

Be Born In Us Today: Bringing Renewal

Isaiah 40: 25-31 25 To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?" says the Holy One. 26 Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one and calls forth each of them by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing. 27 Why do you complain, Jacob? Why do you say, Israel, "My way is hidden from the Lord; my cause is disregarded by my God"?

28 Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. 29 He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. 30 Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; 31 but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Luke 1: 39-56 39 At that time Mary go ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, 40 where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the child you will bear! 43 But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. 45 Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill His promises to her!"

46 And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, 48 For He has been mindful of the humble state of His servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, 49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me— holy is His name. 50 His mercy extends to those who fear Him, from generation to generation. 51 He has performed mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. 52 He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. 53 He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. 54 He has helped His servant Israel, remembering to be merciful 55 to Abraham and His descendants forever, just as He promised our ancestors."

56 Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.

Many of us have come to love the Christmas carol "O Holy Night." First written in 1843 by French poet Placide Cappeau, the lyrics were translated into English a few years later by American pastor John Sullivan Dwight. The carol's initial

popularity is often traced to its third stanza cherished by those trying to abolish slavery in the United States fighting for the freedom of African-American slaves. Lines from that stanza read:

Truly he taught us to love one another; His law is love and his gospel is peace;
Chains shall he break, for the slave is our brother, And in his name all oppression
shall cease ...” [NOTE 1]

These days the carol may be appreciated for still another reason: its recognition of a very weary world. The carol sings in stanzas 1: “Long lay the world in sin and error pining, ’Till he appeared and the soul felt its worth. A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices, For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn ...” The carol sees a weary world thrilled by the hope of an end to a long and tiring life of unabated “sin and error.”

“O Holy Night” doesn’t stand alone in this recognition of a weary world. Edmund Sears’ “It Came Upon the Midnight Clear,” written in 1849, describes the song of the Christmas angels floating over a **“weary world”** in stanza 2: “Still through the cloven skies they come With peaceful wings unfurled, And still their heav’nly music floats O’er all the weary world ...”

So with a cue from our carols, let me ask you: Are you weary? Are you exhausted? Are you fatigued? Will the song of the angels this Christmas float across a weary you? Do you maybe find yourself “in the middle of in-between,” waiting for resolution or reconciliation or vindication or at least a change—but with none of it in sight? What has you weary? Are you weary of circumstances, your age, your illness, your relationships, your job? In J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Fellowship of the Ring*, the hobbit Bilbo Baggins says to Gandalf: “I am old, Gandalf. I don’t look it, but I am beginning to feel it in my heart of hearts. Well-preserved indeed! Why, I feel all thin, sort of stretched, if you know what I mean: like butter that has been scraped over too much bread. That can’t be right. I need a change, or something.”

Do you feel stretched thin? Are you winded or exhausted from a pace that has you spent, physically and emotionally? Have you just about given up hope that we can solve any of our big problems: the economy, war, sickness, tribalism, racism, immigration? Is it all too much—this marathon our life has become?

There are many ways to go when we are wearied by life. Isaiah counsels that with the Lord's strength we can soar like an eagle. Yet weary people are often difficult people. We can live with despair. We can complain, and we can blame. How does the old proverb go? "It's hard to soar like an eagle when you're surrounded by turkeys." Have you ever seen a turkey fly? It is not pretty.

When we get weary, we may **not** see the needs of those around us or the opportunities right before our eyes. In each of us there is this struggle between weariness and being strong in the Lord. It is one aspect of the saint-and-sinner paradox in every Christian. American poet Carl Sandburg is credited with this introspective thought: "There is an eagle in me that wants to soar, and there is a hippopotamus in me that wants to wallow in the mud." [NOTE 2]

This text from Isaiah is for the wallowing hippo in each of us. "Weary" is all over this text. Isaiah first uses the word to say that God does not faint or grow weary. Now that's good news! The One running the universe, Isaiah says, does not fatigue. You would if you were God. I would if I were God. Thank God we're not God! With all God has to do and to be, you'd expect God would get weary at some point. I mean, God has always been and will be God. That's a long marathon of divine responsibility with some very high expectations.

Isaiah reminds us that God never feels (how did Bilbo say it?) "all thin, sort of stretched, like butter that has been scraped over too much bread." In fact, God, says Isaiah, gives "power to the faint" and increases the strength of those with no strength left. In the long history of God and humanity, God has always been strength for the weary, a second and a third wind for those who are ready to fall.

