

A Few Thoughts on Isaiah 40: 31

Remember the King James Version.

“But those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.
They shall mount up on wings as eagles
They shall run and not grow weary.
They shall walk and not faint.”

Those who ‘wait upon the Lord’ or who ‘wait for God,’ in today’s language are making time for the Mystery in the midst of life. They are taking time to engage Divine Presence. We do this through what we call prayer or meditation or contemplation or heartfelnness or mindfulness.

We make time for the Mystery by creating an inner space to ponder or listen or feel deeply about people, situations or events.

We take time for the Mystery by holding up those in crisis to the light and love of Divine Presence.

We make time for the Mystery by entertaining deep heartfelt concerns for the well-being of the world. (Yes even our concerns can be prayers.)

But here is the thing, whether taking time or making time we must open up our own heart to the Mystery in the midst of life and allow the Mystery to deal with us, with our worries, blocks or concerns. Good intentions must be transformed into actions. The passive must become active. Heartfelnness must become an outpouring of good works.

Application for Today

When we Make time, take time for the Mystery in the midst of life:

When we allow the Mystery to move in us, have its way with us,

we feel our strength, our resolve, our energy renewed and we are inspired, lifted up for action.

Mark 1: 29-34

Jesus’ First Sabbath Day on the Job

Last Sunday we looked at Jesus’ ‘first Sabbath Day on the job.’ Jesus taught in the Synagogue that God’s New Day is dawning in him and through him. Jesus also suggested that God’s New Day can dawn in the lives of those who embrace this good news. God’s New Day can dawn in us and through us. But then he has to deal with the fearful, resistant, unhelpful spirit. So, Jesus models the way to handle the resistance to the good news, the reaction to the shocking challenges that he offers on his ‘first Sabbath Day on the job.’

Here are the three steps we know from following Jesus, so that God’s New Day would dawn in us and through us.

We sidestep the whining, complaining and resisting, in the face of needed change.

We include a larger vision of who we and others can become and move towards it.

We recognize and offer what is missing and needed in the situation.

Now, after all the challenge and excitement at the Synagogue caused by Jesus' 'first Sabbath Day on the job' we move to Simon and Andrew's house. It's the familiar family gathering after the worship service. We remember those gatherings back when we were small or our children were little, or still living in the area. However on this Sabbath brunch occasion Simon's mother-in-law is sick in bed with a fever.

Now, let's have a reality check here. This so called fever could not have been one of those little bugs that comes and goes. For a woman back then or for a woman today, for that matter, to be sick in bed and unable to rise and serve her guests would mean that she must be near death. Right? Right! This is a serious illness.

Jesus' next action is very serious too. Let me explain. Authority over raving self-interest in the synagogue is one thing. After all, the synagogue was the liberalizing response to the Temple Tradition. It certainly wasn't the religious establishment. However, physical healing was another matter altogether. Healing belonged to the Temple. Healing only happened through the Temple. Healing was restricted to those who could afford the Temple sacrifices. Healing was an upper class priestly preserve. Healing in the home was totally out of bounds. The priests were trained in recognizing various illnesses and skin disorders so as to pronounce people clean or unclean. Once the diagnosis was made, the requisite tithes, burnt offerings and prayers would then be prescribed. Healing belonged to the Temple tradition, the priesthood and religious establishment. To heal in a peasant's home was to bypass the Temple. To heal in a peasant's home, on the Sabbath was to defy the Temple. To heal a woman, on the Sabbath, in a peasant's home was simply unthinkable. Nevertheless, Jesus sidesteps the monopolistic control and restriction on healing. He includes the woman in God's grace and compassion, thus restoring her back to community, where she can now participate in the gathering. Jesus goes to the woman, touches her, heals her, includes her and restores her. God's New Day dawns upon her and through her as she now hosts the after worship gathering. Now we might think that this was a very full 'first Sabbath Day on the job.' But no, it doesn't end there. After supper as the sun sets, the day's events pick up even greater intensity. The entire town turns out and requests healing for their sick and troubled and unclean ones who cannot possibly access the Temple tradition. Jesus' response? He continues to sidestep the Temple authority and offer free healing. He continues to include others in God's grace and compassion. He touches, he heals, he frees; he restores them back to participation in the community. Jesus creatively engages the needs before him by offers what is missing and needed in their lives.

Application for Today

As followers of Jesus we know how to sidestep the drama, include other people and offer what is missing and needed. We know about God's New Day dawning in us and through us. Amen.

Mark 1: 35-39

Often this last activity of Jesus' first Sabbath day on the job gets overlooked. We jump from story to story, week in and week out and miss the fact that Jesus usually goes off and prays in between activities. He actually prays a lot more in the gospels than we realize. Prayer connects day one with day two. Early in the wee small hours of the morning Jesus steals away to a quiet place to pray. Yes, even Jesus needs some renewal. Even Jesus needs to take time to pray and make time for God in his life. Jesus has broken all the rules, exposed himself to the authorities, transgressed against the moral strictures. He needs some face time with God. And so in the predawn, Jesus prays. Jesus opens himself up to God. Jesus allows God to deal with him and provide the needed renewal. In the words of the Isaiah, Jesus is lifted up on eagles' wings. The weariness passes. The fear of failure vanishes. He is strengthened, renewed and ready for day two: Day two of working with God. In the predawn quiet, Jesus prays, is rejuvenated and mounts up on eagles' wings to greet the dawning of God's New Day. When the disciples find Jesus, he is ready to take the good news of God's Love in action to other towns: Ready to reach out to other people. Through prayer Jesus receives what he needs to soar in the Spirit. We know the heart felt prayers in our worship services lift us up. We know we can come here and lift up others in prayer. We know prayer includes heartfelt thoughts and intentions. It includes hymns and voices, open hearts and thankful offerings.

The Application for Today:

Through heartfelt prayer we follow the way of Jesus. We mount up on wings like eagles as God's New Day dawns in us and through us. Amen.