

HERE IS YOUR GOD

Introduction:

- The Jews in exile had many questions about God: **Was He really strong enough and great enough** to solve their problems and deliver them from Captivity?
- Our antiphonal prayer (of Isaiah 40) answered that question with a resounding: **“YES!”** Nothing is too hard for God. He is more powerful than leaders and nations of the world, He is far greater than man-made idols, and than all He has created! **There is no one like Him**
- That settled, the Jews still had **three burning questions**:
 - Did God really care about them? Did He understand the things they were going through?
 - If He did, would He answer their prayers? Would deliver them from Babylon, the strongest nation on earth at that time?
- Isaiah responds to both of these questions in the text we’ll study this morning: **Isaiah 40:25-31**.

1. Does God care about my suffering? --- (How can you ask?)

- At this point in the text God Himself begins to speak **directly** His people. He was well aware of their questions and the things that kept them awake at night (Just as He knows our issues!)
- The first thing he did was to confront the elephant in the room. He let them know that He knew all about their hidden doubts and fears:

*O Jacob, how can you say the Lord doesn't see your troubles?
O Israel, why do you complain with these words:
“My way is hidden from the Lord ---
My cause is disregarded by my God?”*

- Have you ever felt like that? Perhaps you feel that way now about some of the things that you wrote (or didn't write) on your card.
- In Is 49:15-16. God tells His people that he will never forget them:

“Can a mother ever forget her nursing baby?
Does she feel no love for the child she has borne?
Even if that were possible, **I will not forget you!**
See, I have written your name on the palms of my hands.

“Can a mother ever forget her nursing baby?
Does she feel no love for the child she has borne?
Even if that were possible, I will not forget you!
See, I have written your name on the palms of my hands.”



- In Isaiah 40:25, the Lord gave them and us a graphic illustration of His loving care:

- “To whom will you compare me?
Or who is my equal?” says the Holy One.

Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens:

Who created all these?

(It was I the Lord) (I) bring out the starry host one
by one

And call forth each of them by name.

Because of (my) great power and mighty strength,
Not one of them is missing.



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- **Think about it!** We know today that there are billions of stars, yet God created and knows each one and tenderly calls them by Name.
- Not one escapes His attention! Not one is missing!
- Why does the Lord tell us that? He wants us to know, that we will never get lost in the shuffle!
- He sees us, He loves us and He knows us by name!

Let me tell you the story of **Sara**, a young Christian widow from Bogota, Colombia. She had plenty of her own questions: Why did the Lord allow her husband to die? How would she manage?

Bogota, Colombia



- Sara got a job and struggled to raise her son Samuel all by herself. She made just enough money to pay their bills and Samuel’s school fees, but by the end of each month there was never anything left.
- Then the unthinkable happened. Samuel fell critically ill and had to be hospitalized for several days in a row.
- When he recovered, Sara panicked! The hospital won’t let her take Samuel home until she had paid the bill in full! Sara didn’t have insurance, she didn’t have a credit card & she didn’t have the money.
- Sara cried out to God for His mercy and help, and the Lord spoke to her. “Sara, I see you! I love you and I know you by Name. I will take care of you and your son. Walk through the hospital quietly praising and thanking Me and I will show you what to do next.”
- Unbeknownst to Sara, in another part of that same hospital sat a member of her congregation, named David. His wife had just had surgery and David was waiting for her to come out of recovery.
- As he sat there, David began to think about the bonus he had just received at work. Should he save it or spend it? Perhaps he and his wife could take a trip or buy a something new for their home-----
- His planning was interrupted by a totally unexpected and unwelcome thought. He received the strong impression that he should give his bonus away to a poor woman in their church named Sara.

- David was aghast! “Is that really you speaking to me, Lord? “ he queried, “Or am I making this whole thing up?”
- In the silence that followed David found himself bargaining with God. “I’ll tell you what,” he said, “If you’ll bring Sara to the Hospital **right now**, I’ll know that it’s you speaking and not just my crazy ideas!”
- I think you can guess what happened next:
- Just at that moment, Sara walked by. She spotted David and greeted him! He was totally blown away, but he kept his promise. The bonus was more than enough to pay Sara’s bill. In the end both Sara and David learned a great lesson: God knows us by name, sees our needs, and cares very much about every detail of our lives!

