

How much does the world weigh? I ask because some of us know. The weight of the world is on our shoulders. Maybe this is a recent development, but I suspect this is a burden we are all too used to carrying. We groan and bear it.

What else can we do? Someone has to carry it! These things aren't just going to take care of themselves! “If it is to be, it's up to me,”¹ we say, but there are days when we know what the weight of the world is; scientists guess it's about 6.6 sextillion tons; but, we know what the world weighs – it weighs too much; it weighs more than we can bear, and even as we put our backs into it one more time, we feel our strength slipping away. How much longer can we carry it? How much longer must we carry it?

The Beatles sang, “Boy, you're gonna carry that weight, carry that weight a long time. Boy, you're gonna carry that weight, carry that weight a long time.”²

Is that our fate, or is there another option? Is there a gift waiting for us this Advent season; a gift we can receive when we acknowledge that we are longing for more? We are weary.

✠ We Are Weary

Isaiah's words sing in our souls; we hear them and we long for more: *Isaiah 40:28–31 (NRSV) Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.*

We long for that “*mount up with wings like eagles...run and not be weary...walk and not faint*” experience, but before we get there, let's first try to understand our weariness; “*even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted.*”

¹ Quote attributed to Henry Ford.

² <http://www.metrolyrics.com/carry-that-weight-lyrics-beatles.html>. December 5, 2012.

John Calvin offers this interpretation: [Isaiah] appears to allude to what happens every day, that the stronger any person is, the more boldly does he attempt what is exceedingly difficult, and the consequence is, that they who are naturally more robust seldom live to be old men. They think nothing too hard or difficult, they attempt everything, and rashly encounter all dangers; but they give way in the middle of their course, and suffer the punishment of their rashness. The same thing befalls those who are proud of any gift which God has bestowed on them, and are full of confidence in themselves; for all that they have received from God is reduced to nothing, or rather turns to their ruin and destruction; and thus they are justly punished for their insolence.³

These are strong words, but when the weight of the world is on our shoulders, it is fair to ask, have we taken on too much? Are we living within our limits or do we “think nothing too hard or difficult [and] attempt everything?”

Sometimes the answer to “if it is to be, it’s up to me” is “it is not to be.”

Sometimes the weight doesn’t have to be on our shoulders. Sometimes we can say, “No. No, I’m not going to do that.” “No, I’m not responsible for that.” “No, not me, not now, not today.”

Ah, but the weight doesn’t leave us without a fight. “But if we say that, who will do it?” “If we don’t start now, then who, when?”

We put the weight of the world on our shoulders; we choose to bear it; and we get used to it. We defend it in the name of “faithfulness,” “responsibility,” and “love.” But the day comes when we feel faint and powerless; the day comes when the weight is too much.

That day feels like the worst day of our lives; but it may well be our best; at the very least, that day paves the way for better days. We take the first step to the new life we are longing for when we admit to ourselves, “We are weary.”

✠ We Are Waiting

³ Calvin, J. (1998). *Isaiah* (electronic ed.). Calvin’s Commentaries (Is 40:30). Albany, OR: Ages Software.

When the weight of the world is on our shoulders, it's on the wrong shoulders. Nothing good will come of it. Nothing.

So what's the alternative? We choose to put the weight of the world on our shoulders; what else could we choose?

We can choose to wait on the Lord. *Isaiah 40:31 (NRSV) ... those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.*

To wait is to trust in Jesus' promise: *Matthew 11:29–30 (NRSV) Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*”

To wait is to trust what while circumstances come, they also go, but God lasts, and those who trust God last.

To wait is to confess that we are who we are; finite human beings who live within limits; and God is Who God is; the Creator who makes all things new; our Redeemer, born to set his people free; and our Sustainer, Who does not grow tired and weary, not even of us. God is Who God is; the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

It's kind of ironic; the value of waiting is one of the hidden lessons of this holy season. We make our lists, check them twice, and hope Santa didn't notice the naughty, just the nice. Then, we wait, and we think about how great it will be when we get that new toy, like an 18 inch chainsaw! Or maybe, a great new outfit – like a Steelers jersey! We can just see ourselves on Christmas day wearing that jersey as we put that chainsaw through its paces! But until Christmas day, we are waiting.

This Advent, listen to the longing. Wait for the Lord. Take the weight of the world off of your shoulders. Put it where it belongs. Put it in God's hands. Pray about it. Hand it over. Let it go, and be at peace. Rest easy weary one.

Pope John XXIII said, “A peaceful man does more good than a learned one.”⁴ He knew how difficult it is to be a peaceful man. He said, “It often happens that I

⁴December 7, 2012. <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/p/popejohnxx378393.html#eEVXIr2h8sGZ3x6j.99>

wake up at night and begin to think about a serious problem and decide I must tell the Pope about it. Then I wake up completely and remember that I am the Pope.”⁵ When that happened, here’s what he did. He prayed, “Lord, it’s your Church. I’m tired. I’m going to bed.”

What’s on your mind? What is the weight on your shoulders? What is wearying you? Name it. “My health, my money, my family, my future; Lord, they’re not mine. They are yours. I’m weary. I’m going to bed.”

This Advent, listen to the longing. Wait for the Lord. Take the weight of the world off of your shoulders. Put it where it belongs. Put it in God’s hands. Pray about it. Hand it over. Let it go, and be at peace. This Advent, wait for the Lord, and you will mount up with wings like eagles. You will run and not be weary. You will walk and not faint. Your strength will renew when you listen to the longing and pray, “Lord, I am weary.” Amen.

⁵ *Op cit.*