

ISAIAH 40:31 (ESV) – “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.”

"Dear children of God who trust and hope in God alone,

Have you noticed that people don't like to wait for much of anything anymore? We want more and more of a drive-thru life, just roll down the window, pick up your order, (whatever that order is) and get on to the next thing. And we want to get to that next thing fast. Who of us likes to wait? Who of us even thinks that waiting might be the best thing? So, most of us, we endure the pain of waiting. We anxiously wait in our traffic jams on the way to work. We endure the ads at the movies, waiting for the feature film to start. We wait our turn, grouching about why it's taking so long.

But we wait anxiously for other things, even more important things, too. We wait for that special person to call. We wait for that job, that needed job opportunity, to appear. We wait for those test results to come back from the doctor. A recent poll by Priority Management, Inc. stated that "In a lifetime, the average American will spend six months sitting at stoplights, eight months opening junk mail, one year looking for misplaced objects, two years unsuccessfully returning phone calls, and five years waiting in line." And worse, we get more irritated the longer we have to wait. A 2006, Associated Press Poll found that while waiting on hold on the phone the majority people lost their patience after waiting only 5 minutes.

The point -- we all spend a lot of our time in life waiting and we really don't like it. But why? One reason might be that modern people have been taught to expect things now! In this technological age, we are an "instant gratification" people. But, I do think that the issue goes even deeper than that. I think we don't like to wait, because we're not very confident about what tomorrow might bring. We don't like being in the "waiting room" at the hospital because we're uncertain of the outcome of our stay. We don't want to "take time getting to know a person," because we might just get hurt in the end anyway. When things seem out of our control, we hate the wait!

In fact, we're tempted even then not to wait on the Lord but rather to do something about it, to grab for the gusto, to take what we want, now! Wait? Who has time to wait? Who has patience to wait? Who has faith to wait? Yes, faith. Confident trust that the future will bring blessing no matter the circumstance of the moment. That will be our theme for today

SERMON THEME: Wait Patiently For the LORD!

- 1. Because He is faithful**
- 2. Because He brings us hope**

In our text, the Prophet Isaiah speaks to the chosen people of Israel who were an impatient people just like us. They were unwilling to wait on God; they were unwilling to do what He said. They often times usurped their position of being God's people of the promise and mercy for others. They often felt

that God's favor was deserved and therefore that they had the right to do things on their terms and in their time. They weren't just impatient; they were disobedient. Impatience, disobedience, rash decisions, these things often go hand in hand. But Isaiah isn't merely writing to an impatient people. He is writing to a people under the hand of God's judgment. Writing around the year 700 BC, he speaks to a people in turmoil.

What happened to them serves as a warning and an invitation to us. Their unfaithful impatience brought God's judgment and punishment. And as they sat in captivity in a foreign land, God's message to them and to us is clear: God says, "I am merciful, and faithful, I wish to bless you, if you will but wait on Me!" He writes, **“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.”**

Waiting? Often times, the underlying challenge really is, "Is the waiting worth it?" It depends on who or what you're waiting for. Because of our sinfulness, we often wait for the wrong things; wait on the wrong people. For many, then, to wait is to be disappointed, to miss out, to be discouraged. Our lesson today calls us to repentance, to a life whose object for waiting and hoping is God, Himself. Isaiah not only compels us to wait by faith as God's people, confidently and obediently, it literally links the word "wait and hope" together.

We can wait, joyfully, expectantly, hopefully, on God because we can trust Him! The Hebrew word for **"wait"** in Isaiah 40:31 means: to bind together, to gather (together), to look patiently, to wait (for or upon) something or someone. Such "waiting" here is really a "coming together" with the Lord, being "intertwined" with His purposes and His promises. Such waiting not only compels us to patience, it literally grants us hope. We can wait on Him with hope because we can trust Him.

If there were ever was a time when the believers in the Old Testament needed an uplifting message, it was then! Many of the "chosen" people (the northern kingdom) were already taken away into captivity in Assyria and now Isaiah is predicting Judah's capture and demise in Babylon! Their rebellion and disobedience was threatening their very relationship with God. They were guilty as charged. They knew or would soon know that they had squandered God's grace. What would become of them now? Yet in this time of testing, even this time of discipline, God's ultimate message to those who would trust Him is that He would restore them, God Himself would reestablish them mercifully as His people in this world.

As Christians, we can see this promise even more clearly today. God not only brought Judah back from captivity in Babylon, He would bring redemption and restoration to the world finally through the Person and work of His Son, Jesus Christ, on the cross. Isaiah's promises are fulfilled in Jesus for all the world to see! The promises made to Israel that day come to fruition in the Person and work of Jesus. God ultimately has the final say of grace, and mercy, and eternal life with those who trust Him. So, even in the midst of trial, or struggle, or discipline, we can trust Him. We can wait on Him in all things.

