

Scripture:

Psalm 91

Isaiah 40:21-31

“Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.”

If we place our hope in God ---- everything will work out.

If we trust in God ----- everything will work out.

If we have faith in God ----- everything will work out.

That essentially is the message of our reading from Isaiah today.

Place your hope ---- trust ----- and faith in God and everything will work out.

God will provide and God will strengthen all who give them selves over to Him and trust in Him.

As verse 31 from Isaiah’s prophecy today begins ----- “Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.”

This is a fitting great message on the day we have our annual congregational meeting.

Trust God --- have faith --- place your hope in Him ----- and He will renew your strength ----- and all will work out just fine --- in accordance with His will.

Remember this in case you have doubts or struggles or feel uncertain about anything later in the annual meeting portion of our worship today --- because these are meant as words of great comfort.

Isaiah’s prophecy today starts out with a bold proclamation of God’s grandeur and magnificence.

Where God is high and mighty and we are small and lowly.

He is there ---- we are here.

He sits enthroned in wonder and beauty and awe --- and we crawl around like insects.

Verse 22 from Isaiah 40 ----- “He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth ---- and its people are like grasshoppers.”

That’s a pretty radical divide ----- He sits enthroned above the earth --- and the people of the earth are like grasshoppers.

And then there are verses 23 and 24 -----

“He brings princes to naught ---- and reduces rulers of this world to nothing. No sooner are they planted --- no sooner are they sown, no sooner do they take root in the ground, than He blows on them and they wither, and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff.”

Princes and rulers are reduced to nothing.

Just as they take root ----- He blows on them and they wither and are swept away.

In other words ---- He is strong and we are weak.

We begin to take root --- and He sweeps us away.

And there’s more.

He plays with the stars ----- while we do far more mundane things.

Verse 26 ---- “he who brings out the starry host one by one and calls forth each one of them by name.”

He is mighty ----- we are lowly.

He created the heavens --- we have crated nothing.

Indeed twice in verses 21 and 28 the prophet calls out ----- “Do we not know”----- and ---- “Have we not heard.”

Isn't it perfectly obvious?

Haven't we heard ---- don't we know.

God is high and lifted up --- mighty ---- enthroned above the earth ----- with  
out equal ----- creator of the heavens --- and stars ----- all the ends of the  
earth.

And then there is us ----- grasshoppers ----- withered plants.

Isaiah seems to be driving home the point that in comparison to God we are  
nothing.

And there is some truth to this ----

He is mighty ---- we are lowly -----

He is awesome and beautiful and powerful ----- and we are well ---- small  
and weak.

But all this talk of big and might God and tiny and wee us --- isn't the  
central thrust of the prophecy.

That's just the preamble.

Yes we are tiny ---- and He is huge.

Yes we are weak --- and He is strong.

Yes we are like little insects ---- grasshoppers as verse 22 says.

Where God is creator of all ---- and we are fashioners of nothing.

But this is all just preamble.

And it's all just preamble ----- because the heart of the message is that yes  
----- God is awesome and powerful --- and we are small and weak -----  
BUT --- and this is the clincher ----- the very same power and awesomeness  
that he displays in creating --- building up and breaking down ----- He also  
uses to care for the weak and the outcast.

The heart of the message is that the wonder and beauty and power and majesty ---- the fullness of life that we see in God ----- is for us too.

God doesn't sit enthroned ---- far off distant ----- ignoring us ---- or lording things over us.

He is at once sovereign ----- and profoundly compassionate.

He is at once sovereign ----- and profoundly compassionate.

He not only wants us to have life ---- like a grasshopper or a plant has life --- -- but He wants us to have life in all its fullness --- life in Christ.

Remember Jesus said in John's gospel chapter 10 verse 10 ---- "I came that they might have life --- and life abundant."

God offers fullness of life in Jesus Christ ---- and our role and response is to accept it --- to accept Christ and fullness of life in Him --- and then share Him.

Our church sign out front says ----- "People are at the heart of God's heart."

"People are at the heart of God's heart."

That would be a faithful way of summing up Isaiah's prophecy today ----- "People are at the heart of God's heart."

God so loved the world --- John's gospel proclaims.

God does so love the world.

He so loves the world that yes He sits enthroned as verse 22 from Isaiah says today ----- but He also comes down and helps us soar like eagles --- and run without getting weary ---- and walk and not grow faint.

He comes down and cares for us.

Weak and frail as we are --- He protects us and strengthens us.

Keeping us from the snare of the fowler ----- the terrors of the night and the arrows of the day ---- guarding us from pestilence and plague ----- as Psalm 91 says --- we heard it read earlier.

He cares for us.

And as one commentator I consulted this week said -----“ Isaiah 40 speaks of God’s power and care for the weak and outcast.”

God’s power and care for the weak and outcast.

That’s comforting ----- because aren’t we all a little weak --- and don’t we all kind of feel like an outcast from time to time?

Certainly in a culture that is less and less Christian we can expect to feel a little outcast --- different ----- from time to time.

Precisely because we do things a little differently just as God does.

Bending down and caring for the weak and small ones.

