

God,
Creator and Sustainer

Proper 1
(3rd before Lent)

Mark 1. 29 - 39
Isaiah 40. 21 - 31

Isaiah 40, especially this second half of the chapter, is one of my favourite passages of scripture.

Some years ago - I was in hospital - at death's door facing brain surgery that could leave me dead - or if I survived, maybe a vegetable.

As it happens - I was healed -

God spared me the surgeon's knife - that's another story

While I was in hospital, my brain damage caused me photophobia - light hurt my eyes and I was given a private room of my own - such as people pay good money for at a private hospital.

During my stay there I could listen to tapes (before CD's) and I could read.

I read a book called "On Eagles' Wings" by Betty Pulkingham or someone like that.

It was about Isaiah 40 - and waiting on God and soaring to the heavenly places.

For me it meant that for a while I was not at death's door, but at Heaven's gate.

And that time was very important for me.

I could have died, but God sent me back with a task. Part of that task, is to be here today, with you.

But first of all, very briefly back to Mark's Gospel

In Mark 1 we had the example of Jesus who needed to go off somewhere quiet to pray.

He went somewhere on his own at the start of the day (getting up before it was light)

All sorts of other interesting little details in the story.

Peter's mother-in-law - he was married.
Roman Catholics note - the first Pope was married!

The Sabbath practice of not going out until the Sabbath was over - after sunset.

Jesus' practice of preaching and driving out demons as if it were normal - all part of a day's work.

Moving on to work somewhere else even though people were still looking for him there because it was what he heard from his Father in prayer.

And this is his first day's work - in Mark's gospel.
Jesus doesn't hang about!

Now Isaiah 40. 21

Isaiah addresses his hearers as if they are stupid.
What he has to say seems obvious to him
but they don't seem to be aware of it.

verse 20

*Do you not know?
Have you not heard?
Has it not been told you from the beginning?
Have you not understood
since the earth was founded?*

*He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth,
and its people are like grasshoppers.*

...

verse 28

*Do you not know?
have you not heard?
The Lord is the everlasting God
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He will not grow tired or weary
and his understanding no-one can fathom.*

This is a big God -
unlike the false gods and idols of the Babylonians.
Their gods are made - he is the Maker.
He reigns over the whole Universe.
Time and space are nothing to him.
He goes on for ever.

4/7 Morning Prayer, 5th February 2012

In a sense this is what you might expect
from a Supreme Being.
But Isaiah has got news for us.

He is not just BIG - beyond our comprehension.

He concerns himself with - even helps -
those grasshoppers, ants - insignificant creatures
called people. Us.

verse 29

*He gives strength to the weary
and increases the power of the weak.
Even youths grow tired and weary
and young men stumble and fall.*

Here it comes. verse 31

*But those who hope in the Lord
will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary;
they will walk and not be faint!*

Is it just me - or do other people get moved by this.

Think about soaring on wings like eagles.

If you watch an eagle soaring - wings outstretched
you will see that he climbs - not by effort.
He doesn't pull himself up to the heights.

He waits around - drifts - until he finds a thermal.
And then the air lifts him - no effort - full of grace.

Isaiah is saying- you don't get lifted to heaven
by working hard at godly stuff.

Stop flapping the wings.

You get lifted to heaven - by waiting -
"those who hope in the Lord".

You don't have to work at worship
you have to give it time. It is a sacrifice.

You have to spend that time waiting on the Lord.
But you haven't got to work.

Find the thermal.

Find the place that works for you
a quiet place with no distractions.

Find what warms the air for you
maybe a particular style of music - play a CD
maybe walking in the park - reflecting on nature - on creation
go for the walk.

Maybe reading the Psalms -
or meditating on another part of Scripture

It could be Sunday morning in church.

Find the time, the place, the style, that works for you.
And go there. Regularly.

Hope in the Lord. Put your faith in his promises. Trust him.
And you will soar on wings like eagles.

It is a promise.

There are things that stop us from receiving that promise.

Maybe you don't trust God.

You have forgotten that he sits enthroned
above the circle of the earth.

Come back to Isaiah 40 often.

Read the Psalms often.

Look in the gospels and read about a God
who uses creation power, resurrection power,
to touch and heal people's lives.

Maybe you bring your agenda to God.

You are so fussed with things that trouble you
that you don't allow God to do his thing.

Don't start your worship by focussing on your troubles.

Start by focussing on God's glory.

And do not hurry away.

Spend time basking

in the warmth and the light of the glory of God.

Maybe you are watching the clock.

Sort out your priorities - and make time for God.

Give God the time and the space to do his big thing.

It might mean making a list of how you spend your time.

To make more time for one thing

you have to reduce the time you spend on something else.

Maybe something has to go.

Don't dishonour God by switching him off when his time is up.

Isaiah tells us - and Mark reminds us
that we need to spend quality time with God.

God made the day a certain length.
24 hours and 7 days a week.
not the new decimal day with 25 hours
and ten days a week,

We have enough time to work rest and play.
We have enough time to cease our toil
and walk with God in the garden.

Very simply, if you are too busy to spend time with God
then you are too busy. Full Stop.

These are the Maker's instructions.
Isaiah 40. 31

*But those who hope in the Lord
will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary;
they will walk and not be faint!*

Try him and see.

He is faithful.

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Setting the Scene

Who has needed a torch - you find one
but before long, the batteries fade and the light goes out.
What do you do with the batteries?
Throw them away? - recycle them? - re-charge them?

Or adults - you get into your car on a cold dark morning
you turn the key to start it and it goes (flat battery sound)
What is the problem? Flat battery.
What do you do? Eventually - charge the battery.

Or a Christmas toy - and the battery runs down ...

Now more important - not a tired battery -
but a tired person.

Has anyone here ever got so tired
you just have to stop.
How do you re-charge people's batteries? Sleep - rest

Sometimes we need to re-charge our spiritual batteries.
Perhaps you have been working hard for Jesus
maybe for days - weeks - months - years
and you get to the point where you feel
"I can't go on!" It feels like God has left you.

How do you re-charge those batteries?

That was our story about Jesus today.

Remember last week - in the synagogue teaching -
and the man who interrupted?

S2/3 Morning Prayer, 5th February 2012

After church Jesus went home with Simon and Andrew.
Simon's mother-in-law was ill in bed.
Jesus healed her. And she got up and made a meal.

It was the Sabbath - like our Sunday.
People weren't supposed to travel far
except to go to church.
But when the sun went down - it was tomorrow.
And lots of people came out - found Jesus -
and they were ill - lame, blind, deaf, demon-possessed.

Jesus healed every one. The whole town was there.
It was like one of those healing services
that never seems to stop - goes on for ever.
People didn't want to go home.

Jesus was tired. Physically tired - and spiritually tired.

So Jesus got some sleep - and then - early in the morning
he got up and went to find a quiet place
to be alone with his Father in heaven.
He went off to pray.

That's how Jesus re-charged his spiritual batteries -
he spent time with God - he prayed.

God spoke to him, because when his disciples found him
he said - we are moving on -
to do the same thing somewhere else.

And he travelled all round the area
preaching and driving our demons.

S3/3 Morning Prayer, 5th February 2012

That is what we are looking at today -
Jesus got tired - his disciples got tired - we get tired.

Sometimes physically, sometimes spiritually.

But God can give us strength -
if we go to him and spend time with him.

Worship - prayer - waiting on God.

More later//

Birthdays and presentations

Testimony time
Collection