

“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; his understanding is unsearchable. He 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.” Isaiah 40:28-31.

Dear Christian friends,

We begin a new year and I believe many people are hoping that 2024 will be a more hopeful year than the past few have been. While we have crawled out of the pandemic mode, we still experience the effects of it. COVID continues to circulate among us. The economic impact from the pandemic affects many people daily in their concern about personal finances and the cost of living. Another serious armed conflict has arisen with the Israeli- Palestinian confrontation continuing to happen. Many people that I meet express a weariness that they feel. There is real anxiety or fear present as they wonder whether they will be able to house and feed their family going into the future. There is a deep concern about social unrest escalating with all the grievances and addictions witnessed. There is a palpable fear that the conflicts and turmoil happening among various cultures and nations will escalate into a global war. There is a wondering where God is present in all this turmoil and misery.

A new year is a time in which many people make resolutions. It functions psychologically as an existential reset for one’s life. Resolutions normally are based on a desire for repentance. A person making those resolutions truly desires that their lifestyle takes a dramatically different direction from where they have been. The new year almost reflects the Jewish concept of Yom Kippur – the restart to a new chapter in life. So we can begin 2024 with at least some hope for it.

Chapter 40 of the Book of Isaiah begins with God’s call through the prophet to declare words of promise and comfort to God’s people. In that message God declares that though the people are living in their own well deserved punishment, God’s judgment against them will not be forever. The LORD God will restore his people to a former glory. God’s word is that he has not forgotten his people. This chapter of Isaiah ends with the verses cited above. There God declares the truth. We human beings in and of ourselves are truly finite in our physical and psychological resources. We will tire and faint. We will be over-powered. We will be like many people feel today: anxious, depressed and faint-hearted.

But people of faith, people in communion with God, do not need to despair. The LORD God will renew their strength, their faith and their hope. The LORD declares his people will be like the eagle, the mightiest of all birds. We close out 2023 with disappointment, concern and fatigue about us. But the God of all hope continues to seek out his people and works toward the fulfillment of his promise.

While we wait for the LORD we have the promise that he will renew us and lead us forth like a beacon of light in a world that is shrouded in the darkness of evil.

Let the light of Christ shine through you, so that the world might glorify your Father in heaven. Resolve to be that light in 2024.

In Christ forever,

Pastor Kevin.