Transition. That’s a great story and its a true one, but not all of our problems can be fixed that easily. Most of us are facing some daunting situations as well as several unanswered ---Perhaps you wrote about some of them on your card:

- There are people in this room who don’t have a job and others who have just lost one.
- Many of us are concerned about our children
- Some of us have loved ones with a terminal illness
- Some of us have family members who are in jail
- Some struggle with addictions or depression and it never seems to end
- Some of us are facing marriage problems and others have a broken heart---- the list goes on and on.

What about those things?

This brings us to the third and last question of the Jews in exile

3. Will God answer our prayers? Will He do the seemingly impossible in the issues we face?

This was no light or rhetorical question for the Jews.

- They had been defeated by Babylon and were now her captives
- She was a world power and boasted that her Gods were stronger than the God of Israel
- Finally, no nation they knew of had ever sent their captives back home again!
- So would God ever answer their prayers?

Let’s move into the last four verses of our text and discover how God responded to their question and how He responds to ours!

- The first thing He does is to remind us once again who He really is:

Have you not heard?
 Have you not understood?
 the Lord (am) the everlasting God,
 The Creator of the ends of the earth.

Will God answer our prayers?
 Will He do the seemingly impossible?

of

Have you not heard?
 Have you not understood?
 (I) the Lord (am) the everlasting God,
 The Creator of the ends of the earth.



(I)

- This means that there is absolutely nothing we are worried about that is too hard for God to deal with in one way or another!

(I) never grow weak or weary.

No one can measure the depths of (my) understanding

(I) Give strength to the weary

And increase the power of the weak.

- How cool! God totally understands our situations and **He GIVES strength** to us when we are weary and power when we are weak

But practically speaking, how does that actually work out in real life?

How does God GIVE us strength when we are weary and increase our power when we are weak?

Let me tell you another true story from just last week:

- One of my dear friends in Tucson is a social worker in a local hospital. On most days she loves her work, but recently her hospital has become short of staff and her work load is often doubled.
- What she could once easily manage with 10 or less patients has now become a nightmare with 24 or more to care for.
- So we made a deal. On a tough day, she sends me a quick text and ask me to pray---sometimes mentioning details. More often than not she just says: "Please Pray!"
- A week ago she faced an almost impossible situation and sent me an SOS for prayer. Jack and I decided to pray for her several times that day and in the evening were delighted to hear how God answered:
- She could FEEL the difference almost as soon as we began to pray. Throughout that day, the Lord strengthened her, gave her wisdom and enabled her to somehow care for everyone's needs.
- He will do the same for all of us and now tells us HOW to ask for it and receive His strength.

³⁰Even youths grow tired and weary,
and young men stumble and fall;

Now let's look at the key passage in this text

³⁰Even youths grow tired and weary,
and young men stumble and fall;



- The Lord wants us to know that it's not about our natural strength or ability. The most fit athlete at the prime of his youth can stumble and fall or wear out physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. We've seen that in the Olympics!

Those who wait upon the Lord will renew their strength

What does it mean to “wait upon the Lord?”

- First of all, **it doesn’t mean “killing time” until God does something!”**
- I think all of us hate that kind of waiting! Waiting in line, waiting for the bus to come, waiting for our car to be fixed
- Last month, our van broke down in King City, California. Jack and I had to wait until the mechanics could fix it. We never knew one minute to the next when that would be, so we pretty much “killed time” for 3 days
- That’s NOT what it means to “wait on the Lord”
- Here is a definition of “waiting on God” Let’s look at it together:

“But those who wait upon the Lord will renew their strength.”

(But what does it mean to “wait on the Lord?”)



“Waiting on God is **not something we endure** so we can get what we want, waiting on God is **the way we grow** in patience and trust when we don’t have what we want.”

- Let’s read it again and then think about it!
- “Waiting is NOT something we endure until we get what we want” We did that kind of waiting when we were children, counting the days for Christmas to come so we could open our presents.
- Waiting on God is not like that.
- “Waiting on God IS instead the way in which we grow in patience and trust,
- while we don’t have what we want or hope for.

“Waiting on God is not something we endure so we can get what we want;

Waiting on God is the way we grow in patience and trust when we don’t have what we want.”

- A great illustration of that kind of Biblical waiting is **Nelson Mandela**.

