Centered and Soaring

Vienna Presbyterian Church
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Isaiah 40:28-31

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We’ve had a lot of fun going to the movies right here in church this summer, using the stories of movies as a way to learn faith lessons for our lives. We often talk about God’s big story, the story of creation–fall–redemption. Creation is the story of the beauty and reality of God’s creative power. Fall is the story of our fall through sin into lives of brokenness and separation. Redemption is the story of restoration and of hope and a future given to us by Jesus. Movies always tell stories, and we find elements of creation-fall-redemption in many of them, as Glenda has pointed out to us.

We also live in the day of the short story as told through short videos and video clips that we may find on Youtube, Vimeo and many other sources. I often use them in my teaching and love the humor and the power of the story-telling they can offer. For example, when teaching about change and our lack of awareness of change, I love a video from a German comedy show. You don’t have to understand German but it helps you to know the daughter has given her father an iPad, which would have cost $1000. Now they are “only” $650! Watch the Youtube video: “iPad Knallerfrauen” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nPGY2T9r1O k Look at her puffed out cheeks! She can’t believe he doesn’t get it and he just doesn’t get it!

So, movies and videos are story-tellers. Since the Bible is God’s Big Story, I often think of the words of the Bible as verbal video. Its words allow us to see with our mind’s eye what the words are describing. As you read or hear the words of God, you also see them. I read to our grandchildren the story of the paralyzed person carried on a stretcher by four friends along with others to see Jesus. They had to rip a hole in the roof of the house in order to lower the paralyzed person in front of Jesus. The grandkids were wide-eyed. “They tore a hole in the roof? How did they do that?” The
kids heard the words and saw the words in their minds, something all great writing inspires.

In Isaiah Chapter 40, we read words that paint pictures of the majesty and power of God and our smallness. My personal, all-time favorite movie, and the movie that has most directly affected my life is “Chariots of Fire,” the story of Eric Liddell, a sprinter in the 1924 Olympics. Listen to Eric read the words from Isaiah in a worship service during those Olympics. Notice the combination of hearing the words of scripture and watching the video images help you better “see” what our Lord is saying. Watch the Youtube video: “Liddell Reads Isaiah” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZjF59VB0h6g

When you hear the words you also see what they describe!

28 Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; we “see” that our God is the God of power and majesty and that we are very small. Furthermore, we see that this God of immense power is the God of compassion: 29 He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. We know that we are a frail people who can be deeply challenged by life’s demands – whether it is a hurricane in Texas or a hurricane in your own personal life: 30 Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted.

What do we do when we feel faint, when we are in a very challenging place? We do what followers of our Lord have always done. We stay centered on our Lord and we soar with our Lord’s grace and power 31 but those who wait for the Lord [CENTERED] shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles [SOARING], they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint. What does it mean to be centered? It is to lift your chin and look at Him.
It is to wait for the Lord and to renew your strength. What does it mean to soar, to mount up with wings? It is to take courage and take the adventure our God has for you, whether the adventure is very exciting or is extremely difficult. The Apostle Paul wrote, *So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day* (2 Corinthians 4:16). Centered on our Lord, chin up looking at him, and soaring with our Lord.

Every day, all of us have been mesmerized by the images of the unfolding tragedy in Houston and the area around it. I was in Dallas one month after Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans. My sister, Denise, had fled New Orleans with the rising waters and could not bring herself to go back and to see what happened to her flooded home. So I flew there and made my way to her house. Water had nearly reached the ceiling of the first floor where it just sat there for around 10 days. When I arrived, everything was jumbled and ruined. When I touched pieces of wooden furniture, they simply collapsed. I recovered some china and jewelry, and her soaked wedding pictures. Oddly, there was a green bowl on the floor of the hallway with a picture of our mother, that had evidently floated around until setting gently down. My sister and thousands of others experienced a total loss. It looks like Harvey is going to affect an even greater number of people driving many into destitution.
Sue Hamblen has looked into ways for us to best contribute to the relief effort and it looks like PDA, the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance program, is absolutely outstanding when it comes to efficiently using our gifts to help people. There is a link to them on our website or just type Presbyterian Disaster Assistance into Google. I watched an interview of the parents of five children, two little ones and three infants, triplets. They had gone to bed assuming all was well and were awakened in the middle of the night and told to evacuate immediately. Eight different routes they tried were blocked. They said it was terrifying but then with remarkable clarity they expressed their trust in the Lord who loves them. They remained centered in the storm. They lifted their chins and looked at him. They have a rough road ahead, yet you could sense the soaring spirit within them. They are centered and they will soar. *Those who wait for the Lord [centered] shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles* [soaring]. Isaiah 40:31a

I would like you to see the concepts of centered and soaring in, of all places, a video commercial for Samsung. Before we watch it, I ask you, can Ostriches fly? No, you say? Okay. Second, you need to know that a virtual reality headset fits over your eyes to you can see video clearly and realistically. Watch the Youtube video: “Samsung Ostrich”  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hjKd24UCPYY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hjKd24UCPYY)
I just love that! The ostrich finds itself wearing that virtual reality headset. You see it experiencing flight watching the flight simulator and it trills, “oooooh.” It tries to fly, falls flat on its face. It watches all night, its wings waving. In the morning, we notice three things. The virtual reality headset is gone. You see him go chin up, his feet go up (game on) and you see him take the adventure. Watch the video again, and look for the moments of chin up, feet up and take the adventure.

What a wonderful parable of the Christian life. Whatever situation comes your way, center and soar: Chin up – wait on the Lord – re-center on the Lord who loves you. Feet up – your strength renewed, for Isaiah says those who wait on the Lord will renew their strength – and it’s “game on.” Finally, take the adventure the Lord has for you – mount up with wings like eagles! That’s centered and soaring!

Now, we could talk all morning about what it means to soar in the life God gives us, whether the adventure is to walk through the valley of the shadow of death or is some joyful activity. The Bible simply tells us we soar in every moment as we live a life in a manner worthy of the good news of Jesus (Philippians 1:27). A wonderful way to soar with Jesus is by receiving his people eyes. People eyes are the eyes of Jesus that see people the way Jesus sees people–worn down, thrown down, harassed and helpless. When you
wait on your Lord, centered, and mount up with wings like eagles, soaring, our Lord has something he wants to do through you. Watch this video and see what I mean by people eyes. Watch the Youtube video: “Get Service” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LfeXxkbgCVE&t=55s
The video, “Every Life Has a Story” makes the same point. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2v0RhvZ3lvY

Soar with your people eyes and get involved in the lives of people in your home, neighborhood and place of work. You may join our Global Friends ministry that connects you with our international guests seeking friendship. Donate to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance and find out from Sue Hamblen what else you may do as the needs become clearer. Come to our VPC Connect Fair in a few weeks and see many ways you may make a difference.

For today, center yourself: Chin up - wait on the Lord. Feet up – renew your strength – game on. Then soar, as you take whatever adventure the Lord has for you, and see people in your life with the people eyes of Jesus and serve them as helpful to them.