

A recent study 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." When things seem out of our control, we hate the wait!

In today's OT lesson, the Prophet Isaiah speaks to the people of Israel who were, by and large, unwilling to wait on God; they were unwilling to do what He said. They often felt that they had the right to do things on their terms and in their time. But Isaiah isn't just addressing 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; people who sat in captivity in a foreign land. God's message to them is this: "I am merciful, and faithful, I wish to bless you, if you will but wait on Me! Those who wait on 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!"

Waiting? Often times, the underlying challenge really is, "Is the waiting worth it?" It depends on who or what you're waiting for. 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. God's Word today calls us to repentance, to a life whose object for waiting and hoping is God, Himself. Isaiah not only urges us to wait by faith as God's people, confidently and obediently, it links the word "wait and hope" together.

The Hebrew word translated as "wait" in the ESV of Isaiah 40:31 means: to bind or gather together, and once connected, to wait for something or someone. Therefore, hoping and waiting here is really a "coming together" with the Lord, being "intertwined" with His purposes and His promises. When things seem out of control, we hate to wait. But waiting intertwined with the Lord can become a time during which we are renewed, strengthened, and enabled to soar on greater heights.

If there 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 would soon know that they had squandered God's grace.

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 of His Son, Jesus on the cross. Isaiah's promises are fulfilled in Jesus for all the world to see! We look at Old Testament passages like this as a way of examining God's track record of keeping His promises. But you could also do that with your own life. Look back and

see, how he's brought you through to this present moment. Would you say that He is trustworthy? Yes, when things seem out of control, we hate to wait. But gathered into connection with God, waiting with hope on Him, we learn that things are never out of control. The same God who created the vast universe in which we are traveling also holds your personal history in the palm of his hand. Even in the midst of trial, or struggle, or discipline, you can trust Him to do something that will bless you. Active hope in God is an updraft that enables us to take flight. You can be the eagle described by Isaiah, soaring on the power of God's promises kept and completely fulfilled in Jesus.

Isaiah's use of an eagle in this passage to describe the hoping believer should grab your attention. It got me thinking, what are some things we can say about eagles? I found the writing of Christi Harken helpful; she writes in an article called "Eagle Vision And Dependability,"

*"Birds of all kinds can see where they are going. They pick and choose their direction and path (but eagles see and do things differently.) As birds fly by instinct they head where they are directed. But they can only see what is in front of them. Eagles are known to have vision. An eagle can see up to five miles and often times is able to see well beyond normal sight. The eagle knows where it is going and determines how it is going to get there. While other birds migrate by instinct the eagle stays in its territory throughout the year, season after season. The eagle is dependable and will hold its place in its territory. When a storm approaches, other birds fly in fear while the eagle is energized by the challenge of the storm. The eagle catches the wind and rises above the storm."*

Would you like to rise above the storm that's blowing into your life right now? Then wait with hope in the Lord God Almighty. Wait for Him to provide with perfect precision what He knows is best. And I imagine someone could hear that and say, "OK, that all sounds great, and I'd like to actually have that, but how? What does it look like?" Fair question. Here's one way to answer. Waiting with hope in the Lord looks like a person at prayer. Or let me say it like this: The best way to practice waiting in hope is to pray.

If you want an example, look no further than today's Gospel lesson, where Jesus himself makes the time to pray to His Father. In his human nature, He needed this time with His Father to recharge. Think about that. As a man, Jesus needed to renew His strength, and He did that by separating himself from the crowd for a little while and engaging in prayer. From all these places of quiet communication with His Father, Jesus emerged with energy to continue his work.

When things seem out of control, find a place to pray. It will help you remember who is really in control. It will recharge you, and the Holy Spirit brings to mind what God has done for you, and what He wants to do for you. It will reset you, teaching you to expect God's help and intervention. Pray your way into hopeful waiting...and then hang on, because you're about to take flight.