- Nelson Mandela was born in South Africa, a country that discriminated against blacks and legalized racial segregation
- Mandela became a lawyer and political activist who worked tirelessly for his illusive dream of social justice.
- In 1963 Mandela was sentenced to life in prison because of his efforts to do so. He served 27 years in jail, until in 1990, he was pardoned by President de Klerk, who hoped his release would the divided country move towards peace and reconciliation.
- The Nelson Mandela who to prison was not the same Nelson Mandela who came out 27 years later. As He waited on God he grew in patience and trust, He forgave his enemies and he learned new ways to achieve his dreams.
- In 1993 he was elected as the first Black President of his nation. He was a man transformed by waiting on God.



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What does one do while we're waiting?

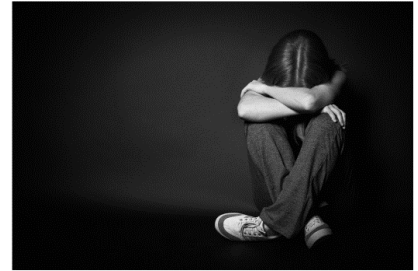
- 1) Depend on God and trust Him with our problems.
- 2) Let Him decide the terms and the timing of the outcome.
(In the end, we are not in control, He is!)
- 3) It helps to focus on God and not our problems.
- 4) Keep on praying, with thanksgiving.
- 5) Ask the Lord to speak to us from His Word.

Let me tell you a final story to illustrate what I mean:

- One of my dearest friends and prayer partners has an only daughter who has suffered with depression from childhood. In more recent years has become suicidal.
- Although my friend has prayed endlessly for her daughter's healing, things often seem to get worse instead of better.
- A couple of years ago, she came to a crisis point. My friend wondered if either she or her daughter could take it anymore! She brought her despair to the Lord.
- In that darkest of hours, the Lord very clearly brought a passage of scripture to her mind. It was from the Gospel of John chapter 11, and it tells the story of the death and resurrection of Lazarus.
- Jesus had arrived at the tomb where Lazarus was buried and said "Roll the stone aside!"
- But Martha, the dead man's sister, protested, "Lord, my brother has been dead for four days. The smell will be terrible."
- Then Jesus spoke these words to Martha, and to my dear friend, and to each of us who faces situations as impossible as death:

**"Did I not tell you that if you believe,
You will see the glory of God?"**

- Martha believed Jesus and He raised her brother from the dead.
My friend believed Jesus and though the outward circumstances have not changed all that much---My friend has renewed her trust and Hope in God and is waiting on Him to work in her and in her daughter in His own way and time.



"Did I not tell you that if you believe,
You will see the glory of God?"



Now let's look at the last parts of our verse:

Those who wait upon the Lord **will renew their strength.**

- It's fascinating to me that the Lord doesn't say: "Those who wait upon Me will have all their prayers answered."
- I think that's what we often hope for.
- But God has bigger purposes in mind. His primary desire is to enable us to know Him and to make us like His Son. Our waiting on God enables both.
- So instead of promising answers to prayer, the Lord promises to **renew**, to **replace**, or better yet, to **exchange** our strength for His.

Those who wait upon the Lord
will renew their strength.



- As we wait on him, he'll take our weariness and weakness, our fears and anxieties, our hopelessness and despair and exchange them for HIS STRENGTH, HIS LOVE, HIS COURAGE AND HIS POWER.
- And he does this in **three measures**
 - They will **soar** on wings like eagles;
 -

They will soar on wings like eagles.



They will run and not grow weary,
They will walk and not faint.



- They will **run** and not grow weary,
- They will **walk** and not faint.

What about those unanswered prayers?

- God may or may not answer them in just the way we hope He will, but we can rest assured that He cares about those needs and as we wait on Him, will answer them in His way and time.
- The Jews waited on God for 70 years, and then to their great surprise, the Babylonian empire fell in just one night, conquered by the Medes and the Persians.
- Cyrus became King and to everyone's amazement, (except God's) Cyrus decreed that all the Jewish exiles could return to their own country. Not only that, He gave them the money they needed to rebuild their temple, so that they might ask their God to bless Him.

This is how the Lord answered the Jews.

- 1) He forgave their sin.
 - 2) He let them know how much He cared for them.
 - 3) He strengthened them.
 - 4) He answered their prayers in His way and in His time.
- Friends, God cares for you and me this morning in those very same ways: If we need forgiveness, we only have to ask. If we need His Help, we can rest assured that He cares for us, and as we wait on Him, He will renew our strength with His won.