

Have You Not Heard?
Isaiah 40: 28-31
Don Lincoln

The weight of this day is palpable. Never won the Super Bowl. Against a team that has won a thousand times. But how quickly we forget. The Philadelphia Eagles won in 1948 and 1949. There was no Super Bowl, but they won the national championship game. That may have been before your time – it was a little before mine. Let me fast forward a bit. Some of you certainly remember the 1960 win?

Some of you may even remember that a member of Westminster participated in **THAT** NFL championship game. John “Tank” Highberger, officiated at that championship game in 1960 at Franklin field, 67,000+ in attendance, when the Philadelphia Eagles beat the Green Bay Packers 17-13 – giving Vince Lombardi his only playoff loss ever.

How quickly we forget our history!!! Even worse, how quickly we are then consumed by our own anxiety, our own focused fears, and forget there are four teams that have never even BEEN to a super bowl, much less never won one. The **Cleveland Browns**, the **Detroit Lions**, the **Houston Texans**, and the **Jacksonville Jaguars** – **NEVER** been to a Super Bowl.

So, it is to a group like us that Isaiah is writing – Israel – not at the peak of its game, but in exile in Babylon – weeping by the rivers of Babylon, dreaming of the super days of Old Jerusalem.

The crisis of the Babylonian exile has caused the people of God to forget their own winning story, the story of God’s dependability, the story of God’s love for the people of Israel – the saving of the Red Sea; the delivery of the law on the mountain; of the welcome into the promised land. NO! They don’t remember at all. Israel is suffering from theological amnesia.

Babylon seems so strong and threatening, but it is Israel’s forgetfulness that represents the real threat to the community of faith. An entire generation has lost hope – their ears shut and their eyes closed. That is the real threat to the people of God.¹

And this text is a theological slap in the face. “Have you not known? Have you not heard?” This is an appeal to the public record. God has not forgotten you – why are you forgetting God? The Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth. He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. Have you not known? Have you not heard?

Today others are waiting – not for their team to win the super bowl, but they are those who are indeed weary and exhausted. They're not worried about what the score will look like in the fourth quarter this evening, but rather they're worried about where their next meal will come from, where their children will sleep tonight; worried whether their exhaustion from chemotherapy means it's working; or worried with despair because the demons of addiction never sleep.

How is it that those weary, those who have fallen, who have fainted will know the MIGHTY God whose praises Isaiah sings, is indeed at work, unrelentingly, to sustain the cosmos, strengthen the weak, and restore those who have fallen?² How will they know?

Have you not known, have you not heard, church – that the living Word of the Mighty God has been given to you – placed in your hands – and available through you to the entire world? Have you not known? Have you not heard? Part of how God brings hope to those who have grown faint and to those who have weary, is through you and through me.

We listened to a young mother two weeks ago in the Family Promise video. Family Promise houses homeless families in 13 churches in southern Chester County. Westminster does it for one week every quarter when we have people living in our building. The young mother said, "You find yourself in this terrible, dark place – and then there is a light – a light at the end of a tunnel." And we remember that the ordinary lives of people like you and me can become, at any given moment, the very arena of the activity of the Holy One of Israel as God continues to love and bless the world through us! Whether it is through what we put in soup pots following worship today or what we will do again in two weeks when Family Promise comes again to Westminster, to find warmth, shelter, and safety.

And church, lest you and I forget the winning season to which you and I belong – we belong to a mighty and everlasting God who lifts up the powerless, who picks up the faint and the weary, who chooses and uses us to show God's love for the world. Lest we forget, God gave us this table, the power and the wonder of this great love given to us and poured out through us into the world so the entire world would not grow faint or grow weary but mount up with wings like eagles, and the hope of God's love.

May it be so. AMEN.

1. William J. Carl, III; Feasting On The Word, Year B, Vol. 1, Fifth Sunday after Epiphany.
2. David Lose, "In the Meantime....."; www.davidlose.com; February 4, 2018.