



“PROJECT APOCALYPSE”
SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 40: 28-31
GRACE COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
ASHEVILLE, NC
Sunday, October 26, 2025
The Rev. Dr. Marcia Whitney Mount Shoop, Pastor

Isaiah 40: 28-31

28 Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. God does not faint or grow weary; God’s understanding is unsearchable.

29 God gives power to the faint
and strengthens the powerless.

30 Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted,

31 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.

It’s been an exhausting week, if you want to know the truth about it. I’m not sleeping very well these days. How about you?

What’s keeping you up at night?

For me, it’s complicated. There are lots of ways I could tell myself stories about why I am not sleeping.

1. Get used to it, Marcia, you’re a post menopausal woman. Your days of sleeping through the night are over. Now you understand why your

grandmother was in the kitchen frying bacon at 4am when you would visit her in the summertime.

2. Stress! You have too much on your plate. You've got to fix your life so you have less stress.
3. PTSD. October is always hard for me. Bad things happened in October way back when. My body remembers and part of my fight response is to not sleep. I have to stay awake, my fire fighter parts are telling my brain, because sleep is dangerous. You let your guard down when you are asleep. When you've been stalked and terrorized early on in your formative years of life, your body can learn hyper vigilance as a way to survive.

All these things are true. But if I look at those things not as an isolated individual, but as a child of God, as a part of the elegant ecosystem of this world, as a tangled up part of the family of things, I know I haven't been sleeping these last several days, not just because of what's happening with me, but because of what's happening with us.

By us, I mean Grace Covenant, I mean Buncombe County, I mean North Carolina, I mean the United States of America, I mean the whole planet, I mean the multiverse. I'm not sleeping because we are not ok and my body is carrying it, feeling it, looking for ways to live through it and find safety.

What's keeping me up at night is white supremacy's latest swindle.

This go round, it's actually all written down by the Heritage Foundation in the form of "Project 2025." It's all right there—they are coming for our full humanity—Black people, immigrants, women, LGBTQIA—they are coming for our bodies—for our ability to live in communities that want to tell the truth about how greed is killing us.

Greed is killing us, not critical race theory, not immigrants, not books about gender fluidity, not single moms.

Project 2025 spells out the latest white supremacy con game. If you've taken a look at it, everything that is happening right now is clearly written there. It's a game plan and they are following it to the tee.

The first President who received their game plan from the Heritage Foundation was Ronald Reagan. And it showed. Some people are nostalgic about Reagan because he was a charmer, more polite and polished than the current occupant of the White House. But this effort to socially engineer a culture where the economy is built on the backs of the many for the comfort of the few was at the core of Reagan's policies—that really weren't his policies at all—they were the policies outlined in the Heritage Foundation's game plan back then.

Well, let me stop right there and pause—because it's a lot to metabolize and that's why I'm up at night. And maybe you are, too. It's hard to sleep when America's reckoning for the lies we've lived with for over 250 years as a nation are trying to tighten their grip on us and cut off the oxygen of the truth of what America needs.

But let's give some more oxygen to the truth.

We don't need to restore white men to their rightful place at the top of the power hierarchy. We don't need to tell kids lies about our country's history so white people can be "comfortable." We don't need to protect sports from transgender athletes or our communities from violent immigrants. We don't need to destroy democracy. We need to actually get serious finally about being a democracy.

The thing that's keeping me up at night is this toxic poison of white supremacy—if you've done your work, you can see it very clearly all around us. But what's keeping me up at night is even more difficult to deal with—it's the white supremacy within me.

When I read Isaiah 40, I hear God calling us to get clear on what is making us tired.

The exiled people that God is addressing in Isaiah 40 are chalking up their weariness to God not providing for them, to God receding from them, to God forsaking them.

The Divine Council speaking to the people in this passage of Isaiah tells them they are barking up the wrong tree if they are blaming God for their weariness, for their exhaustion.

The exiled people are looking for God's favor, God's love in the powers and principalities. And they are attributing their exile, the impact of the ways systems of power move bodies around the planet to serve the wealthy somehow to God's power and presence in the world.

But it's not God, but the powers and principalities that weather human bodies, it's not God's ways, but the ways systems of oppression wear us down that make us work at cross purposes with ourselves and with each other.

The Divine Council wants to make sure the exiled people get clear on the cause of their weariness—it's not God receding, it's humanity rupturing, forgetting how we're made and who we should listen to about how we're made and how to heal.

In other words, the Divine Council say, I'm not making you tired, you all are making yourselves tired because you've forgotten who you are, you are looking for your identity in the kinds of power that will only end up depleting you instead of in the kind of power that will always renew you!

The exiled people were up at night thinking God had left them in a foreign land. God says, I'm right here, wherever you are.

You're tired because you have forgotten that I am right here, not contained in a certain land or a certain building or a certain institution. I have asked you to trust that I will provide you with the energy and stamina you need to be my people. You are tired because you've forgotten who you are and you've forgotten who God is!

