

Airplanes and Eagles

"But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew [their] strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; [and] they shall walk, and not faint." ~ Isaiah 40:31

In a sermon recently, I used the image of an airplane to describe the journey I believe God calls us to take as Christians. Today, maybe that image can take wings as we consider it together.

Faith can be seen as a mighty airplane, a 747 or larger, going places as it is fueled and ready. The real tragedy is if that airplane spent its life sitting on the tarmac, having never taken off, rusting away with the years.

Individuals, churches, the world, they can all be that airplane. The airplane God wants them to be is the one that flies daily to special places he has prepared for us to see and experience.

When God in Christ begins to take charge of our lives, we are going to have the gift of flight. Of course there are mountains, valleys, and all the places in between on that journey. But there is also the flight above even the highest mountain in this world.

I'm not even talking about the final flight to heaven. That will be glorious and at the end of our time here on earth.

What I'm talking about is not being fettered with human opinions and limitations. What other people say or do should not matter in the least to the Christian. What we are about is the business of going places humans could never go without God.

While some spend their time worrying about survival, trying to combat the latest cowardly word of gossip, or trying to fix all the things that are wrong with us, God's people are called to fly above them, looking down occasionally just for directions. They do not concern us. They should not concern us, for we are concerned with heavenly things.

The church, and her people, spend entirely too much time walking. We are bound by specifications and requirements that we use in our daily lives and somehow think that worldly ways are to be transferred to our holy thinking and action.

Where are the days when people will take risks which have nothing to do with reason and everything to do with faith? When will we realize that Jesus calls us not to think as the world thinks, but heavenly thoughts as God thinks.

A fable is told about an eagle who thought he was a chicken. The eagle grew up doing what chickens do, living like a chicken, and believing he was a chicken. The eagle was strutting around the chicken coop, pecking at the ground, and acting very much like a chicken. A friend took the eagle to the foot of a high mountain. The man held the eagle on his arm and pointed high into the sky where the bright sun was beckoning above.

He spoke, "Eagle, thou art an eagle! Thou dost belong to the sky and not to the earth. Stretch forth thy wings and fly."

This time the eagle stared skyward into the bright sun, straightened his large body, and stretched his massive wings. His wings moved, slowly at first, then surely and powerfully. With the mighty screech of an eagle, he flew. (Jamie Glenn)

Sometimes we Christians think chicken thoughts, in all of the meanings of the word chicken. We strut and peck, we scratch and cluck, when all the while we were born to fly.

This day may be the day, dear reader, when you stretch the spiritual wings that God has given you and launch forth to fly. Fly over mountains of despair and valleys of indecision.

Soar on heavenly eagles' wings that God has given you. Rise to commune with God in heaven, and land when and where he commands.

Look down at the world with all her people scurrying around like ants, and go down from time to time so that they can fly too. Don't be an ant; be the eagle you were created to be.

I always find it ironic when I remember that it was Wilbur and Orville Wright's father, a clergyman, who told them that if man were meant to fly he would have been born with wings. I wonder if he ate his words later when they made their first flight with that pedal-powered airplane.

And I wonder if he ever discovered that we as Christians were indeed meant to fly and do have wings. Once we fly for the first time, once we have temporarily lifted off from the chains that bind us to the human way of doing things, we will want to do it again and again.

Never doubt that flying is possible and necessary for the Christian. Peter Pan was a philosopher as well as a mythical character. "The moment you doubt whether you can fly,' he crows, "you cease for ever to be able to do it."

Whether as an individual or as passengers in that heavenly airplane, let us fly onward and upward. God will make it happen if we trust him completely.