

Lent Weariness

Scripture: Isaiah 40: 28-31
Date: March 14, 2021

WEARY

PANDEMIC WEARINESS

It's been about a year since Canada closed down due to Covid 19 and we recognize that it's been a year that has challenged us and a year that has changed us. It's been a year of confusion, chaos and calamity. A year of wanting / waiting / worrying – more than ever before

TEXT – LIFE WEARINESS

The backdrop of Isaiah 40 sees Israel in exile – as slaves / servants – in Babylonia. They are separated from temple / church, they are separated from Jerusalem and their country as a whole and they've possibly been separated from family and friends possibly too. Expectations of a return to normal decrease and anger and frustrations increase.

In the text today – the author affirms this weariness as the word is used four times in the four verses. The Hebrew word used for worry is yaga. It speaks of fatigue – physically, mentally, emotionally and even spiritually. It speaks of a struggle – a striving – but without any success.

The gospel text – Matthew 11 - speaks of a weariness and burdens. Weary as in worn down and wilting, weary as in exhausted and empty and weary as in beaten / battered / bruised / broken. Life is wearing us down and creating a burden that is harder and harder to carry.

The Psalm text speaks of the writer in a dry and parched land where there is no water. A dessert without an oasis – a place in life where there is no sustenance and life is harsh / hard

TODAY – LIFE WEARINESS

Our lives understand a dryness – a parchiness – as Covid has limited much of our regular living. We are missing our routines and our relationships. We're tired of distancing and masking and other protocols that have restricted our 'normal'. We've endured a year of loss, of longing, of loneliness and a growing sense of lament.

We understand striving and struggling unsuccessfully. To try and get ahead or even just make ends meet have left us fatigued and frustrated with our failures. We understand the weariness and burdens that wear us down and out and the feelings of being burned out and broken down by life and our attempts to live it to the fullest.

Shalom is where life is filled and complete and whole but our lives have become empty, and dry and fractured. Water nourishes us and is essential to life. But failure to drink enough water – 3 to 4 litres a day – leaves us dehydrated. Other symptoms are dry skin, headaches and fatigue. Ultimately not being hydrated leads to death.

WILLING

WE SEEK - WATER

In our harsh and hard world suffering is not uncommon – but neither is our response. Those who are weary are seen as wounded and the wounded are seen as weak. And we don't like to be weak. We strive forward even harder behind a façade that all is fine.

But those who are truly weary know better. They know that they can't fix themselves without a greater strength or power because they are completely and unable to remedy the problem on their own. Psalm 63 speaks of that desperation - *O God – MY God - earnestly I seek you / thirst for you - my whole being longs for you*. Psalm 42 echoes that place - *as the deer pants for streams of water - so my soul longs for you*

GOD GIVES – LIFE

These prayers – these hungers – these thirstings – are heard by God because it's in His nature to restore – renew – refresh. Isaiah 40 declares that God IS the everlasting God and that HE is the creator of the ends (all) the earth. Even that if we are fading in our journey of life and faith - HE does not!

Isaiah 40 bookends these words of truths. Verse 1 speaks of encouragement and vs. 31 speaks of empowerment. An empowerment from God that gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.

Those who need refreshing to continue their journey will find it. Psalm 107: 9 speaks of God satisfying the thirsty. Revelation 7: 17 speaks of God leading to springs of living water. John 4: 13 God – Jesus – declaring that HE IS the living water that supports and sustains us through hard times.

These truths of who God is and what God can do are echoed in the calling from God to us. Isaiah 40: 28 asks a redundant question – do you not know / have you not heard? Speaking of the truths of God's offer to the people to find rest and restoration in Him. In Matthew 11 Jesus echoes this invitation to come – to Him – to find rest. To learn from Him, to live with Him and to lean on Him.

WATERED

RESTED – REFRESHED – RESTORED / REFRESHED

God's gift of life rests us in Him. Psalm 23: 3 speaks of lying down in green pastures and by quiet waters. That we would have our souls restored / refreshed. The best vacation / Sabbath we could ever imagine.

Isaiah 40: 31 reminds us that this renewed strength comes from waiting / hoping in the Lord. That hope will find its truth in the strength from God so that we can walk, so that we can run – so that we can soar – like eagles – without fatigue / weariness but rather with purpose, power, passion.

APPLICATION / CONCLUSION

Our Lenten journey is over half way completed but there is still more on this road of life and faith. We continue to move forward with a growing appreciation of Christ's place / role – in us, for us and through us.

We need to stay refreshed – by God's Spirit and through God's scriptures – so that we won't be fatigued or dizzy but will be better able to continue our journey forward. A journey that also empowers us to walk alongside others – helping them see their space of weariness, helping see the willingness of God to strengthen and empower them. In this world and in the world yet to come!

AMEN