

Community Church of Issaquah  
Sunday, November 3, 2024

## But God, We're Tired

*A Message by Rev. Vincent Lachina*

Without a doubt, there are days when each of us want to include in our prayers or conversations with God that we are truly tired. Perhaps we need to be reminded that God already knows that. It's been a chorus for thousands of years that will likely continue for hundreds more or until Christ comes again. Our Scripture passage today helps us to focus on what it was like to be tired in the days of the prophet Isaiah. It's a life we can't quite picture. There were continuous tribal wars that seemed to have no end and threatened the very existence of the Israelites who were persecuted before the days of Abraham. We have a hard time wrapping our minds around what being tired meant to them. So when Isaiah asks Jacob why he was complaining, it was obvious that Jacob was tired of waiting for the promised coming of a Messiah.

You and I grow weary or tired in different ways, but in truth we do get tired. Perhaps we get tired of the hate filled campaigns during this election. Perhaps we get tired of the rise in the costs of everything from food to homes. Perhaps we get tired of our inability to master technology fast enough to maintain even the easiest computer. Or perhaps we get tired of losing those whom we have loved but were taken from us long before we were ready. And what about

being tired as our bodies age and we encounter more and more physical challenges that we never had when we were young. There are a million reasons why we get tired.

So for Isaiah to scold Jacob for complaining, he might be just as well talking to you and me. Why do you complain? sounds more like a parent asking you the question than a Biblical prophet, but either way, it's said with a smirk. Why did Jacob or why do we think that God doesn't know where we are in life or that God ignores or disregards us? When we grow weary or tired believing that what's going on is beyond the awareness of God, we're much like Jacob in these Bible verses. There are times we are tired physically, emotionally, and even spiritually, and if we were to be honest, we just want to quit or give up, sometimes thinking that God doesn't know what's happening to us.

Growing up back in the days before there was such a thing as the internet or flat-screen television or cell phones with computer games for kids. We used to make up our own games or just sometimes play the standards – Hide and Go Seek, Kick the Can, Red Rover- Red Rover, Jacks or Pick-up Sticks. Do you remember any of those? Well, in the South, boys also wrestled around a lot. Back in the early 50's growing up on Fairmont Avenue in Memphis, Tennessee, my brother and I would often fall victim to the older kid across the street, John Tom Elkins.

Oh, did I also tell you that in the South, most people have two names – John Tom, Jimmy Lee, Peggy Sue, Betsy Ann.

There's no logical reason for it. It's just the culture. Like doling out nicknames for boys like Bubba, Pee Wee, Junior and such. I can't tell you mine or I'd be embarrassed. It sounds a bit stupid now that I hear myself saying it, and in truth, it was. Anyway, back to John Tom. He was a few years older than my brother and me, and was our neighborhood hero. Even though I knew I would never win, I loved the challenge of wrestling with him. It usually took about 45 seconds before he was yelling, "Say uncle!" and I would repeat it loudly just to get him off the top of me.

It seems that we learn at an early age that when something bigger than us holds us down, we can just say 'uncle' and be done with it. Don't like a TV show? Hit the remote and be done with it. Hate your job? Just quit and leave. Don't like the way things are going at church? Don't show up next Sunday. Day in and day out, you and I are confronted with decisions that require us to either stop or move on. We either quit or we continue. So what is it in our psyche that tells us when it's time to mentally say 'uncle'? Not being a psychologist, I don't have all the technical answers for that. But being a fellow struggler like you, I've learned a few things maybe I can share if you'd like to hear. When I told a friend about this message, it dawned on me that you could make that very real decision this morning and just say 'uncle' in the middle of this message and quit listening because you might be tired physically or attention based.

Assuredly, the soundest reason we have for giving up is when we know for sure there is no positive outcome that can happen. That was the attitude Jacob had, and it isn't that different from yours or mine. While my mother was visiting her aunt in Illinois several years ago, she had a massive stroke and went into a coma. The EMT's did not know that she had a DNR (do not resuscitate) order and was adamantly against being on life-support. She was connected to a ventilator, a feeding tube and several other medical devices. After we had her transported back to a hospital in Birmingham where she lived, my siblings and I began the complex and gut-wrenching process of having her taken off life support. Even though the doctors advised that there was no brain activity, we had to fight the hospital to make it happen. That took two weeks. Knowing when to bring that ordeal to an end was difficult but it was one in which we knew there could be no positive outcome. So in a way, my sisters and brother and I said 'uncle,' we had Mother disconnected, and my mother passed away on Mother's Day morning. She was tired physically and it was time to let her go.