It's not the work of church that's making me tired, it's the way the work of the church is distorted by white supremacy that makes me tired. It's the way white supremacy still lives in me that makes me tired.

Our pledge campaign this year is its own apocalypse.

How many of us are willing to truly pool our resources to create the world we dream of together?

GCPC isn't just a congregation, we are an emergent community on the leading edge of much needed collective transformation in our larger culture. What that means is, we are doing something hard and beautiful together. We are building something new—something different than the ways churches traditionally function.

The work of mutual liberation is a repellent for lots of high wealth white people. And discomfort makes white people seek comfort—a place where they don't have to look at the way the world is working and the impacts of our current social arrangement in the United States and around the globe.

So that means at different junctures, we have apocalypses, where we see the truth about how the work we are doing together changes us. And the way this work we are doing together shows us how far we've come and where we each are on the journey. Those apocalypses also show us who is not with us and how the practices of the past may not work in the future.

Stewardship has always been a stressful time for me—there's pressure around raising a certain money so this whole church thing can all work every year.

Right now, we don't have the pledges we need. Truth be told, we didn't this year either. Last fall we really didn't even have a stewardship campaign. We were in the midst of doing millions of dollars of rent support for our region—the money poured in, and it poured out the door to stabilize our community. We did that work sacrificially, we did that work faithfully, trusting in God's economy. There was energy, provision, and resources in that work!

That's us being an emergent community—responding, adapting, and building new systems and practicing our values and trusting that there will be enough.

This passage in Isaiah is written to a weary community struggling to find its footing in hostile surroundings. Sometimes our weariness in hostile territory is when the starkest apocalypses show themselves.

There is always the impulse to restore the past or escape to a more promising place. But when so much is lost, building something new is where God usually calls us humans to make life right where we are. Building something new means letting some things go. Building something new means not being afraid of the inner apocalypse each of us needs to have to find our place in this emerging newness, in the present moment, in where we are right now.

The best thing we can do in times like these is to pool our resources—they actually go further and we can do more to mitigate the harm of extreme wealth disparities when we invest in systems of mutual aid and collective resource sharing.

At its best, that's what a faith community can be and do with our resources. The problem is churches get caught up in false binary thinking. We can think of the church as just another institution asking for money set over and against our needs as individuals. As if giving money to church is taking money from ourselves. That's the false binary that white supremacy teaches. What is giving money to the church is investing in your well being by investing in the well being of our collective. It's not about giving something away to maintain

an institution, it's about building something new so you can truly be at home in your own life in community. We're here to follow Jesus, not maintain an institution. And He's calling us to come toward each other, not to pull back.

What keeps you up at night?

Maybe it's really the fear of there not being enough to go around, or enough for us to be who God is calling us to be.

The powers and principalities want us tired, afraid, and reactive.

God invites us to trust that we will have the energy we need, the courage we need, the ability to respond that we need when our lives are truly fueled by the yearning for God's creation to be healed.

Project 2025 is having its day. And that is not some way off in Washington DC kind of thing. It's coming for us.

- Disaster relief (10%)
- SNAP Benefits (12-13% of the US population—about 42 million people, in NC 1.42 million people, about 12% of the state's population) And SNAP benefits don't help all the families that actually need it. The amounts are already low— a few hundred dollars a month for families with multiple children.

We need more mutual aid, not less. But as the vice grip tightens on working families, people with resources can start to feel nervous, too. And start to give less, start to feel like it's not the time to be generous.

White supremacy teaches us to hoard resources and think of our resources as our own—that each of us is an isolated individual separated out from everyone else. White supremacy teaches us scarcity. So when things get hard, we can think we better hoard some more.

Project 2025 is a big push to the past. How do we answer it, counterbalance it, neutralize it with an even bigger push toward the future.

The world won't change if we aren't willing to change. And we don't change in isolation, we change together. I believe in what God is doing at Grace Covenant. And I believe it is not about Grace Covenant—it is about the whole human family being healed, God's whole creation being healed.

You see what's keeping me up at night is really the white supremacy within me that tries to be in charge when things get stressful. It's the part that tells me I can't trust all of you, it's the part that tells me I'm not safe here, it's the part that tells me we're all going to turn on each other. That's the deep socialization of whiteness—that when the going gets rough, batten down the hatches and don't let anyone see you sweat, don't tell the truth, tell people what they want to hear. That when things are hard, people turn on you and turn on the community.

We can learn to know our own inner resources. We can learn to trust the resources around us. Divine Love tells us it's always been true that we have what we need within us and around us. That the apocalypse God has been calling the human family toward all along.

How about Project Apocalypse instead of Project 2025. We're not going back, we're not tired of the work of mutual liberation, we're tired of white supremacy. We're not hoarding our resources, we're sharing them so we can all get free together.

Thanks be to God!