Do you see what is happening here? Isaiah spoke words of comfort to people weary of the long wait for a Messiah. He spoke to a chosen people who were losing their sense of being chosen. Isaiah's comfort speech was for those who forgot the chapter in their history titled "the Exodus" and those who would spend decades as exiles in a strange land. Today Isaiah's comfort reaches any of us who want to follow Jesus but find ourselves weak and weary. He doesn't bellow like some NFL line coach,

“Lean into it! Dig deep! Try harder! You gotta have pride, Don’t go soft on me now!” Isaiah doesn’t even say, “Be strong!” or “Be courageous!” What Isaiah does do, though, is bring to remembrance the God who has always been there for the weary. “Have you not known?” he asks. “Have you not heard?” To put it another way, “Don’t you remember? Have you forgotten?” Isaiah is a remembrancer. Historically, kings had remembrancers in their court to remind the king of significant past events or commitments, lest the kingdom suffer from forgetting. The good Kings wanted to remember so they didn’t repeat the mistakes of the past! [NOTE 3]

So what we have in our text is a remembrancer speech, a comfort speech, turning us from our weariness to remember a tireless, an all-wise and all-powerful God. Isaiah has us remember who God is and what God is like: “The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength” (verses 28-29).

More than this, though, Isaiah turns us to God, who offers divine strength to Replace our weariness. There is a wonderful exchange here that some of you have experienced personally. The exchange is your weakness for the Lord’s strength.

Isaiah puts it this way: “He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they 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” (verses 29-31).

Who doesn’t want to soar like an eagle? When I was about seven years old, a friend of mine wanted to fly. He was so taken by the idea of flying that he gave it a try from his garage roof, fortunately only about 12 feet off the ground. He fell hard on the alley cement. “Like eagles,” Jesus says. “They shall mount up on wings like eagles.”

The image presents an eagle ascending, well beyond expected boundaries. Eagles do that. They can fly at altitudes of 10,000-15,000 feet. It isn’t a new image, this picture of an ascending eagle. When God brought Israel out of slavery in Egypt, God said, “You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on

eagles' wings and brought you to myself" (Exodus 19:4). **[NOTE 4]**

Isaiah no doubt is doing some remembrancing here. Our God has a history of taking the weary and putting us into eagle-like flight.

For us, on this side of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God has exchanged our long weariness of "sin and error" for a thrilling hope that rejoices in the strength of Christ to overcome sin, death and a very weary world. This is the God we know, the God we trust. **[NOTE 5]**

In one of his letters, the apostle Paul remembered how in his weakest moments, God's strength had come through. "When I am weak," he wrote, "then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:20). That is someone acquainted with the exchange of the Lord's strength for our weariness.

At the front of many churches is a replica of a sculpture done by Bertel Thorvaldsen, titled "Christus Consolator (Christ the Consoler)." The extended hands of the often life-sized Christ figure are scarred by crucifixion nails. Standing before this image of Christ, one can hear the echo of his invitation in Matthew 11:28, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."

Rest for the weary. Strength for the weary. "A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices,

For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn ... " Rejoice in the hope of Christ. Know that He loves you and desires for you a full and meaningful life! Jesus is a thrill of hope when we are weary, when life gets tough, His mercies are new every morning. **[NOTE 6]**

So be encouraged! Take advantage of this offer from our Lord and Savior! Hear Jesus saying to you this morning, "Come to me, all you that are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest!" Let Jesus be Your thrill of hope so you can rejoice. In just a few short weeks we are going to be celebrating God come to earth as a little baby. Surely you can relate to that. Who doesn't like babies? Now how do we share that with others this week? What are you going to do with the gift you have been given this morning? Please grab a pen and write out an "I will ... statement." If you do it now, you won't give the evil one the opportunity to get you too busy or tired to write it down. You see, the evil one wants you to just hear the Word. He doesn't want you to practice it! So

let us take responsibility for our lives, and write down what we will do this week to share the thrill of hope for the weary, so our weary world can rejoice.

So we pray, “Jesus, be born in us today.” May we be strengthened. When we are weak and weary carry us through the valley. May we depend on You, O Lord, and live like we are yours, Your children, with access to you and your boundless resources in the person of the Holy Spirit. We pray in the precious and wonderful name of Jesus Christ ...Amen.

Sermon Notes for “Be Born in Us Today: Bringing Renewal”
based on Isaiah 40: 25-31 and Luke 1: 39-56
given December 4, 2022 in Doster Community Church

- I. Jesus is born in us today so that we can be a blessing to a weary world. Jesus coming to earth brings hope to those who are weary, stressed, “stretched thin”.
- II. God does not faint or grow weary. We tend to give God our human characteristics because we are made in His image. But God does not grow weary. He does not grow impatient with you as you slowly grow toward being more like Jesus.
- III. On this second Sunday of Advent we must remember that we are loved unconditionally and without limit by an all-wise, all-powerful God, the Creator of the universe! He offers to exchange your weakness for His strength!
- IV. Our God has a history of taking the weary and putting us into Eagle-like flight.
- V. Jesus Christ, is for us ... rest for the weary, strength for the weary! Jesus is a thrill of hope for us all. Share that hope! Be renewed and fly on wings like eagles. When you are filled with the Holy Spirit you can run and not be weary, walk and not faint!
- VI. So what are you going to do about it? How can you share this thrill of hope with others this week?