

“Wait, Fly, Run, Fly”

Isaiah 40:28-31 & Mark 1:29-39

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The Olympics begin Friday. Today's scripture reveals how you can experience healing, renewal, strength, agility, and the joy of doing your best.

A gold medal usually requires a lifetime of training, an extensive support network, and being healthy on the day of the event. Often the athletes have had to overcome all sorts of obstacles and persevere through injuries. The Olympics bring people together to celebrate human triumph and fill us with hope as we witness how the Olympians have endured the training and now are soaring with amazing feats of athleticism.

The prophet Isaiah spoke words of forgiveness, comfort, and hope to people who were exhausted, down and out, hurting, crushed by guilt, and hopeless. The prophet Isaiah proclaims. **Isaiah 40:28-31 MSG** “**Why would you ever complain, O Jacob, or, whine, Israel, saying, “God has lost track of me. God doesn’t care what happens to me”? Don’t you know anything? Haven’t you been listening? God doesn’t come and go. God lasts. God is Creator of all you can see or imagine. God doesn’t get tired out, doesn’t pause to catch God’s breath. And God knows everything, inside and out. God energizes those who get tired, gives fresh strength to dropouts. For even young people tire and drop out, young folk in their prime stumble and fall. But those who wait upon God get fresh strength. They spread their wings and soar like eagles. They run and don’t get tired, they walk and don’t lag behind.”**

Barbara Brown Taylor said, “God has done some of God’s best work in the dark, including resurrection.”

Isaiah proclaims the incomparable greatness and goodness of God. Isaiah reassures you that no matter what you are going through, no matter how bad things may seem, no matter how miserable you feel, even when your thoughts are negative and you are utterly exhausted, God is with you. God will never forsake you. Absolutely nothing can diminish your renewal, because God created the cosmos. God knows precisely how to make you soar for eternity. Isaiah urges us to have hope for our future is secure. Our lives will be transformed. We will enjoy liberation, renewal, strength, vitality, and soar like eagles.

Isaiah proclaims **Isaiah 40:28-31 NRSV** “**Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. God does not faint or grow weary; God’s understanding is unsearchable. God gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. 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.”**

We are to wait, fly, run, and fly. Waiting enables us to sense God’s loving presence which permeates us with hope. Waiting for God may involve stepping off the daily treadmill to stop moving for a minute. To take a moment to slow down to feel God’s presence. To listen for what God might be saying to us without expecting a particular answer. To create space for God’s Holy Spirit to flow within us. When we slow down, we discover that God is the source of all that is, the great "I AM". We are reminded that God is the all-powerful Creator who sustains all and will redeem all. When we wait, we discover that God is the provider of all we need for abundant, joyful, loving life. The mess of life, the ugly schemes of the world, are like dust in the wind, for God is cleaning up the mess and making all wonderful. Waiting for God may involve acknowledging and setting aside the herd of thoughts that course through your mind, so you can perceive God’s delight in you. Listening to God’s love and joy for you, shifts your thoughts to gratitude, delight in blessing, and joy in loving.

I have come to believe that the most challenging waiting of all involves grace. To let the free gift of God’s forgiving, cleansing, purifying love wash over us making us wonderful inside and out. To let the free gift of God’s transforming renewing, nourishing love come into us through bread, juice, and blessings making us

Christ-like. To let go of all, so we can let come the fullness of God. To rest, letting the current of grace carry us into completeness. To dance with the unforced rhythms of grace. To stop trying to earn love, so one can simply savor love.

Grace means forgiving yourself and others. M. L. Stedman said, “You only have to forgive once. To resent you have to do it all day every day.” Holding onto hurt, grudges, and guilt is exhausting. Forgiveness sets us free. Replaying a mistake in your minds, causes that mistake to grow, without forgiveness a mistake will sap all your strength. Waiting invites God’s grace to heal all.

