



Sermon, Sunday August 14, 2022 “The Lord Does a New Thing for Us”

SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 43:15-21 ¹⁵ I am the LORD, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King. ¹⁶ Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, ¹⁷ who brings out chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick: ¹⁸ Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. ¹⁹ I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. ²⁰ The wild animals will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches; for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, ²¹ the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise.

Introduction: A Christian Living in Hope

If we have hope for tomorrow, even if today is difficult, we can live each day with joy. But if we lose hope for tomorrow, we despair.

German theologian Jürgen Moltmann distinguishes between hope and optimism in his book “The Theology of Hope.” He says that while optimism refers to the good things that are concealed from us in the present and satisfactory results in the future, hope is a gift given to us by God when optimism for tomorrow is impossible under the present circumstances. When we realize in our lives the hope that is poured out from God to us, we can overcome our current circumstances, no matter how difficult they may be.

The prophet Isaiah, who wrote today's text, was called as a prophet in 739 B.C. and was active for over 60 years. When Isaiah, chapter 43, was proclaimed in today's text, the Jews were living in captivity in Babylon. Today's text is a wonderful promise from God to the Israelites when they were suffering during Babylonian captivity. The Lord promises to do a new thing for the suffering Israelites.

The prophet Isaiah unequivocally proclaims that the God of creation will restore His people and grant them abundant grace. So, what was God's word that the prophet Isaiah prophesied to the Israelites?

Body: The Word of the Lord to the People of Israel

1) Look to the new things the Lord will do.

The Lord tells Israel to look to the new things He will do. However, these words of God did not bring comfort and courage to the people of Israel who were in Babylonian captivity at that time. **Isaiah 43:8 describes the spiritual condition of the people of Israel as “Lead out those who have eyes but are blind, who have ears but are deaf.”**

The Lord reminds these Israelites of the history of their ancestors' Exodus from Egypt. However, the history of the Exodus was too long ago for the Israelites in Babylonian captivity to remember. Because the suffering of the people of Israel is so great, the Exodus incident, the record of their ancestors' victory, does not help them. But the Lord promises to do a new thing for these people of Israel.



We need to realize who the Lord is in His work for the people of Israel. Today's text says that the Lord is **"the God of creation."** In the beginning, the Lord created all things in the universe and chose His people to accomplish His work of salvation. And even now, he continues to rule the world according to the will of the Lord.

Therefore, we need faith to discover the new things that the Lord is doing and accomplishing in our life of faith. In other words, we must be able to look to the Lord to open a new path and guide us along that path even in a situation where the east, west, north, and south are blocked. The Lord's love and care for us is created anew in our daily life. We must be able to see and experience the wonders of the Lord that are happening among us with the eyes of faith.

Then, what did the Lord promise to the Israelites in today's text?

2) The Lord makes a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.

Today's text Isaiah 43:19 says, "I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert."

As I read this verse, I wondered what it meant to make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. I remembered a nature documentary narrated by former President Barack Obama on Netflix a while ago. It was a documentary about the amazing mystery of life taking place in the great grasslands of Africa. In the African savannah, there is a clear division between the wet and dry seasons. In the rainy season, everything is plentiful, and ecosystems recover their vitality. However, once the dry season begins, things change dramatically. To survive the dry season, the animals of the African savannah must do their best.

Among the animals of the savannah, it is very impressive that the elephant survives the dry season. The Elder Elephant Leading the Elephant Herd is wise and, based on his own experience, guides the herd to the water. The wise and experienced elder elephant uses the nose's sense of smell and his own experience to spot water and save the lives of the herd. Paths and drinking water discovered by the herd of elephants make it possible for other animals to survive. When the rainy season returns to the ecosystem of the savannah and it rains, water flows through the dried river again, and the river overflows and the ecosystem regains vitality.

When the Lord makes a road in the wilderness and a river in the desert, He pours out energy, passion, and hope for life. It gives freedom to those in guilt, healing to those who are sick in mind and body, and courage and hope to those in despair and discouragement. And to those who do not have the strength to love, it gives the strength to love and forgive their neighbor. It also leads us to praise the Lord by faith.

So, what is the Lord trying to accomplish by making roads in the wilderness and rivers in the desert?

3) The Lord wants us to praise Him in hope.

Isaiah 43:21 says, "the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise." What does the word **'praise'** in this verse mean? It refers to the heart of love for the Lord and the image of a creature that wants to glorify the Lord.

But today's text **'praise'** in Isaiah 43:21 has a slightly different meaning. The reason the people of Israel praise the Lord is not to praise the Lord for what He has done to them, but because they are confident that the Lord will be their hope and lead them to the best place even during their difficult Babylonian captivity.

However, there is one thing we must not forget. It is that we, as creatures, cannot take the place of the Creator. But we often forget this fact. So, we need to mature in our faith. So, how can we confirm the maturity of our faith? In a quite uncomplicated way, if we have the humility of fearing the Lord in our hearts, we are moving forward in mature faith. Conversely, if we do not have such an attitude and heart, we are in a position of pride that is far from the maturity of our faith, no matter what position we have in the world or how people see us.



1 Corinthians 13:11 says: “When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.” All mature believers praise God the Creator.

Conclusion: Trust in the promises of the Lord.

Now let's summarize today's sermon. **According to Hebrews 6:1-2, "Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment."** Those who remain in the 'elementary teachings of Jesus Christ' in this verse are those who do not know the works of God's grace toward us. We must be able to move forward to a mature of faith.

Numbers 23:19 says: “God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?”

May we all be blessed to trust in the promises of the Lord. May we also experience daily what the Lord is doing for us in our lives. The Lord creates a new life every day and guides us with His amazing grace. I hope that everyone will receive such blessings. Amen!