There's another world of decisions that aren't always black and white. So many of these decisions are simply based on lack of interest or the desire to move on to other more interesting things. The New York Times Crossword Puzzle is always a challenge, but when the number of blank spaces outnumbers the filled in ones, I grow tired and put it down. Diets of all varieties draw me in at first – Paleo, Adkins, Weight Watchers. But the reality that I must do

two very difficult things always causes me to say ‘uncle.’ First they require you to give up all the foods you love, and as if that’s not bad enough, they keep pushing this thing called “exercise.” It’s common to get tired of trying so hard to be thin again so we quit. We sign up to be on a church committee, and at first, it’s fun. But in the course of time, we lose interest and decide that it isn’t for us, so we get tired of it and quit.

Sometimes there is also the reality that we quit because we failed. One year I decided I should be creative and make my own Christmas gifts. If Martha Stewart could do it, why couldn’t I? It was a disaster. The loaves of fruit cake could have been used for door stops. The candles were small cups of wax with the strings sunk to the bottom with no way to light the wick. The little tile coasters with the pictures glued to them? The photos peeled off the first time anything wet was placed on them. I was a failure, so I quit. And I have gladly left those adventures to the Martha’s of the world.

It’s not unusual for each of us to come to a place of making a life-decision and find ourselves quitting because we failed. What should be simple car repairs, or household plumbing fixes that anyone could do, or sewing simple projects, or painting a room - the list could go on for quite a while. But you get the point. There are things that we attempt and fail, and so we cry ‘uncle’ and give up the challenge. My own list of these would be long, I fear. Absolutely no other personal fault of mine, at least in my

mother's eyes, was more evident in my youth than my lack of what she called "stick-to-it-tive-ness." With age, I have improved a bit on that, but I still find it easier to quit once I have failed than to stick to it and am personally tired. Just tired.

There is undoubtedly one aspect of each of our lives in which we refuse to cry 'uncle.' Those are the passions that we have and hold onto no matter what, and would never call it quits on. I so often have people ask me, "Why do you keep doing this pastor business? Why don't you just quit or seriously retire?" It's a good question, especially these days. Let me share with you a poem by Dag Hammarskjöld, the former Secretary General of the United Nations who died in a plane crash in Africa. It kind of sums up my reason why I don't quit my calling even when I am tired.

**Tired and Lonely**  
**by Dag Hammarskjöld**

Tired  
And lonely,  
So tired  
The heart aches.  
Meltwater trickles  
Down the rocks,  
The fingers are numb,  
The knees tremble.  
It is now,  
Now, that you must not give in.  
On the path of the others

Are resting places,  
Places in the sun  
Where they can meet.  
But this  
Is your path  
And it is now,  
Now that you must not fail  
Weep  
If you can,  
Weep,  
But do not complain.  
The way chose you --  
And you must be thankful.

In my many years of ministry, I've asked myself that kind of question over and over again, mostly about my calling. When I was fired from my church position and shunned because I divorced and came out, why not just give up and stop going to church? When I was physically escorted out of the church, or when all of my personal belongings from my church office were dumped in my driveway on a snowy Kansas February day, or when all those I thought were my church friends turned away from me, why not just say 'uncle' and be done with it? I could have. Many people have left the church for a lot less than that. But I refuse to give up just because I get tired. I still do.

When you and I feel like there is some divine calling or leadership to do the things we do, quitting never is an option. We follow our passions, we do what we feel called to do, and we are strengthened by it. We become parents and grandparents and we are called to take on those roles

and we do the best we can. There are many times it is tiring, but we keep doing what we have to do. We become church leaders and workers because we feel that's what we are led to do, and we give it our all. We don't quit just because something doesn't turn out as we wish. We just keep working because we believe that what we are doing matters, and it does. When there is a calling or some type of divine leadership, we don't think about quitting. We just continue to search and to do and to try and to get up again if we fall. We just don't say 'uncle.'

It all boils down to this: regardless of when and how tired you get of anything that happens in your life, always remember what Isaiah told Jacob. God is never tired or weary. God is always with us. Let me just repeat what Isaiah told Jacob. "Do you not know? Have you not heard? 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.

Are you tired? Think you want to say "uncle"? We have much left to do, so rest up, ask God for more strength, and see what the Lord can do for you. You definitely do not want Isaiah to ask you why you're complaining. Remember the words of the poem, "The way chose you, and you must be thankful."