

They Who Wait for the LORD Shall Renew Their Strength

INTRO:

Me: Ran the half-marathon last weekend. Halfway through you eat this energy gel. It's got all kinds of good stuff, like electrolytes, sugar, caffeine...They are really helpful.

We: We need boosts like that throughout the day, throughout the week. Life is demanding.

- We drink coffee or energy drinks. So many energy drinks out there now. BUT...those are temporary. And they don't always work well.
- I still got cramps up the back of my right leg. I was at mile 9 when I first had to stop to walk and stretch my leg. 4 more miles. Now, that's not a lot compared to what I had done, but I was in my head..."How am I going to finish this thing?" I'm glad Matt was there to help me and walk with me. And keep me going. At least that time...
- A few years before, I tried to run the whole marathon by myself and on my final long run of training, I hurt my foot so bad that I could barely walk. I couldn't run it at all.
- There are just some things we aren't able to do. We have limits. We can only control so much. People we rely on get sick, weather changes, we get injured, we don't have the resources.
- Yet, this life is so demanding of us. And there's so much to do. And there's so many things we want to do. And yet...we can't do it all and it's frustrating. And we get overwhelmed. And we get depressed. And we get anxious. And we want to keep going. But we also want to give up. We start to lose hope. And without hope, life becomes very difficult...

Well, what does God have to say to us in our hopelessness and weakness and hurried life?

Isaiah 40: background and where are we?

Let's Read our passage this morning, ISAIAH 40:27-31.

What God is calling Israel to see, and us this morning is right there in **verse 31**...

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There are three sections to this passage. And just a fair warning, we're going to spend most of our time in the last section, ok?

1. Our Hopelessness: Where Is Our God? (40:27)

- Theological question: Does God see me? Can He see me?
- Personal question: If He does see me, does God care about me?
- The lie beneath all lies of the enemy: God doesn't love you. (see Gen. 3)
- Isaiah sees these questions as irrational. They don't make sense...don't you know who God is???

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2. God's Greatness: Who Is Our God? (40:28)

- **God is the Eternal God**, who has always and will always, exist. He is self-existent. He needs no one and will outlast everyone.
- **God is the Creator** and Ruler of all the Earth. There is not a place on this Earth where God is not in control and King.
- **God is All-Powerful**. He never slows down, gets exhausted, or gives up.
- **God is All Wise**. He doesn't just know everything. He knows how to best use that knowledge too.
- He has not disappeared. He has not lost sight of them, He is not defeated or too weak to act, He is not being outsmarted or outmaneuvered. Everything is going His way, according to plan.

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3. Our Hope: How Great Is Our God! (40:29-31)

- He gives power to the faint, strength to those with no might. Here His greatness and His compassion are displayed. They are never working separately from one another.
 - To those tired and exhausted, who feel like giving up and giving in, to those who are ready to tap out because they have nothing more to give - the One with limitless power supplies you with enough to keep going.
 - Not just the extraordinary but the ordinary need of every day.
 - Not just the missionary or the pastor, but the mom whose exhausted, the husband who wants to love his wife well, the employee who wants to honor their boss, the single person striving for purity...we all need strength
- What you and I are to do in the meantime is...wait?

- What is waiting? It's not a one-time act but an active posture. For instance, Christmas is coming up. As soon as Halloween is over, Christmas music will start blaring. The ads are already on TV.
 - But we don't just sit at home until December 25th, right? No! We have jobs, we have school. We go about our lives. However, the next two months ARE filled with activities directly connected to Christmas, aren't they? You watch more Christmas movies, maybe put lights up, put the tree up. Maybe get an Advent calendar. We make plans for meals or to go see family. Knowing that day is coming means not only do we need to wait for it (We can't change the date of Christmas, no matter how hard we want it to come sooner), but also how we wait. We prepare ourselves for it.
 - That is what it is like to wait for the LORD. We go about our lives, but we go about them with this realization that God is there. He is real. And He is really, truly for me and with me. Now, there is a difference in that with Christmas we know the date...but with God's timing, we are rarely let in on WHEN He's going to act mightily.
 - I mean think of Israel, God promised them that He'd release them from exile...but He doesn't tell them WHEN. Not once in **chapter 40** does He do that...instead He tells them WHAT He is going to do and WHO He is and HOW He can fulfill such promises but never WHEN. Why does He do that? Because it forces you and I back into the place we were made to be: ***Living dependently on His grace towards us.***
- You see, our temptation is NOT just to depend on ourselves too much. Our temptation is to live as if God doesn't even exist. As if none of the promises He made to us were true OR as if His grace really isn't enough. We so quickly desert His ways and His word when we get into this place of despair and confusion. Why is that?
- Because our view of God is so small. Israel was worried that God had overlooked them, and the truth is: they had overlooked their God. And so do you and I. Listen to all the wonderful descriptions of our God in Isaiah 40.
 - God is the Eternal Creator and Ruler of the Earth, He is All-Powerful, and All-Knowing and All-Wise.
 - God is merciful to His people, He is present with His people, He fights for His people, and He secures His people in His arms.

- He is for His people, giving them strength in their weakness, lifting them out of their slavery into new life, giving them His very life.
- Now, what would happen to your fears and your worries if you believed all of that about God? Like, not just in your head but here, in your heart?
 - That you are seen by Him, you are loved by Him, and He is good.
 - He has your life in His hands. He knows what He's doing, even if you don't.
 - He is able to do all that He pleases, for your good and for His glory.
 - He will strengthen you to endure every hardship. And you will come out the other side of every painful situation better off than when you entered it.
- How do we know this, because you are wrapped up in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. By His own will and desire, He gave His life for you. And it wasn't easy to face the cross. But He willingly chose to do it. He willingly chose to trust His Father's will and keep taking the next step of obedience. Listen to his prayer the night of His arrest:

Luke 22:41–44

[41] And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, [42] saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." [43] And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. [44] And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. (ESV)

Jesus needed to be strengthened just like you and I do. And we see here an example of how to access that strength through humble, submissive, and dependent prayer. But we also see how this kind of prayer is even effective to begin with...because Jesus was strengthened in His hour of weakness to endure the cross for sinners like you and I; sinners like you and I can now find strength in our hour of need to endure whatever comes our way.

The apostle Paul gives us an example of this from his own life. In **2 Corinthians 12**, he writes about this "thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan..." we don't know more about it than that...but it was bad enough that Paul prayed over and over and over again for God to take it away. But He never did. Instead, Jesus told him, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." On hearing that, Paul's resolve changed, "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

It's in the place where we must depend on God that He is seen as most glorious, where His grace is experienced and made most real. Don't run from those? Don't try to fix it all on your own? Turn to Him. Wait on Him. Living with expectancy. God is for you. **They Who Wait for the LORD Shall Renew Their Strength**

So, this morning:

- Are there situations that are a struggle for this morning? How have you sought God in them? What if you took this time to do that?
- Do you feel like God is overlooking you?
 - Meditate on these verses this morning. What do you need to truly believe about God this morning? Right it down, put it in your phone. Set a reminder. Think on it and pray over it.
- How can these verses form our community?
 - Vision Night - being a church strengthened by God in this community.
- How can we be a ray of hope to those in our small worlds?