Weekly Scripture and Sermon Study: History & Context Guide
Isaiah 40:28-31

History, Culture, & Context

In this section of Isaiah, we see the Lord acting to restore Israel from Babylonian captivity. Most of the Israelites were dispersed throughout the Middle East from the Assyrian and Babylonian armies. Here, the prophet Isaiah has shifted the tone of his earlier writings that dealt with Israel's sin and unfaithfulness, to a message of hope and comfort that God is with them and will restore them. These verses speak to the sustaining power of God to address the how the people of Israel feared that God has forgotten them.

In verse 28, we read that "The Lord is an everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth." God has not and will not forget His people, and He will "…not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable." The NRSV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible explains, "In the ancient world, the gods were viewed as having human weaknesses and often were inattentive or simply unaware of events that were taking place. One result of this was that the pantheon of gods were constantly outwitting or tricking each other."

Verse 29 reads that God "gives power to the faint and strengthens the powerless." This is a call to Israel that God will deliver them from Babylon just as he did in Egypt. God will bring them back to their home and ensure that they have strength to get through this and for the journey home.

Verse 30-31 continues, "Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; 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." Like a shepherd who looks after their flock, God will guide His people home and equip them to do so.

Questions to Consider

1. What does verse 31, "Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength", mean to you in your life?
2. How do you handle moments when you feel "overwhelmed" and "weary"? How does this passage in Isaiah help?