

2/4/2018

. “God Will Lift You Up”

Scripture: Isaiah 40:21-31; Psalm 147:1-11,20c; Mark 1:29-39

† **The God of all creation is aware of our lives and needs. God lifts us up from circumstances beyond our control**

God lifts us up from disease and despair, giving strength to the weak and weary, casting out demons from the oppressed, and leading us to share the good news of God’s kingdom.

There are times in all of our lives when we experience pain or hardship, weakness or defeat. Whether it’s from personal suffering or from that of loved ones, we may feel drained of energy, overwhelmed by adversity or just plain tired.

There are times of personal illness or chronic disease or disability.

We might experience heartaches or even heartbreak through the loss of a loved one or a close relationship.

Sometimes you may wonder where God is in all of this.

Even when the troubles we experience are the result of our own shortcomings, mistakes or sin, the Lord desires to extend mercy and kindness, restoration and peace.

The bible declares and reminds us through the proclamation of prophets and the personal witness of others that God is aware of our lives.

† **God cares for each and every one, as well as communities and nations**

The prophet Isaiah declared words of assurance to the captives of Israel and Judah who were exiled in Babylon, because they did not follow God’s ways. The fortieth chapter of his book begins, “***Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. ² Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received double for all her sin.***”

God instructs Isaiah to remind the people that God is creator and ruler of the universe. And, God is mindful of all of his creation. Isaiah declared:

²⁶ *Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.* ²⁷ ***Why do you say, O Jacob, and complain, O 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.*** (Isaiah 40:26-31)

Just as Jesus centuries later reminded his hearers about God's loving oversight and provision for all of creation (Matthew 6:28ff), we are reminded of God's loving care.

Yes, God will lift you up also!

Our attitude should be one of hopeful expectation! Our hearts should be filled with humility and joy! Our voices should be lifted in praise!

As we shared with the Psalmist (Psalm 147:1-11):

***Praise the LORD.** How good it is to sing praises to our God, how pleasant and fitting to praise him.*

The LORD . . . heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name.

Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit.

The LORD sustains the humble. . . .

Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; make music to our God on the harp.

He covers the sky with clouds; he supplies the earth with rain and makes grass grow on the hills. He provides food for the cattle and for the young ravens when they call.

His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse, nor his delight in the legs of a man;

the LORD delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love.

God will gather you with his people as a shepherd his flock. God will heal your broken heart if you let him in. God will bind up your wounds if you let him come near to you and touch you. Just as God gives food for the animals, God will provide for you and your soul. God will lift you up and make you strong again.

But note this, as the Psalmist shares, God does not delight in merely the physical or material state of creation, but God delights in those who revere Him and put their hope in God's unfailing love. You see, God's desire is about relationship.

These are also the things we see found in the Gospel verses from Mark 1:29-39.

Jesus had been teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum on the Sabbath.

“As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her.”

What did Jesus do then?

*“So **he went** to her, **took her hand** and **helped her up**. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.”*

Now it may not be that significant, but notice it doesn't say that he first healed her completely, and then helped her up. He went to her. Took her hand. Helped her up. Then the fever left her. . . . And she waited on them. He restored her to health by first lifting her up.

Jesus lifted up Simon's mother-in-law and healed her.

† **Jesus can lift you up and heal you also**

. . . Perhaps not in just the same way.

. . . Perhaps in even greater ways.

For as the gospel account goes on to say . . .

That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was, and he did not want that fully revealed just yet.

Jesus can drive out the demons that oppress or possess us. . . be they despair, fear, anxiousness or worry. . . be they addiction or compulsion. That is not to say that other therapeutic practices should be avoided. But it is to affirm the tremendous healing power of God!

But let's also remember one more thing . . .

† **Once healed or delivered, we are invited and challenged to share that good news with others.**

We have a ministry of God's love and mercy, power and provision to fulfill.

Mark goes on to record. . .

“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: ‘Everyone is looking for you!’ Jesus replied, ‘Let us go somewhere else – to the nearby villages – so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.’ So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.”

Let me close this morning with what I believe is a great witness of the Holy Spirit at work even today, from some of the Philadelphia Eagles as seen in the following video clip . . .

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6bnEY13vAok&feature=player_embedded

Now that's the kind of talk we need more of inside and out of the locker room. I found it also good as the video goes on to say that while they shared their faith journey, they respect the right of other players to hold their own beliefs as well.

Friends, as you come forward and receive Holy Communion today, **God will lift you up!** And once he does, you may return to your normal responsibilities as Simon's mother in law most likely did. But let us also share the good news and blessing of God's kingdom with others in need, whether through hospitality, hope or healing in some way. And may we give the glory and praise to God! Amen.