

Sunday, February 4, 2024 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church
Bible Study
Fifth Sunday After the Epiphany
“With Wings Like Eagles”
Isaiah 40:21-31 and Mark 1:29-39

Open with a word of prayer

Gathering Time (5-10 minutes). Have participants answer: “Can you remember when the Lord renewed your strength?”

Isaiah 40:21-31 Context. The book of Isaiah falls into two main sections. Chapters 1-39 record the oracles and prophecies of Isaiah of Jerusalem, whose ministry spans the second half of the 8th century BC (roughly 742-690). Starting with chapter 40 the text reflects the ministry of an anonymous servant who suffered and was killed in the closing days of the Exile in Babylon which ended in 539 BC. Chapter 40 serves as an introduction to and announcement of God’s intention to redeem the people of Israel, set in the context of the “heavenly court”: God begins with a pronouncement to the heavenly host to bring comfort to God’s people as the desolation of Jerusalem – a just judgment for the sins of the people – is coming to an end. Various heavenly voices alternatively proclaim God’s sovereignty and record Israel’s despair and exhaustion that make it nearly impossible for the people to take in this incredible pronouncement. This week’s reading reflects both of these perspectives: the unrivaled power of the God of all creation and the sense of abandonment felt by Israel.

Mark 1:29-39 Context. This week’s reading reports the second in a series of healings that the evangelist has placed at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. After casting out the demon from the man in the synagogue, he heals Peter’s mother-in-law, and then many from the crowd that have gathered, silencing the demons he casts out. But Jesus’ mission is primarily to “proclaim the message,” not to perform miracles, or more properly “works of power.”

Read Isaiah 40:21-31 and Mark 1:29-39

What touches your heart, what do you hear in the scripture, what questions do you have, or what doesn’t make sense to you in the text?

Read Isaiah 40:21-31 and Mark 1:29-39 again -

Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

- *“The prophet [Isaiah] is asking us to pay attention to what already is. We are asked to know that God is among us, around us, within us already. Waiting in the Lord, in this*

case, means trusting, relying on, and being confident in the Lord.” Do you see God at work around you and/or within you?

- After Jesus healed Peter’s mother-in-law, she began “to wait on” Jesus and his disciples. She did not take time to rest. What does it say about the traditional role of women in society and within the communities of faith?
- Why did Jesus not want the demons to say who he was? (Mark 1:34b).
- According to Mark 1: 35-39, how were Jesus’ priorities set?
- What is the difference between “waiting upon” the Lord (Isaiah 40:31) and “waiting on” the Lord (Mark 1:31)? What do these two concepts mean to our walk with our Lord? How might you serve our Lord this week?

Closing Reflection Question

How is this scripture calling you to change, to see, to be or what might it be calling you to do?

Prayer (10 minutes). Share prayer requests and respond appropriately.

Sending Forth (2 minutes). After all, have shared, end by praying the following or a similar prayer:

Dear God, life can be hectic and tiring. We wear many different hats and have many responsibilities. Whenever we are exhausted and about to give up, please help us to have hope in you. Please give us the wisdom and determination to go to a quiet place to be in your presence and renew our strength to continue fulfilling your call upon our lives.

Amen.

And now we pray The Lord’s Prayer....

Our Father who art in Heaven

hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,

on earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power

and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.