



“On Eagle’s Wings”

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany
Saturday and Sunday, February 3-4, 2018

All Services
The Reverend John H. Brock
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Isaiah 40:21-31; Mark 1:29-39

Grace to you and peace, from God who is, who was, and who is to come. Amen.

We're only twenty-nine verses into the Gospel of Mark, and listen to all that's happened:

- John announces Jesus' arrival, (Mark 1:2-8) and baptizes him in what becomes a heaven-tearing declaration (1:9-11);
- Jesus immediately goes into the desert, where he has a toe-to-toe with Satan (1:12, 13);
- Proclaims the impending reign of God here on earth (1:15);
- Calls the first of his disciples (1:16-20); and
- Smacks an unclean spirit up along the side of the head, thereby not only healing the poor fellow who was possessed, but inspiring the people of Capernaum to say, “This man speaks with authority!”

We're barely halfway through the first chapter, and already I feel like I need to sit down and rest. That's all because of the *immediacy* of Mark's gospel. Because Mark is on a mission: he *wants* to tell this story, he **needs** to tell this story, and he needs to do **Right Now!**

Mark has this message to tell, and he's up front about what this message is right from verse 1:

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

And we get that sense of urgency from the way he writes, which comes across much stronger in the original Greek. I have yet to come across a translation that really get the feel of reading Mark in the original Greek, because our passage would sound something like this (this is the Brock transliteration):

Immediately coming out of the synagogue they went into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John, and having a fever, Simon's mother-in-law was lying down, and immediately they speak to Jesus concerning her, and having approached her, he raised her taking her by the hand; and the fever left her, and she was serving them.

Because that's how Mark writes, with bad grammar and run-on sentences. I know I just said that really fast, and some of you may not have been able to understand me, but that's the sense of *euthos*, that sense of *urgency*, that the entirety of Mark's gospel has.

Mark uses the word *euthos* seven times in those first twenty-eight verses. That word *euthos* is best translated as *immediately*, although throughout most translations, they try to use different words and phrases, like what we heard in our English version of *as soon as* and *at once*.

That *urgency*, that desire to tell the gospel story, is a driving force throughout Mark's gospel. So, if it's a driving force in Mark's gospel, is it a driving force in your life?

Wait, what?

I know, I said *ll* of that kind of quickly, and you probably weren't really paying attention, because you were still trying to get your ears wrapped around my transliteration of the Greek, and then I went and asked us all if our faith has that same sense of urgency that Mark's gospel does. and because I am fairly certain this is a room full of mostly Lutherans, I pretty sure that the answer to my question of whether or not the driving force in Mark's gospel is a driving force in our lives is . . . No.

Because we, as Christians in the Lutheran tradition, are **way** more at home at having that firm *foundation* of a faith, a mighty *fortress* of spirituality. Which are fine and good things. But fire? yea, not so much. There's a reason Lutherans are often referred to as the "frozen chosen", and it's **not** because we live in Central Pennsylvania.

But I also think this is why this gospel reading is matched up with that reading from Isaiah. Our reading from Isaiah begins with the author asking the people (and I'm going to paraphrase here):

What's wrong with you folks? Have you forgotten? Weren't you told? Don't you remember what all the Lord God has done for us? How God is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. God does not faint or grow weary.
(40:28)

That, I fear, is what happens to too many of us: We forget. We *know* what God has done in our lives, the positive things that have happened, the times we have been staring down illness or grief or sorrow or whatever, and God has been right there with us. Yet each time one of those awful things hits us, we tend to forget the last time, and how God got us through, so we complain to God that we've been abandoned, even though in reality we haven't been.

Like us, the people of Israel needed to be reminded of God's faithfulness. They had lost *everything* to the Babylonians: their city; their capital; their temple. They had been marched hundreds of miles away, forced to settle in a foreign land, learn new ways, eat new foods, comprehend a new culture, and like good Lutherans, they weren't handling change all that well. Just like Jesus dealing with that unclean spirit, Isaiah smacks the people up along the side of the head:

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD gives power to the faint and strengthens the powerless.

Everyone stumbles, says Isaiah. Youth exhaust themselves, they wear themselves out. But, says Isaiah,

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.
(40:31)

Those who remember that God walks with them, in the good **and** the bad, **those** folks will soar on eagle's wings, up above the crap and junk in their lives.

Let's put these two readings together. Mark wants us to have this sense of urgency, this fire, this unquenchable fire of faith, burning within us. So that's what we strive for. **But**, we know, because, let's face it, we know ourselves, that while the immediacy of Mark's gospel might move our hearts, realistically it is **not** going to move our mouths.

So, we look to Isaiah. We remember what God has done for us: how God has been there with us in everything: the good and the bad, the joyful and the awful. We remind ourselves what we are **called**, by the waters of our baptism, by the bread and wine we consume, to **do**, to act, to proclaim and serve and reach out and listen and love.

We are reminded as to how we serve God in **all** that we do. We strive for that sense of urgency, and we live in our own *now*, whatever that now may be wherever that now may take us. We pray to God for those wings of an eagle; that we may do our best to soar when we cannot walk, to *burn* with the fire of faith, even when our spirit feels drenched with doubt. We run and not get weary. We walk and do not faint.

Go in God's peace; Soar on eagle's wings.

Amen.

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