

Scriptures:

Isaiah 40:21-31

Mark 1:29-39

A Healing Journey

Several things stood out for me today in these passages that connected with where I am in life these days. I actually think that is the purpose of scripture. To connect with our daily lives. If scripture is read as a story, a novel, or even a history book we are missing the point of it. So I want to invite you to join me for a moment in the re-reading of some of our passages today. I am going to invite us into a practice called Lectio Divina. It is a kind of meditation. "Lectio Divina", a Latin term, means "divine reading" and describes a way of reading the Scriptures whereby we gradually let go of our own agenda and open ourselves to what God wants to say to us. In the 12th century, a Carthusian monk called Guigo, described the stages which he saw as essential to the practice of Lectio Divina.

The first time I read the scripture I invite you to listen with your whole being - let it sink in. Get yourself into as comfortable a position as possible and then absorb the scripture. You may or may not want to close your eyes but be in a state of acceptance:

Isaiah 40: 21-31 ²¹Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? ²²It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to live in; ²³who brings princes to naught, and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing. ²⁴Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows upon them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble. ²⁵To whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal? says the Holy One. ²⁶Lift up your eyes on high and see: Who created these? He who brings out their host and numbers them, calling them all by name; because he is great in strength, mighty in power, not one is missing.

²⁷Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God"? ²⁸Have 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. ²⁹He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless.

³⁰Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; ³¹but 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.

The second time I read the scripture I invite you to remain in a posture of acceptance and at the end of this reading I will ask you to let me know what words or phrases stood out for you?

(Third time reading) This time as I read the passage I invite you to listen for what God is calling you to. What is God's message for you personally?

I began by saying these scriptures spoke to me personally and here is why - this passage and the one from Mark remind us of a source of healing. We heard the passage from Mark a couple times already also and so you know it is a healing story and yet did you notice what Jesus did in the midst of the passages when he wasn't healing?

vs. 35 says "In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed"

And what happened next? They began to search for him and they began to make demands on him and rather than running back into town to meet the needs of those who wanted more from him he said "Let us go on to the neighbouring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do."

And so that is what he and his disciples did. They went to a new place and offered healing but only after they had taken some time away for their own peace. Their own healing. I want to invite all of you on a wellness journey. Sea to Sky Community Services is doing this and they invited me to join along. I want to invite you also. I thought this might be fun to do for the weeks of lent so this is a bit of a heads up advertisement. This is their mindfulness bingo challenge - This is theirs but I am going to adapt one for us.

Mindfulness Bingo Challenge

It is a busy time in our agency with assessments, professional development, and reports. As we enter into this busy month, it's more important than ever to focus on developing our Mindfulness skills and take care of our overall well-being.

What is Mindfulness?

It is the psychological process and ability of being fully present and aware of the experiences occurring in the present moment; of drawing thoughtful attention to what we are doing and how we are reacting to what is going on. Research studies have indicated that the practice of mindfulness is strongly correlated with greater well-being and perceived health. Studies have documented both physical and mental health benefits as a result of mindful practices.

Send a nice text message to three people	Go to bed an hour early	Try a new exercise for 30 mins	Write down 5 things you are grateful for
Relax and listen to music	Try a new herbal tea instead of coffee	Cook a new healthy recipe	Go for a walk someplace new
List 4 things you like about yourself	Watch an inspiring TEDx Talk	Try a guided meditation exercise	Do one thing you've been putting off
Make a list of short-term goals	Take the day off from social media	Call someone you love and catch up	De-clutter your workspace or room

Mindfulness Bingo Challenge

I don't know if it is happening in your world but all around mine I am noticing a world of seeking mindfulness, and wellness. I am pretty sure this has been highlighted due to political upheaval worldwide. There is a reason our world is in the place it is in. The passage from Isaiah today was speaking to people in exile, who were weary and struggling. Today it seems to me that no matter what side of the political spectrum you are on, no matter what country you are from our world feels like it is struggling. Many are actually physically exiled, and others feel they are emotionally, morally and politically. That is likely why someone like Trump gets elected - he is the voice of those who were feeling exiled, voices that perhaps many of us were failing to hear and acknowledge. It is a bit of a wake up call for all of us to get on a journey to wholeness for all of creation, not just for those people we like. I have been on this journey striving for wholeness

for a very long time and it is nice to finally have some others close to me on the journey with me. Clergy have one of the highest burn out rates and I have been working hard with some of my colleagues to set up systems to work on that. This week the United church of Canada put out a wellness challenge also. With all of this I want to say the 'self-help' industry is massive but I honestly believe 'self-help' won't bring us to wholeness and wellness. We are discovering that generations of children who have been told they can be who ever they want to be and get what ever they want if they put themselves as the priority are struggling to make it in the 'real world.' Why are rates of depression sky rocketing? I don't mean to be a cynic but I firmly believe we have a world of mental illness epidemics partly (not solely) because that is simply not true. I don't mean don't strive or work hard or do whatever you can to succeed. I firmly believe in excellence (at times to my detriment in fact) but I believe God has created us individually and all of us have different gifts and skills and strengths. And we are to use those to make not just our lives better but the whole world better.

So right now. It is true that I am spending more time in prayer and meditation and I am drawing a lot more clear lines of what I can and cannot do but that is not only about me - that is about my family and all of you. Did you notice that Jesus healed Simon's mother-in-law - she had rested, healed and then she immediately began to serve. Jesus went off on his own to pray. He was called upon to go back and he said "no." I have healed some here, they have heard the word - now it is time for them to participate in the care and healing of one another so that we can move out to heal and care for others.

Friends - we should be ahead of the game on this wellness journey. We have a faith with a foundation and tools to use. Let me encourage you to join me this lent on a wellness journey that brings us to a place of wholeness and healing so that we can participate in healing our world and offer love to our neighbours.

Let us wait upon the Lord, renew our strength, mount up with wings like eagles, so that we too shall run and not be weary, walk and not faint.

Amen.