

BUMC Weekly Bible and Sermon Study

Sermon: “Stressed Memory” from the “Rest for the Stressed” sermon series

Scripture: Isaiah 40:28-31

Key take-aways from the Scripture

- 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.

Key take-aways from the Sermon

- We are beginning a new sermon series “Rest for the Stressed”, in which we are looking at passages in Scripture that provide us with renewal, rest and hope.
- A recent study conducted on those living in Nashville has found 77% feel stressed, compared with the national average of 68%. We are a stressed people in need of rest!!! Rest is to be hard-wired into us, modeled after our Creator!
- Today’s reading is from Isaiah, a part of the “prophetic literature” in the Bible. “The prophets worked to get people who were beaten down to open themselves up to **hope** in God’s future. In the wreckage of exile and death and humiliation and sin, the prophet ignited hope, opening lives to the new work of salvation that God is about at all times and everywhere.”
- The central truth in Biblical literature is the Israelites were a people in need of hope, and so are we today. They longed for the days of the past.
- In today’s reading, the Israelites are in the midst of exile, surrounded by chaos, despair, and loneliness. Psalm 137 speaks of this timeframe. The Israelites felt “knocked down” and were having a hard time getting back up!
- Repetition counts for something...both ancient Israel, and those of us today, need to be reminded of the presence of the Creator of the universe of our lives, in this moment! “Don’t you know anything? Haven’t you been listening? God doesn’t come and go. God lasts.”
- Theological amnesia: during trying times, the tendency to forget about the awesome power and presence of God. This can cause us to fall apart in crisis.
- Verse 31 in Isaiah reminds the people of rest and renewal when they seek rest in the arms of God. We experience a renewed strength only when we rest.
- We are the beloved of the God most high. God does not just come and go but lasts and is with you in the moments you feel the weakest. God intends to walk every step with you and His strength will become your strength...even when you are the weakest.
- We will always grow weary and incur stress in our life. We will encounter moments that we are certain are too much for us to ever rise above. However, in the midst of all of this, we are called to remember that God lasts and walks with us.

Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Discussion

- What were your key take-aways from the sermon? How can you apply this to your everyday life?
- What does verse 31, “Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength”, mean to you in your life?
- How do you handle moments when you feel “overwhelmed” and “weary”? How does this passage in Isaiah help?
- How can we combat what Rev. Adam Jones calls “theological amnesia”?
- How does your faith sustain you when you feel knocked down in life and need to get back up? What passages in Scripture do you find the most helpful?

