

## THOSE WHO WAIT FOR THE LORD – ISAIAH 40:31

My text for this morning is from the First Testament reading in Isaiah 40, and when one turns from Chapter 39 to Chapter 40, the experience is similar to moving from darkness to light.

Chapter 39 concluded with Isaiah's prophecy to King Hezekiah in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century who had foolishly and pridefully displayed the treasures of his house to the prince of Babylon who had visited him.

Isaiah said to the King: Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and all that your fathers have laid up in store will be carried to Babylon says the Lord.

And some of your sons whom you will have will be taken away and become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.

In the 6<sup>th</sup> Century, Isaiah's prophecy was ultimately and completely fulfilled.

The defeat of the nation, destruction of the Temple, and their exile to Babylonia began in 586 B.C. followed by a return of God's people to Israel under the rule of the Persians.

This exile was God's final attempt to call His people to repentance – a people that had backslidden, sinned and moved far from Him.

While the exile was punishment, it was grace on the part of God to attempt to invite His people to repent and return to Him.

Isaiah is often referred to as the "Fifth Gospel" because of its content.

- I Chapter 40 begins with the words: Comfort My people, says Your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and proclaim to her that her warfare has ended, that her iniquity has been removed...
- II Isaiah was led by the Holy Spirit to declare to God's people that He would speak comfort or tenderness to His people – a phrase that possesses the sense of a man wooing a woman, inviting her back into a relationship.
  - A Isaiah as preacher was to make known to them that their battle, their conflict, struggle, and hardship would be terminated.
  - B Her suffering in the Babylonian captivity far away from Israel was sufficient.
  - C And note well that although they had been apostate, God continued to refer to them as "My people."
  - D Moreover, His forgiveness and restoration of the remnant of His people was an act of divine mercy excluding any merit or worthiness on their part.
- III Now, turning to our reading, I will read verses 27 and 28 from *The Message*: **Why would you ever complain, O Jacob, or, whine, Israel, saying, "God has lost track of me. He does not care what happens to me?"**

**Do you not know anything? Have you not been listening? He is Creator of all you can see or imagine.**

**He does not become tired, does not pause to catch His breath, and He knows everything, inside and out.**

- A The people had lost hope in the Lord – perhaps because of their suffering.
- B Far from being disinterested or lacking power to reverse their troubles, God was already acting in their behalf.
- C Their deliverance may have been in the future, but it was assured.
- IV How different are we from the people of Israel in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century before Christ?
- A Do we ever complain or whine concerning our circumstances?
- B Do we ever doubt God’s steadfast love?
- C Have we now and again questioned God’s goodness, Presence, or interest in us?
- D The questions are for each of us to answer but I suspect each of us has experienced these feelings.
- V But the Spirit gave Isaiah the answer to our questionings:  
<sup>29</sup> **He gives strength to those who are tired;  
to the ones who lack power, he gives renewed energy.**  
<sup>30</sup> **Even youths get tired and weary;  
strong young men clumsily stumble.**  
<sup>31</sup> **But those who wait for the LORD find renewed strength;  
they rise up as if they had eagles’ wings,  
they run without growing weary,  
they walk without getting tired. (Isa 40:29-31 NET)**
- VI This is a message of grace to those of us who are ready to give up and quit: encouragement for the fearful and weak.
- VII God desires that we wait hopefully.
- A Where verse 31 indicates those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength, the words wait and hope are derived from the same Hebrew verb.
- B We are to wait upon the Lord with hope – with faith in a loving God who does not abandon His chosen ones.
- VIII Those who wait for the Lord shall mount up with wings like eagles ...
- A Every day the eagle preens himself, breathing upon his feathers because over the night they become matted and stuck to each other.
- B And every day the eagle secretes a liquid from a gland in his mouth that waterproofs his wings so he can fly through storms.

- IX God has given us the means of grace: the Word and the Sacraments – to enable us to fly through the storms of life.
- X The Holy Wind of the Spirit lifts us through these means of grace that we may fly above the tempests that come to everyone who draws breath upon this earth.
- XI Earlier I remarked that what Isaiah was saying to Israel was: your suffering was sufficient.
- A The New Testament component is that the suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the Cross, the shedding of His Blood, and His triumph over death was sufficient – for us.
- B And the Holy Spirit calls us through the Gospel of Jesus Christ to return to God the Father to find healing, forgiveness, and renewed strength for life in this world as it is.
- XII Jesus said: **I have told you these things that in Me you may have peace. In this world, you will have troubles. But, take courage: I have overcome the world!**