

Devotion – Week of February 6, 2022

Rev. Jeanne Simpson

You have probably been as mesmerized this past week with the Winter Olympics as I am. I'm a klutz to begin with, and on snow and ice, I'm even more of one. So watching these athletes skate and sled and ski on a substance I view with fear always puts me in awe of their talents. I can't stand up on ice skates, much less glide across the ice, or heaven forbid, spin around up in the air four times. I've gone skiing ONCE in my life, and that was enough. I got off the ski lift by falling out of it, I got maybe a tenth of the way down the hill before I fell, and I walked/slid/scooted on my rear the rest of the way. At the bottom, I pronounced that I was absolutely DONE and went off to find hot chocolate.

Ironically, my brother and sister-in-law, who live in Minnesota, ski and snowboard all the time. My brother ran a ski school for a while, and he still does training, at times, with Olympic team hopefuls. Their idea of a great vacation is to go to Colorado or Switzerland and ski nonstop. My idea of a great vacation is to sit by the pool on a cruise ship and read. No clue how we managed to come from the same family.

The Olympics athletes literally defy gravity. I'm reminded of that song from the musical *Wicked* which Elphaba sings as she learns to fly. As she says, "everyone deserves the chance to fly." That reminds me of the text we looked at this past Sunday, when Satan comes to Jesus in the wilderness and twice takes him up to high places – once to see all the kingdoms in the world, and once to the top of the temple where he urges Jesus to jump so the angels will save him. Jesus doesn't need Satan to defy gravity, and he feels no need to fly, although he could. He is content with the knowledge of who he is, why he came to earth, and the power that God has given him.

These words from Isaiah 40 remind me of Jesus and also of these athletes who are competing in the Olympics:

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.

God gives us strength and courage, just as he gave Jesus strength and courage to defy Satan. And I'm sure our athletes are thankful for that renewed strength that God gives them as they work hard to represent our country. May they run and not be weary, may they walk and not faint, and may they soar like eagles, as they defy gravity.

Jeanne