

Midweek Reflection # 3

"Let hope rejoice in a promise"

"But 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 40:31, NRSV

The title comes from a passage in George Adam Smith's late nineteenth-century commentary, The Book of Isaiah, Vol. 2 :

"Let hope rejoice in a promise, which does not go off into the air but leaves you on solid earth; and let us hold on to a [faith] , which, while it exults in being the secret of enthusiasm and the inspiration of heroism, is daring and divine enough to find its climax in the common place."

Smith explains that Isaiah's descending order here is correct. In our faith journeys we have only occasional opportunities to fly like eagles in spiritual joy and delight. More consistently we are called on to face challenges where we need the strength just to keep going, to run through weariness, to walk without fainting, even to simply stay standing in faithfulness to God's purposes.

The promise we are to rejoice in, as I read it, is : those who wait for, hope in, put their trust in God's grace through prayer will find themselves gifted by the Holy Spirit with the strength to endure anything.

"The New Testament writers had a special word for this: 'Hypomene.' It means 'patient endurance', the ability to be poised to do what needed doing even though the going seemed to be against one ~ staying power ~ desperately needed... And that staying power calls on deep spiritual resources, on a deep peace within ourselves."

Thomas Cullinan, OSB, quoted in Peacemaking, Day by Day

Saint Paul echoes this New Testament truth in his charge to Timothy (2 Timothy 3:10-17) : "Continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of" (vs 14). Timothy is encouraged to continue in Paul's own purpose, faith, patience, love and endurance (vs 10).

Jesus uses the contrasting parable of the Persistent Widow (Luke 18:1-8) to encourage his disciples to persist in this kind of 'waiting on God' prayer.

I like to visualize this truth by imagining all three of these "coaches", saiah, Paul and Jesus, quietly cheering for us on the sidelines as we 'compete' on a daily basis in the 'soul olympics' event of freestyle longsuffering! Try this the next time you need patient endurance (sometime later today?): Imagine glancing over to the sidelines for encouragement. Isaiah whispers "Be steadfast!" Paul silently mouths "Continue." Jesus gives you a thumbs-up"and reminds you to "stick the landing on your dismount!"

May your hope rejoice today in this promise: Those who wait on the Lord will renew their strength!

Under God's Mercy,

Howie