

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany  
Year B

Isaiah 40:21-31  
Psalm 147:1-12, 21c  
1 Corinthians 6:12-20  
Mark 1:29-39

One of the most terrifying notions is amnesia - not being able to remember who you are or anything about your life. Just ordinary forgetfulness is bad enough, but amnesia just takes that unsureness to a much higher level. And, while we may want to forget aspects of our past, no one wants to be totally devoid of all remembrance of their past.

Isaiah is asking the people of Israel if they have amnesia - have they forgotten who reigns in heaven, who created all that surrounds them, who watches over the Israelites and planted them on the land they inhabit? We, also, share in that amnesia, forgetting who is in charge, who brings in the harvest from the seeds we have planted.

You may be wondering why we just sang the hymn "You who dwell in the shelter of the Lord." In the movie *Chariots of Fire*, the lead character, Olympic runner Eric Liddell reads this passage in a church in Paris, France while this music plays in the background. We may never know why the makers of that movie selected this music for this scene, but the words give us the answer to the question we might ask, who is in charge of this world? That is the question Isaiah is reminding the people of Israel to consider. It is when we lift up our eyes on high, we see who created us. It is only when we feel weak and helpless that we are able to allow ourselves to experience the power and grace of God that lifts us up on eagle's wings.

This text for Isaiah, then, is really about us and our relationship with God. We are amnesiacs, selectively remembering what we want to remember and conveniently forgetting the rest. Usually what we remember, though, is all of the negatives in our lives, how we failed in this endeavor or that relationship; all of the awful things we have done in the past. Or, on the other hand, we might only remember all of the wonderful things in our lives; all of the triumphs we have had.

As theological amnesiacs, we fall apart whenever a crisis hits. Whether it is a dire medical diagnosis, a financial setback, or the loss of a job, we fall apart. Why, because we forget who is truly in charge. God has not gone off to a far country and forgotten about us. While those around us might feel abandoned by God, we at St. Matt's know that God is still here and is waiting for us to call. Israel may have forgotten about God over and over again, but I feel that we are reminded continually of God's mercy and grace.

We have a choice - act like the people of Israel and forget God is always with us, or we can look at all of the benefits we receive from God. Two weeks ago, at the Annual Meeting, we looked at a budget that, for many, would have been disastrous. For many years, we have looked at ever increasing budget deficits. However, we have also seen that all of the bills get paid and there is money in the bank at the end of the year. Why do we not panic and feel that the end is near?

Because we are not amnesiacs; we have seen God bless us year after year. And, we know that God will raise us up as on eagle's wings and makes us shine like the sun to those who need a meal or a word of comfort. We remember that God does hold us in the palm of his hand.