

**"THE SOARING EAGLE REVEALS THE CONQUERING SAVIOR"***{Isaiah 40:31}*Trinity Presbyterian ChurchMarch 23, 2008

There are many variations to the story that Vincent Arishvara shared in one of his messages recently about a Native American boy who climbed high in the mountains above the reservation near his parent's chicken farm. To his utter amazement he discovered an eagle's nest. He reached down and took an egg out of the nest, brought it back to the farm, and put it with the chicken eggs under a setting hen.

The hen sat on the eggs until they hatched and out came a little eaglet along with her chicks. The eaglet was raised among the chickens and never knew it was anything else than a chicken. For awhile it was content and lived a normal chicken's life.

✚ ...he walked like a chicken

✚ ...he scratched the dirt for seeds and pecked for insects to eat

✚ ...he clucked and cackled like a chicken

✚ ...he flew in a brief thrashing of wings and flurry of feathers no more than a few feet off the ground—after all, that's how chickens were supposed to fly!

✚ ...for all he knew he was just a big overgrown chicken—he had no idea that he was born a majestic being—but, instead he thought he was a chicken!

As the eaglet grew older there were strange stirrings within. Every once and awhile it would think, *"There must be more to me than a chicken!"* But it never did anything about it *until* one day an incredible bald eagle flew over the chicken yard. The eaglet felt strange new strength in its wings and he thought he heard a voice within him saying: *"What are you doing here with your beak on the ground. You were born to fly high, be an expert hunter, to contemplate the earth from way, way high!"*

The eaglet couldn't take his eyes on this majestic bird as it would swoop towards the ground and then soar high into the heavens.

He focused with determination on the gigantic bird above—he couldn't take his eyes off it—and thought to himself: *"I'm like that! A chicken yard is not for me. I want to climb the sky and perch on mountain crags."*

His confidence began to build, he began to stretch out his massive wings—over seven feet from the tip of one to the tip of the other.

Determined, he felt a new power—and instinct within—and he spread his wings and was lifted to the top of a low hill nearby. Exhilarated, it flew to a higher hilltop, and finally on into the blue to the summit of a high mountain peak.

I know individuals like the eagle in this story who don't realize who they are, or the incredible potential they have within.

- ✚ ...they've lost their identity to external pressures
- ✚ ...some are trapped by defeatist behaviors, fears, low self-esteem, lack of faith and no confidence
- ✚ ...they're content to peck away in the dirt rather than spreading their wings and soaring to heights they never dreamed of reaching.
- ✚ ...life seems hopeless—just as it did to those disciples on that first Easter morning when they approached the tomb of their Lord who had been crucified just three days earlier.
- ✚ ...all they had hoped and dreamed for was dashed on a hill called Calvary.
- ✚ ...but, when they heard the incredible news, ***“He is NOT here...is risen—just as He said...”*** their hope was renewed—their vision restored—and they were filled with power—resurrection power—that which they had not known nor experienced before! There's was a conquering Savior!

I love those words penned by the Prophet Isaiah...

***“Have you not heard or understood? Don't you know that the Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth? He never grows faint or weary...HE GIVES POWER to those who are tired and worn out; HE OFFERS STRENGTH to the weak. Even youths will become exhausted, and young men will give up. BUT THOSE WHO WAIT ON THE LORD WILL FIND NEW STRENGTH. THEY WILL FLY HIGH ON WINGS LIKE EAGLES. THEY WILL RUN AND NOT GROW WEARY. THEY WILL WALK AND NOT FAINT!”*** {Isaiah 40:28-31, NLT}

### **GOD DESIGNED YOU TO SOAR**

The eagle is a most unusual bird because it soars higher and faster than any other bird—up to 60 miles per hour—more than 100 miles per hour on a dive.

Unfortunately some of you have been trying to soar from the ground up—flapping your wings frantically, but going nowhere!

- ✚ ...some are like a canary—in a cage singing a little tune but not accomplishing very much— *“I’m a sweet little bird in a gilded cage...Tweety’s my name, but I don’t know my age! I’m a bird...a sweet little bird...and I live in a cage...!”* {You’re trapped and don’t see any way out of your dilemma}
- ✚ ...some are like peacocks—strutting and pruning your feathers—full of pride—looking with disdain at those less fortunate than you
- ✚ ...some are like turkeys—gobbling here...gobbling there...gobble...gobble...gobble—gobbling everything and everyone that gets in your way.
- ✚ ...some are like those chickens—pecking here...pecking there...pecking...pecking...pecking—whoever you can—whenever you can
- ✚ ...some are like crows wallowing around in dirt—falling for everything that is appealing to the eye while never thinking of the consequences.
- ✚ ...some are like filthy vultures—corrupt, rotten, and eating the stinking things in life—totally consumed by your passions
- ✚ ...and, thank God, there are those who like the eagle soar with purpose—fearless of the adverse storms of life knowing your destiny and convinced of an internal hope.

