

Eagle-wings: Isaiah 40.27-41.7

Today's TFTD comes from Anna:

Isa 40-27-31 (Message translation)

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”?

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.

He energizes those who get tired,

gives fresh strength to dropouts.

For even young people tire and drop out,

young folk in their prime stumble and fall.

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 is a really long book! The first 39 chapters are not easy to read.

Isaiah was not a popular guy because his message from God was one of

judgement, he told the people of Israel that they must return to God and

repent for how they had forgotten God. He was a prophet for a long time,

during the reign of many different kings but the message remained the

same. That is, until chapter 40. In chapter 40 we read about what happens

when they do return and when they do repent. They will be renewed. The second half of the book tells of what will happen after the exile when they will be allowed to return, it tells of a suffering servant who will come to save them and it tells of the hope of a future kingdom of God.

This passage at the end of chapter 40, would have given hope to the first hearers, hope that God hasn't forgotten about them in their troubles and it can give hope to us as we read it, hope that God hasn't forgotten us in our troubles either.

It begins by asking a question. A question I bet we have all asked at one point or another. Does God even care what is happening to me? Aren't I too small, too insignificant for God to bother about? It doesn't feel like God is caring about me right now!

But then it promises that God hasn't forgotten, or lost track of us. It says God doesn't need to stop for a rest as we do; he doesn't need to re-charge his batteries. He is constant. He cares for us and wants us to be renewed.

However, we are always trying to do things in our own strength, we think we can manage, but we forget that even the youngest and fittest can't keep going like God can. We all get tired, overwhelmed and scared.

The hope in this passage is that those who "wait on the Lord will get fresh strength. They spread their wings and soar like eagles,". The image of an eagle soaring is a great one. They don't flap their wings they just lock them and wait for the thermals to lift them up into the air. They can soar like that for ages, they don't get tired because they are letting the air do all the hard work for them. Isaiah's prophecy from God is suggesting that if we would only stop trying to flap all the time and just let God carry us, we will be ok.

This is one of the paradox-up-side-down parts of God's kingdom, the less we do and the more we give to God the better our lives will be. God is asking us - can we stop trying to control what we can't? Can we give to God the worries we are carrying that aren't ours to carry, the ones that are Gods? And can we leave them with him and trust he hasn't forgotten us? Can we stop all the needless flapping and just soar on the thermals for a bit?

That is an amazing gift! God wants to carry us. However, as with all images, the image of an eagle can give us a mistaken impression; the eagle has an easy time soaring around, looking majestic, the image can make life sound too easy. It can make it sound like we don't have to do anything or that we won't have any problems. We know, deep down, that isn't true but sometimes we can think because life isn't easy, I must be doing something wrong- I am not trusting God enough.

But that souring image is balanced by the last line in the chapter. *"They run and don't get tired, they walk and don't lag behind."* We still have to walk and run, the eagle still has to fly. God is promising to give us fresh strength to keep going.

He doesn't promise that life will have no troubles but he promises that he hasn't forgotten us, he cares for us and he gives us the strength to keep going through it. Jesus said *"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."* Matt 11:28-30. The promise is rest and an easier, lighter burden.

The burden becomes a little lighter just by knowing that God hasn't forgotten us, that he cares and hears our worries and pains. The burden becomes lighter knowing that we are not in this alone, that God is with us and is carrying the burden too; and we can see hope for the future when we trust that God has an eye on the big picture and has it under control.

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