

Sermon Isaiah 40 21 31 5th Sunday after Epiphany Series B

Sermon: 5th Sunday after Epiphany

Text: Isaiah 40:21-31 (vv.29-31)

Theme: Strength from God

Goal: That the hearer would be encouraged by God's promise to put his hope only in God

Dear Friends,

Introduction: Do you sometimes feel tired and weary? I do... sometimes. A famous cardiologist wrote about his father's complain: 'I am so tired...' (The father was 92 years old). The cardiologist replied: You are not tired; you are old!

Our text has God's promise: "Those who hope in the Lord renew their strength."

I – Physically and psychologically

We all pass through several stages in our lives. The little baby is totally dependent, in spite of the energy and strength it has. The children have lots of energy and they run up and down; but it's difficult to use their strength for doing some work. The teenager begins to become independent and to direct his strength to his own interest. The young adult is very active and full of energy and he thinks he manages his own life by him/herself. The middle age begins to slow down. The 'golden age' is not that golden as some people say, and pain and weakness limit several normal activities. And the time comes when we become dependent again, tired and weary.

Sport, exercises, gym give more energy and help to postpone the time of dependence. But even so, in any stage of our life from time to time we feel tired and weary. Is there any support that can help us? I am not talking just about physical tiredness. You feel tired and

weariness, and you don't know why... Sometimes it seems that God has forgotten you...

God invites us to consider His mighty wonders. By a set of questions, He presents Himself as the Almighty God, maker of heaven and earth. When we are tired and weary, He says: “Lift your eyes and look to the heaven: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name.” When Abraham was becoming weary of waiting for God's promise, the Lord came to him and said: “Look up at the heavens and count the stars – if indeed you can count them” (Genesis 15:5). It was a way to renew God's promise and Abraham's hope.

It was full moon last week. We enjoyed looking at the moon and identifying the Southern Cross and other stars. God invites us to look at the stars to remember that He knows each of them by name. How much more does God know our name and how much does He take care of us? as Jesus said: “Are you not much more valuable than they?” (Matthew 6:26). He knows us by name because we were baptized in His name and He wrote our name in His Book of Life! *God knows every star, every mote of dust, every barren asteroid. His mind does not get overwhelmed like ours do when he considers the vast array of people and things in this universe. He can hold it all in his mind. He has you in mind right now and every moment of every day.* (Phil, 5th Epiphany).

When you grow weary, confess the Apostle's Creed and think about our God. “The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.” Luther recommended to confess the Creed every morning besides the Morning Prayer and the Lord's Prayer. It helps to see that we are not alone; that we can “cast all our anxiety on Him because He cares for us” (1 Peter 5:7); and it helps to see that there is something much more important than food, health and wealth. The

Almighty God is with us and promises: “Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.” - God said to Apostle Paul in a very difficult situation he was facing: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

II - Spiritually

But there is another reason which causes tiredness and weariness. It is sin. Not confessed sins cause a deep feeling of weariness and can lead to depression. After David had sinned, he confessed in Psalm 32: “When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my **strength** was sapped as in the heat of summer. - Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD”-- and you forgave the guilt of my sin... Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found;... Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding ... Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!”

David is a good example of someone who was “tired and weary” because of his sins and God restored his strength through forgiveness and promises. Jesus made this process of restoration very clear when He preached repentance and faith; and He called it “Good News”. And Paul wrote based on his own experience what it means to be renewed by God. The word ‘renew’ literally means “exchange’. *The Hebrew for this verb is used for changes of clothes* (CSSB 1075). You take off your dirty clothes and put on new clothes given by God. Before you put on the new clothes, you are washed in the water of the Holy Baptism, who is renewed every day through the forgiveness of sins. Paul stresses this several times in his letters when he recommends: “Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus” (Romans 13:14).

III – Hope

I have personally never been a strong guy. I didn't like sport during my youth and I was what is called "a book worm". Even though I am "hyper active" (as my wife calls me), I become physically tired very easily and I know my limits and the time to go to bed. Therefore, my hope in this promise of God is that God gives me the necessary strength I need every day for my task in His Kingdom. He never failed. When I look back to what He allowed me to realize during my 42 years of ministry, sometimes I cannot believe it. It was many times beyond my own strength. I can only praise Him and say with the apostles when they came back from the 1st Missionary Trip: "They reported all that **God** had done through them and how He opened the door of faith to the Gentiles" (Acts 14:27).

Above all, the hope in the life without any pain or mourning or death or crying gives the strength each of us needs to support the weakness of this present life; because God Himself will be with us and will be our God. He will wipe every tear from our eyes (Revelation 21:3,4).

Conclusion: As in many psalms of praise, Isaiah stresses in this text the goodness of God after describing His majesty as the maker of heaven and earth. Such a God is able to deliver and restore His distressed people if they will wait in faith for Him to act. They are to trust in Him and draw strength from Him... Their weakness will give way to God's strength. (CSSB 1075). God is the great re-maker and re-shaper of hearts and minds, giving new vision, connecting us in Jesus to a love which transcends our understanding. There is no problem bigger than God's solution, there is no sinner bigger than God's forgiveness, there is no hurt whose tears He will not wash away. (Phil, 5th Epiphany). "Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength."

Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle, Cape Town, 08 February 2015