

“WORDS THAT SUSTAIN”
Nate Taylor
Wilton Presbyterian Church
May 17, 2020

You know what it's like. You know you will need to prepare your words and speak life into a hard situation. So you get ready. At night, you make sure the computer is plugged in before going to bed so that it will be charged for that task ahead.

You set the alarm with an energetic ringtone to get you up and going so that you can have a productive day.

In the morning it takes raw will power to leave the comfort of bed,
But each step of preparing for the day is made with purpose
Because of the importance of today's task.

Today is the day you have to find the words to uplift a friend.

As you go to your favorite writing spot, your brain is racing through different possible directions.

You get to your writing spot and plop your things down, and out comes the computer that has been waiting for this moment.

You open up a new message, and then it happens,
an expression falls over your face
Just as blank as the page in front of it.

Is there a word coming?

What word could possibly sustain the weary?

Our text today is a story of empire and exile,
Deserving of yellow text rising up into a starry universe.
The Assyrian empire has fallen to the Babylonians

And now, the king of Judea sees an opportunity for freedom in the midst of the transition of power.

He leads a rebellion against the Babylonian empire.

But the emperor sends the Babylonian army to end the rebellion.

Jerusalem falls

the young king is taken into exile.

the temple is stripped of its treasures.

And ultimately destroyed.

God's home is lost...

Then arises one who ignites hope into this situation of desperation.

when everything is gone.

Your way of living is gone, the comfort of a space to worship God is gone, and now you live in an unfamiliar land surrounded by the ones who did this to you.

one rises up out of the exile to give hope

They speak a word that sustains the weary

They speak of a return.

But the job is not easy. They are beaten for their message of hope. Insulted and spit upon. Because they stand against the status quo that benefits from the suffering and oppression of people. People who have already lost so much and are exhausted and hurting.

This one is a danger to anyone who benefits from the systems of oppression that maintain the status quo instead of meeting the needs of the suffering.

This one endures the attacks and points the way home.

Now, too, the situation is growing desperate. We are suffering.

Our training teaches us to check our privilege and remind ourselves that our suffering is not as bad as others. And it is important to realize that others suffer more than we do. But while there are certainly people

suffering more deeply than anyone who will ever hear my words, it does not change the fact that you are suffering now. People like to remind others that things could always be worse as if that somehow lessens the reality of current suffering. But the truth is it doesn't. Just like no-one goes up to people when they are having a great day and tries to get them to feel worse by telling them "Well it always could be better." No-one feels better when they are suffering deeply and someone says "Well it always could be worse." We need to recognize and name the reality of our suffering without allowing it to be diminished or blown out of proportion. And the truth is people are hurting all around us, and on top of it all, we pretend that we aren't hurting too.

In the midst of so much hurting, so much suffering, who can bring hope to the weary now?

You can.

You are the new hope growing.

The world can be cold and cruel

But God has given you the power to sustain the weary with a word.

You have already brought hope for the future of this world.

You are the hope for the church and you are the hope for those weary and suffering.

It will not be easy. You will be insulted and criticized and maybe even spit upon and beaten. By those afraid of what your word of hope means. Because your hope means change must happen.

But who will give you hope?

If you are sustaining others with a word... What word will sustain you?

What sustained the servant in our text as they were beaten?

The servant was sustained by the Lord God.

Sustained by seeing other people's hope.

Sustained by seeing lives changed.

Sustained by seeing people catch a glimpse of returning home.

When you know that the word you have been given comes from God, you can stand by that word.

So, when you find yourself at a loss for words, staring at that blank page bearing down on you, looking for a word to sustain the weary, remember you have done this before, and you will do it again. Remember all of the times that you have made a difference. Remember each kind and loving word that gave hope to the weary. Remember each time someone said "thank you, I needed that right now." Remember that God has given you a well-trained tongue that can sustain the weary with a word.

You can be a danger to anyone who maintains the status quo instead of meeting the needs of the suffering.