In Christ, God's blessing was firmly offered to all who would believe in Him. In our text for today, Isaiah speaks of God's blessing, God's renewed strength, of His gift of life given to those who had lost it all. The God who fulfills His promises to ancient Israel, fulfills all of His promises to the world by sending His Son to bring the great treasure of life and salvation for all to receive. Through God's Word, His sacraments, God literally gifts us with His Spirit, His Grace, His love. As ugly and terrifying as the cross of Jesus might be, it is God's merciful "kiss of grace" offered to you and to me, to be a bearer of this gift in this world. His blessing awaits all those who hope in Him, who wait on Him. **“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.”

So, we Christians, then, we get busy and we wait, with God's promises motivating us, with His Presence sustaining all who trust in Him. But, waiting on the Lord, then, is no idle proposition. Such a "waiting hoping" life is active, involved, ready to roll up one's sleeves to get to work, but always in hope. Get busy waiting. It means that we get to live this life of trust in Him in all things right now. Christians get to rise up, to run, to walk, to get busy. As Isaiah reminds all those who put their hope in God, we get to rise up on eagles' wings with eagles' eyes. We get to run weary free in the midst of trouble. We get to walk dreary free in the midst of the mundane, the challenges of day to day routine. With renewed strength in the certainty of God's promises, with an eagle-eye perspective of His Word in our lives we get busy waiting. Isaiah reminds all who wait on the Lord that we wait with His renewing energy, we wait with His sustaining Presence, and we wait with the eagle eyes of faith.

The people of Israel were to get busy waiting with hopeful faith in the Lord in all circumstances. Those who would find themselves in a foreign land they were to begin to live faithful lives even there. So, too, we are called to wait, to hope in the Lord, to follow His lead, to be faithful to Him no matter what the circumstance. God is faithful. We will trust Him. We will wait on the Lord!

Christians, then, get busy while we're waiting. But even waiting, we are hopeful as we do. As we wait on Him, we're hopeful even though He works in His time! I know that waiting is often difficult because there are times when God's answer to prayer is "to wait on Him." In those waiting times, even then, we need to remember God is working out things in His time for the good of His people. For many, sounds like a strange answer, but it's not.

The Prophet Isaiah said earlier in Isaiah 30:18 - **"Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; therefore he rises to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!"** This is the answer that God has given to the questioning, even complaining people down through time. In all things He seeks to show Himself to be faithful, to demonstrate what it truly means to be saved by His grace alone with no merit or worthiness from or in me. Therefore, in the middle of "the bread of adversity," or in the "waters of affliction," God invites you and me even then even now to wait on Him. Don't push away the hand of His grace. Don't act as though He has said something strange to you. Trust in Him, even in those times when all you have is His promise. He won't let you down, no matter what.

He says such things over and over again to all in similar times of need. The Psalmist reminds us **"Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes." -- Psalm 37:7.** The Prophet Isaiah says it again and again, **"Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him." -- Isaiah 64:4.** God's timing often seems slow to us! Yet even then the Bible says that He works for our good in His time, in His way. The Prophet Isaiah challenges Israel, and he challenges us all to never forget that God always works at the right time, and in the right way for you and for me!

The Lord always works at the right time for the good of His people. Even in our brokenness, He can work the beauty of His grace. Judah's return from Babylon was "at the right time." The events of Christmas were "just in time." The promises coming to fulfillment through Mary and Joseph, to shepherds

and Wiseman alike, was at the right time. Whether in the brokenness of the moment or in the victory of the day, through this Word, this is the time of God's favor for you.

Have you been broken, don't despair, start looking for God's greater good. Are you anxiously waiting and yet the Lord seems so far away, trust in the Lord's guidance now. You will not be disappointed. It's not that this seems too good to be true. It is that God has made it possible to be true. Isaiah called the promised people to believe and to trust in the Promises of God above all things, to trust in His mercy. Well, He calls you and me to trust in Him today too because the work of Jesus Christ on your behalf has opened the door out of bondage to an energetic, waiting-hoping life in God renewed, refreshed, and sustained always by Him alone!

The great Houdini was a master magician; actually he was an awfully good "locksmith." He had a standing challenge that there was not a jail in the country that could hold him! A jail in the British Isles took up the challenge. They finished their "escape proof" cell and invited Houdini. Houdini accepted and was placed in the cell. As the locksmith left, he turned the lock in a strange direction and with the clang of the door they left Houdini to his work. Houdini took out his special piece of metal to work the lock, he worked for 30 minutes. He put his ear up to the lock and through his skill; he did his work, waiting to hear it "trip." After an hour he was perspiring, after two he was exhausted. Finally, dejected and defeated, he leaned against the door and voila, it opened! They hadn't locked it at all! But more importantly, it had been locked in his mind.

Today God is offering you an open door to a new life with Him. Don't let the exhaustion of the moment or the troubles of today tempt you to take your eyes off the promises of God and the blessing that is already there for those who trust Him. His promises open the door of forgiveness, and life, and salvation for us. By the power of the gift of faith, believers enter into that life of grace now. Even in the midst of trial, don't assume that God doesn't care or that He isn't concerned. Remember this day what the Bible says, God is faithful. We will trust Him, in hope we will wait on the Lord, for **“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.”** Amen