think that he isn’t close, when he is no where to be found, when we struggle to feel His presence; His promises are as certain then as ever. Read that passage with me in closing this morning,

“…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. (Isaiah 40:31 NRSV)