

Are You Growing Faint?
Isaiah 40:21-31
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
February 7, 2021
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So, friends, how are you?

How are you really?

I'm not sure we ask each other that question often enough. We have spent a lifetime saying, "Hello, how are you?" as we walk past each other barely in the same space long enough to hear the obligatory, "I'm fine."

Maybe we've gotten better at asking and listening this last year. After all, it's been a year when it has been more difficult to pretend our way through the day. So, maybe we've gotten better. Or maybe we haven't. Maybe now we just assume that everyone is tired, is lonely, is Zoomed out...and so many we don't listen any better now.

As Laura reminded us in the children's moment, the scripture today comes from a time when the people were in exile. In many ways that is very different from our experience. While they'd been taken from their homes, we have been told to stay in ours. While theirs was a political exile, ours is a limitation put in place by the power of a virus.

And yet there are many things that feel similar. It is more difficult in both cases to feel like we have any control over what's going on. There is much loneliness even as we adjust to the current routine. There is much wondering about how long things will remain this way and whether or not we should just suck it up and commit to this as our new way of life.

And, in our scripture reading it is clear that the people are not only wondering about their circumstances, but wondering about God as well. "Does God even see us anymore?" they seem to ask.

Some days we may have the same question. And this isn't just in the midst of pandemic.

A job is lost...a loved one dies too young...a doctor speaks words of diagnosis we never dreamt we would hear...a dream disappears...in so many circumstances we are left wondering. We are left questioning. And in the midst of this sometimes we feel left by God.

So, Isaiah's words come to us as well.

And did you hear the refrain of these verses as Dale read them for us? Twice in our reading today, the prophet says, "Have you not known? Have you not heard?" In other

words, the prophet calls us back to our faith, to the stories that remind us not only who we are and who God is, but the stories that remind us *whose* we are...that we belong to a faithful and loving God.

The prophet reminds us that we can rely on God. And this isn't some catchy slogan. This isn't a platitude embroidered on a pillow. But, the invitation is to remember who God was and is and continues to be and to let that God buoy us up when nothing else can hold us.

Have you not known? Have you not heard? Ours is a faithful God who is a constant companion in the midst of all things.

Have you not known? Have you not heard? Ours is a God who wants the best for each and every one of us.

Have you not known? Have you not heard? Ours is a God who keeps calling us back and welcoming us home no matter how many times we have wandered away.

Have you not known? Have you not heard? Ours is a God who doesn't wear out or give up or let go. Ours is a God who has enough to share and who will sustain us with divine power when we can't find the power to sustain ourselves.

This doesn't mean that life will always be easy. Friends, the Israelites were hearing these words from exile, having watched their city and their temple be destroyed. We, too, even the fortunate among us, know what it is for the unfair to happen. We know that the struggles of this life are real.

So, if not saving us from hardship, then what is the promise?

The promise of our faith is that God is always present. Whether it is COVID exhaustion that has you down or the hard work of living authentically, whether it is addressing what seem like never ending issues like racism or personal grief and loss, whatever has worn you out and stripped you of your energy to move forward, God is with you.

So, we are invited to lean into the presence of God...to allow God to give us strength or sometimes to simply be our strength. We are invited to experience God whether in that still, small voice or in the presence of others who care for us tenderly when we need it most. We are invited to remember that we are not on this journey alone, but that we are surrounded by the love of God and a great cloud of witnesses who offer us strength when we just can't find it.

Friends, have you grown weary? Do you feel faint? God is with you...and it is okay to lean in.

I'm going to invite us as we worship to pause and to hear again these words from Isaiah, to really let them sink into our being. So, I invite you to sit comfortably...perhaps to close your eyes...to let these words sweep over you and fill you.

Don't you know? Haven't you heard? Wasn't it announced to you from the beginning? Haven't you understood since the earth was founded? Why do you say, Jacob, and declare, Israel, "My way is hidden from the Lord, my God ignores my predicament"? Don't you know? Haven't you heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth. God doesn't grow tired or weary. God's understanding is beyond human reach, giving power to the tired and reviving the exhausted. Youths will become tired and weary, young men will certainly stumble; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength; they will fly up on wings like eagles; they will run and not be tired; they will walk and not be weary (Isaiah 40:21, 27-31, CEB).

Friends, this is God's invitation to us...to lean in to God's power and strength...to let God renew and revive us. This life can most certainly be wearying, but we do not do this alone. Amen.