### LEARNING TO SOAR

Some have the traits of many of the birds I’ve mentioned; however, God’s desire—and plan—is for each one of us to soar like eagles! Eagles are not fearful of life’s storms—they don’t run from them—they lock their wings and rise above them using the winds to their advantage. Their hope...their focus...is upon something *and* Someone bigger than you and I.

The writer of the Book of Hebrews wrote...

*“Strip down, start running—and never quit...Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we’re in. Study how He did it. Because He never lost sight of where He was headed—that exhilarating finish in and with God—He could put up with anything along the way: cross, shame, whatever. And now He’s there, in the place of honor, right alongside God. When you find yourselves flagging in your faith, go over that story again, item by item, that long litany of hostility He plowed through. That will shoot adrenaline into your souls!”*

Keep your eyes on Jesus!

Arriving at the tomb where Jesus had been buried, Mary Magdalene

assumed someone had stolen His body and she was so distraught. She cried hysterically.

She then turned and saw a man standing there whom she assumed was the gardener—she's didn't recognize him as Jesus. He asked her: *“Woman, why do you weep? Who are you looking for?”*

She replied: *“Mister, if you took Him, tell me where you put Him so I can care for Him!”*

Jesus said to her: *“Mary!”*

She cried out: *“Teacher!” and went and told His disciples: “I was the Master!”*

She was no longer in her pen overcome by grief...she saw Jesus...she believed...and she was soaring with excitement.

### APPLICATIONS

Three days ago, Liz Plett—woman of faith whose focus was clear...whose hope was sure...went home. Her security was in her resurrected Lord...and today she's in His presence celebrating Easter with Him. Can you imagine what Heaven must be like now that Liz is there—hands raised in praise to God? I can just see her gazing upon the face of the Lord whom she loved and greeting him as she often did me, *“Hi love, it's Liz!”* She's probably looking for some children in her Tootsie the Clown outfit.

*“Since we preach that Christ rose from the dead, why are some of you saying there will be no resurrection of the dead? For if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ was not raised, then all our preaching is useless and your trust in God is useless...and, if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless, and you are still under condemnation for your sins. If only we have hope in Christ only for this life, we are the most miserable people in the world.*

*“But the fact is that Christ has been raised from the dead. He has become the first of a great harvest of those will be raised to life again...”*

*“Everyone dies because all of us are related to Adam...but, all who are related to Christ will be given new life...!”*

Keep your eyes on Jesus—HE'S THE MIGHTY CONQUEROR!

Our hope is in the resurrection of Christ—**our entire faith pivots on that event.** If there is no resurrection, let's pack-up and go home.

Keep your eyes on Jesus—THE CONQUEROR!

The other day I was searching for a photo to show to Jake Espy of the

General Store in Rabbit Hash, Kentucky. As I scrolled through the photographs to find it I came across the last pictures taken of my father in 2000—three months before he went home to be with the Lord. I noticed...

- ✚ ...in his eyes there was a far away look
- ✚ ...his thoughts were heavenward
- ✚ ...he thought of my grandmother and those who preceded him
- ✚ ...this world was no longer to be his home
- ✚ ...he was soon to soar to that place God had prepared for Him
- ✚ ...his hope was in the resurrection
- ✚ ...he told me, *“Jack, I’m going home!”*
- ✚ ...and just before he died he told my mother, *“Well, look who’s praying for me...it’s Jesus!”*
- ✚ ...he kept his eyes on Him—the one who conquered death
- ✚ ...on December 23, 2000—he soared heavenward
- ✚ ...I believe in the resurrection

On Friday evening I spent several hours with David Coleman only hours before he was to go home to be with the Lord. We talked about it...about his mother who had been such a devout Christian...his grandmother who had lived to be 110 whom Ronald Reagan had visited on her birthday...and he told me he had no fear. Just before leaving I said to him, *“David, when you get there, I want you to look for a guy whose name is Gene Longley—my dad! Tell him I’m ok...and that I was your pastor and we were good friends!”* Dave replied, *“I’ll do that!”*

I could not face you this morning...I could not stand by the bedside of those whom I love if I didn’t believe in the conquering Christ. That’s our ONLY hope!

Are you living like a chicken...bound to earth? Friend, you were meant to fly—to soar like an eagle—to be renewed in strength...to run and not grow weary...to walk and not faint.

Fix your eyes on Jesus...and follow Him!