Our waiting enables us to fly, to mount up with wings like eagles. Flying elevates us, enabling us to rise above our earthly perspective, so we can see the world from the vantage point of our everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. The symbol for John is an eagle. In his gospel, he strived to help us see the glory of God full of grace and truth that permeates all and is renewing all. To mount up with wings like eagles is to see the world from the perspective of Jesus. Seeing the image of God in every person, the wonder of God in every detail, and the eternity of God in the enormity of creation. Flying is offering grace to all people, seeing every person as beloved family. Flying is giving hospitality, breaking bread with outcasts, comforting the sick, feeding the hungry, welcoming outsiders. Jesus is teaching us to fly with him.

God’s renewal in our waiting and fresh perspective in our flying, enables us to run and not be weary. We are talking about spiritual stamina that enables us to run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. With the hope of waiting and the perspective of flying, we are able to face our problems and overcome our obstacles becoming fully alive.

Waiting, flying, running gives us a hint of our future flying in heaven. At death we shed all our burdens, imperfections, and our restrictive shell, our body, so we can soar on the air of God’s love and every love we have received and every love we shared and the thrill of savoring each joy.

It is fitting that Abigail, who has Olympic aspirations, will climb in the National Bouldering Climbing Championship on Friday, the same day the Olympics begin. Abigail has dealt with crushing defeats. One year, she was just one spot short of making the United States Climbing team and competing internationally. Several times just one more move, obtaining just one more hold, would have gotten her on the U. S. team. After devastating losses, one’s mind often gets negative. Waiting enabled Abigail to learn from the losses, to redirect the “what ifs” into determination to train harder and to rediscover the joy of climbing. Abigail is now running as she trains 12 hours per week. Hopefully on Friday and continuing Saturday and Sunday she will fly to the podium and the U.S. Climbing team.

Abigail has dealt with demoralizing injuries, a broken wrist, a nasty fall with a slow recovery from a concussion, recurring finger tendon injuries, and a shoulder injury. Abigail has waited as she took a break from climbing to heal, to research human anatomy, to follow the advice of doctors and painstakingly endured the treatment, stretches, and exercises of physical therapists. Abigail has learned to run by taking an hour to slowly warm up for climbing, by spending time every day stretching and performing the prescribed therapy exercises. For the first time in four years, Abigail’s body is flying with injury free performance.

Each of us has our own set of devastating setbacks. Have hope for God is with you. God will heal you in your times of waiting. God will restore you to fly.

Listen for the waiting, running, and flying in our gospel message. **Mark 1:29-35 NRSV** “**A**s soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. Jesus came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them. That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And Jesus cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew Jesus.

This scripture was confusing to me. Why did the healed woman serve them? Context and word connections completing changed my understanding of this text. The word translated “serve” is the same word used when the angels “waited on” Jesus in the wilderness. Later, Jesus used this same verb to describe himself

as one who comes to serve. Here Simon's mother in-law is set free from submitting to cultural convention, free from keeping to her restricted place, and free from fulfilling the traditional role of a woman. Instead, she is set free to become the first deacon—embodying the ideal of discipleship as service to others, a mandate that Jesus requires of all his followers. She is serving out of gratitude. Filled with grace, love, and joy, she freely shares grace, love, and joy. Having been healed, renewed, and empowered to fly she is healing, renewing, and helping others fly. This is our calling as well.

Scripture continues, **Mark 1:35-39 NRSV** “**In the morning, while it was still very dark, Jesus got up and went out to a deserted place, and there Jesus prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for Jesus. When they found him, they said to him, “Everyone is searching for you.” Jesus answered, “Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.” And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.**”

Jesus began everyday by waiting with God. Waiting for hope, guidance, and healing power to permeate his being. He ran going to neighbor towns to serve all, to enable all to run and fly. Jesus served to freely give the fullness of human life, to help each person catch their breath, reacquaint them with their dreams, give them faith eyes to see from God's perspective, and soaring joy. Jesus rose from the grave to proclaim that death is fleeting, life is eternal. Jesus came to free us from all that is exhausting, free us for all that weighs us down, so we can savor grace and soar with joyful love.

Jan Richardson prays for us and all people, “That each ill be released from you and each sorrow be shed from you and each pain be made comfort for you and each wound be made whole in you. That joy will arise in you and strength will take hold of you and hope will take wing for you and all be made well.” Amen