Isaiah’s prophecy is all about God’s power and caring for the weak and fragile.

Not just Isaiah 40 but Isaiah in general.

“The Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor --- bind up the broken hearted --- to proclaim freedom to the captives ----- and so on” --- -- Isaiah proclaims at the beginning of chapter 61.

And of course we later see Jesus live out this exact sentiment ---- “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat --- I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink ---- I was a stranger and you invited me in.” ---- and ---- “whatever you did for the least of these you did for me.” --- near the end of Matthew 25.

Our passage from Isaiah today starts off painting a picture of God as high and mighty ---- almost disconnected --- or least ----- distant from us.

But it quickly moves to God caring for us tenderly and compassionately.

And we come to see that the power and might of God is not something far off ---- or only in the distant past.

Instead the very same power and might that God exercised in creating the universe is also present in his compassionate love for us now.

He is ---- as verse 29 says from Isaiah today --- “The one who gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.”

And we are called to do the exact same things --- strengthen the weary and help the weak.

When we surrender our lives to God we move from smallness and weakness to strong and powerful.

To use the language of Isaiah today --- verse 31  
 “we soar on wings like eagles,  
 we run and not grow weary,  
 we walk and not be faint.”

Isaiah’s prophecy is all about God’s power and God’s care for the weak and the outcast.

Yes we are tiny and weak and powerless and frail ---- where God is huge and strong --- and powerful ---- and durable ----- full of infinite stamina.

But the beauty of God’s power and might ----- comes in the strength of His compassion and care for us --- not in His lording it over us ----- or wasting it by offering great but pointless displays of power ----- or ignoring us and turning a blind eye to our needs.

We matter to God.

God loves us ----- He knows us each by name.

And to put it into context for our annual meeting ----- He knows this church by name.

He looks down on us as a community and knows all that we are doing and trying and living out for Him.

It's not as though He's way up there in heaven and we're way down here lost amidst the shuffle --- a bunch of people in and around Whitby helplessly trying to be Christ without God having any sense of who we are and what we're trying to do for and through Him.

He is intimately aware of all that we are doing.

Gathering to worship.

Gathering to pray.

Gathering to make decisions and be good stewards.

Gathering to practice singing and dancing so that when we offer our gifts up to Him we are offering our very best to Him.

Collecting food and giving it away to those who need it --- caring for the weak and outcast just as we are cared for.

Holding the hearts of those who may not have love and compassion showed to them otherwise.

He is ware of all of this.

He is aware of what we do every time we gather to study His word --- Tuesday nights --- Tuesday afternoons ---- Wednesday mornings --- Wednesday nights --- and all the other times.

He knows what we're trying to do at our Friday bi-weekly community times --- sharing our resources just like the early church did in the book of Acts.

The message of Isaiah is that God is awesome and powerful and sovereign -- -- in a way that no one ---- nor anything else is ----- and that until we surrender to Him ----- we are only ever tiny and weak.

The message of Isaiah is that God is loving and caring and compassionate --- - and in a way that no one ---- nor anything else is ----- and that once we

give ourselves over to Him He cares for us --- and protects and strengthens us.

Such that we soar on wings like eagles ---- run and not grow weary ----- walk but never become faint.

People are at the heart of God's heart.

God cares for us.

And just as God cares for us we are to care for others.

“Those who hope in Him will renew their strength.”

Isaiah drives the point home today that single minded trust in God changes everything.

Half hearted trust ----- “I know better” ---- kind of trust or commitment doesn't cut it.

Partial hope doesn't cut it.

“Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.”

Those who hope and trust and have faith in the Lord --- and totally ---- will renew their strength.

Today is a great day to celebrate this.

Today is a great day to celebrate ----

“Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.”

And it's a great day precisely because our strength here at St. Andrew's is being renewed.

This is a congregation that is growing in strength.

And we're growing in strength why? ---- because we are putting our hope --- ----and trust ---- and faith in God.



We're coming together more often --- Bible studies --- social events ---- youth gatherings.

We're celebrating the sacraments more often --- communion and baptisms.

We're giving more of what we have away in love --- just as Jesus gave away all that He had in love.

We're serving others just as Jesus served others --- our community drop in program ----- and our day to day living.

We're giving ourselves over to God ----- we're placing our hope in Him as Isaiah drives home today.

That's what worship --- that's what life in Christ --- and believe it or not ----- that's what an annual meeting is all about too.

Thanking God --- celebrating God ----- and continuing to give ourselves over to Him as we look back over the past year --- and forward to the next.

“Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.”

My hope is that we will continue to have faith --- and to place our trust --- and hope in God ---- giving ourselves over to Him.

That we might continue to grow --- and be renewed by Him.

So that we can continue to worship Him.

Praise Him.

And invite others into His saving presence.

Sharing the light and love of Christ that everyone who walks through these doors.

And everyone we encounter far outside of these doors ----- might come to know Christ as the light of the world.

As we meet shortly in our hall.

As we live our lives inside and outside of these walls.

May we hope in the one who renews or strength.

The one who lifts us up on wings like eagles ----- guarding our way ---  
guiding our steps.

Jesus Christ.

Amen.