

Where Feet May Fail

Isaiah 40:28-31

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WATCH/LISTEN: www.fbcjc.org/sermon/where-feet-may-fail/

I realize that not all of you will share this opinion...but I love snow! I am always amazed at how beautiful it can be as it comes down and before it starts to melt and gets mixed with dirt. It seems so pure...so fresh.... so peaceful. I love snow days which mean unexpected and unscheduled gifts of time to slow down and simply enjoy life without feeling guilty that you should be doing something else. And....I love sledding at our family farm.

Just a few weeks ago, I was delighted when Dad invited our family home to go sledding. There were so many pieces that made this afternoon extra special. My dad has battled some health concerns recently so that he felt up to sledding made my heart happy. I genuinely love time with my family, so that added to my delight. And we go sledding on the mound on our family farm.....one of my absolute favorite places on earth.

It was the first time sledding on the beloved mound for my 4 year old niece Sloane. She wasn't wild about the snow in her face on her first trip down with her parents and sister, but she bravely tried again....this time nestled in between her mom and dad. Each time, her daddy pulled her back up the mound on the toboggan.

"Aunt Cara? Mimi? Will you sled with me?" My sister and I were thrilled to grant this request. Soon, Sloane was nestled in between us. She giggled with joy as we sped down the mound. What fun!

And then, it was time to climb back up the mound. I will admit, the task can be a bit intimidating. I took her hand and we took a few steps. It wasn't long before I heard her sweet voice say, "I think this is as far as my feet will go." Her Mimi quickly and creatively decided to play a game. "I think we could do 20 more steps. Let's try." And the three of us counted, "one, two, three..." How many steps do you think we could go? Well, maybe 15. One, two, three..... I think we could do 7... This continued with an occasional tentative voice saying, "I think this is as far as my feet will go." We kept going, and she made it all the way!

Have you ever felt like saying that to God? "I think this is as far as my feet will go." I'm guessing all of us have had moments where our feet may fail us...where we think we've gone as far as we can go. Things are just too hard....and we're just too weary. But even in the midst of our despair, our selfishness, or destruction, God finds ways to create the world anew. Our text today tells us that we can find our strength in Him who never gets tired or weary!

Sometimes God says, "Just hold on....I'll carry you through this part." And like my niece, we can rest as our Father pulls us along to the next spot on our journey.

I think about Elijah. Do you remember how he had just witnessed God's glory in a huge way and then he got scared....and weary....and discouraged....and burned out....and essentially said, "I think this is as far as my feet will go."

In 1 Kings 19:4-5 we read *"while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors."*

And then, he went to sleep.

God let him rest. And not only did God let him rest....but he made him breakfast! The Creator of the universe sent ravens to bring him bread and meat twice a day. And God also showed Elijah in the most creative and amazing way that He was there by physically passing by. Wow!

Last week, Melissa talked about Jonah. Talk about creativity! Instead of saying, this is as far as my feet can go, Jonah decided to see how far his feet could take him in the opposite direction from what God had directed. Our Creator has a sense of humor. God said I'm going to carry you. I'm going to carry you in the belly of a fish for a few days while you have time to rethink how to respond to my mission for you.

Sometimes God says, "Take my hand, let's walk together.... Just a few more steps." He gives us the strength we need to keep going. There are many examples throughout Scripture.

I think of how God provided manna for the Israelites in the wilderness. It was a daily reminder to depend on Him. He could have just eased their hunger pangs....but instead He taught them about His provision and His faithfulness.

I think of Joseph who went from pit to palace to pit to palace. Did you know that four times in his recorded story the statement is made, "The Lord was with Joseph..." Can't you imagine God saying, "I know this pit is not fun, Joseph....but we can make this journey together. Cling to me. Trust me. I know this palace is great, Joseph, but keep your eyes on me. Avoid the temptations....get your strength from me. Yes, you're back in the pit Joseph, but I'm going to use even this. Trust me. Give me your whole heart. See, Joseph? Look at how I have been and continue to be with you. Keep trusting me, and I am using you to change history! I am going to use what others planned for harm for my glory.

I think of Paul. He was not a stranger to challenges. There were multiple times where he could have called out, "I think this is as far as my feet can go!" but instead he kept voicing "I can do ALL things through Christ who strengthens me..." (Philippians 4:10-13).

Our text comes from the book of Isaiah today. Part of Isaiah points to judgment and doom, but it also points to the need for a coming messiah....the need for a savior....and the entire book points to

the glory of God... Chapter 40 begins a great section on comfort. It reminds us that God is more than whatever we can imagine. *“Do you not know? Have you not heard? Who can compare?” The Lord God is the everlasting God. The creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary. His understanding no one can fathom.” (Isaiah 40:28)*

Even in the midst of our selfishness and destruction, our God finds ways to create the world anew. He carries us. He walks beside us. He gives us strength. He shows us HIS glory.

**He gives strength to the weary
and increases the power of the weak.
Even youths grow tired and weary, and
young men stumble and fall;
but those who hope in the Lord will
renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles; they
will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint. Isaiah 40:29-31**

I remember another snowy winter very vividly. Early on a Sunday morning after fighting a battle with cancer, my mom entered the gates of heaven. Our family returned to the farm after going to town to make funeral arrangements. I will never forget what my dad said as we quietly got out of the car. “I think we should go sledding.” It was an odd statement and yet perfect and exactly what we needed. So my dad, my siblings, my nephews and nieces, and I all bundled up and headed to the beloved mound. I distinctly remember God speaking to my heart that day as I gazed at the beautiful landscape in front of me and watched my Dad head down the mound with my niece’s arms wrapped tightly around his neck....both with expressions of delight on their faces. I sensed God saying, “I know you’re hurting and your heart is broken. Trust me. I’m still God. Find your strength in Me. Joy will come again.”

As I spent time on the mound a few weeks ago I thought about how He has proven that over and over again. My faith in Him has grown tremendously. Even in the times where I have called out, “I think this is as far as my feet can go” He takes me deeper than where my feet can wander. My strength comes in Him.

There’s a song called “Oceans” by Hillsong United. As I have been preparing this message, the lyrics have been on my mind.

*You call me out upon the waters
The great unknown where feet may fail
And there I find You in the mystery
In oceans deep my faith will stand*

*And I will call upon Your Name
And keep my eyes above the waves*

*When oceans rise
My soul will rest in Your embrace
For I am Yours and You are mine*

*Your grace abounds in deepest waters
Your sovereign hand will be my guide
Where feet may fail and fear surrounds me
You've never failed and You won't start now
So I will call upon Your Name
And keep my eyes above the waves
When oceans rise
My soul will rest in Your embrace
For I am Yours and You are mine*

*Spirit lead me where my trust is without borders
Let me walk upon the waters
Wherever You would call me
Take me deeper than my feet could ever wander
And my faith will be made stronger
In the presence of my Savior*

Oh Friends. He wants more for us than to simply give us what we think we can handle on our own...for us to lead lives that are comfortable. I don't know what season you are in today, but I believe He wants us to trust Him without limits...without borders. He takes our hand and promises to walk with us each step of the way. He wants to grow our faith as we follow Him beyond where our feet can take us.

Do you not know?

Have you not heard?

Who can compare?

**The Lord is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.**

**He will not grow tired or weary,
and his understanding no one can fathom.**

**He gives strength to the weary
and increases the power of the weak.**

**Even youths grow tired and weary, and
young men stumble and fall;**

**but those who hope in the Lord will
renew their strength.**

**They will soar on wings like eagles; they
will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.**

Let's pray.