

Precis of sermon by Dr. Das Sydney Island Baptist Church, Kitchener August 12, 2018

Sermon title: Strength in God's Presence

Dr. Sydney began his sermon by illustrating how we learn early in life that the world can be a dangerous place. Many famous individuals have underscored that is so in their writings and poetry. When the Israelites were in captivity in Babylon surrounded by Babylonian gods they felt God had failed to help them. But Isaiah challenged them saying: "Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. Can there be anyone more powerful?"

God does not grow weary and he can give strength to the weak and powerless. "Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint (Isaiah 40:25 – 31).

These words have sustained many famous individuals in their moments of crisis, including Martin Luther when he was being held in the fortress at Wartburg and the American abolitionist John Brown. These individuals had the deep conviction that God was in charge. However, to many people, Isaiah's words may not ring true. They may even seem to have been written in the wrong order.

There are times in life when we do feel we are soaring as Jesus might have felt as he rode the donkey into Jerusalem and the crowds shouted "Hosanna to the son of David" or when Peter James and John witnessed the transfiguration. But we can wait on the Lord and waiting begins with asking what is God's purpose for me at this stage of my life. By waiting on the Lord, we can discover what is pleasing to God and find the resources to do his purpose.

Over the time, we may reach the point when we can "barely walk" and it is at that point that the greatest power available from God is simply to hang in. Isaiah says "they who wait on the Lord will renew their strength" but what does it mean to "wait". The root word of wait means rope so waiting is like holding on to a rope until God's answer comes. When we allow God to become part of whatever it is that is troubling us, we may experience the voice of God's Spirit, changing our thinking. This is the process of discernment and it does not come quickly.

So how do we wait on the Lord? Begin was a simple and honest plaintive prayer for help, practice contemplative prayer, read Scripture deeply and imagine what it would be like to stand in the stories from Scripture. Keep a journal or write a diary and pray for the things that have been written down. Then remember again the words of the prophet

"those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,

they shall mount up with wings like eagles,

they shall run and not be weary,

they shall walk and not faint”

Precis for Facebook

The road of life can be very rough and we never know when pain, suffering or dark days will descend on us. When the Israelites were in captivity in Babylon, they felt abandoned by God but Isaiah reminded them that the Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. What can sustain the person in the midst of troubles is the deep conviction that God is in charge. We can “wait” on the Lord to renew our strength. Waiting can begin with a simple and honest prayer asking for help. We can read Scripture deeply imagining ourselves in the biblical stories. We can keep a diary and pray over the things that we write there. All of these things, we can do while waiting on the Lord who will renew our strength, so that we can” mount up with wings like eagles, run and not be weary and walk and not faint”.