

God Wants to Do a New Thing

Text: Isaiah 43:1-19

If there is a positive impact in positive thinking, then what America is generally embracing is the power of negative thinking. I have never heard more people say, "I cannot wait for 2021, because 2020 has been such a bad year." There were many great things that happened in 2020. Thank God for the children reared in our church who have received Christ as their personal Savior and followed Him in baptism. That's good! We not only rejoice in the new spiritual births, but we rejoice in the new babies that have been born to our families this past year. That's good! This past summer we had the greatest youth camp revival among our youth that carried over into Vacation Bible School, even in the midst of the COVID-19 complications. That revival is still being experienced by our teens. That's good! Most everyone in our church who got the Coronavirus have recovered. That's good! We hated to say goodbye to some wonderful Christians. Ottis Young sang more specials in our church for the past two decades than anyone else in our church. He often sang about Heaven and how wonderful it will be when we all get there. With the passing of some in our flock, Heaven has become more precious, and that's good. Christchurch is healthy in spite of the financial downturn in our country; we have paid our bills, salaries and repairs to the building. Not one missionary has gone without their monthly support. We were able to keep up "Christmas in July," and most every month we have hit a surplus in our mission giving that has been an extreme blessing to our missionaries. and that's good. We have added new Sunday School classes. And that's good! We had an excellent Mission's Conference and added new missionaries. That was good! We had a revival with Dr. Tom Ferrell and hearts were blessed, some were saved and commitments to a deeper walk with God took place. And that was good!

Perhaps what I am saying is, there is power in Gospel thinking! The Gospel changes everything. Romans 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." The Bible says in II Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." The promise of our text aligns perfectly with this thought of new creation. Isaiah 43:19: "Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert." When God does a new thing, the wilderness cannot hinder God's highway of holiness as mentioned in Isaiah 35:8a: "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness...." When God is ready to send a refreshing river of revival, no desert can stop the flow as spoken of in Isaiah 35:6b: "...for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert." God doesn't change; He is still desirous to do something new. Therefore,

1. LET THE ATMOSPHERE OF CHANGE BE PRESENT.

Matthew 5:43,44: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." Leviticus 18:19 commands us to love our neighbor. The religious teachers of Jesus' day added "...and hate thine enemy." The law does not teach us to hate our enemies. So Jesus was making some real changes in the world in which He walked. No less than fifteen times in the New Testament Jesus said, "But I say unto you."

Will you let Jesus change you this year? Are there any areas in your life that are considered "off limits" for God? Jeremiah 18:4: "And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it." Let us be clay in the Potter's hands.

2. WHEN GOD IS INVOLVED, NOTHING CAN BECOME SOMETHING.

Genesis 1:2 says, "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." The evolutionists say that everything came from nothing. Nothing cannot produce anything other than what it is, i.e. "nothing." It has been said, "Nothing is what rocks think about all day long." I know I am being absurd, but with good reason, for we believe that God can move upon nothing and make a universe and furthermore, that's exactly what He did.

As we enter this new year, there are some reading these words that may be lamenting that you virtually have nothing. Let this thought encourage you: when the earth was without form and void, that's when the Holy Spirit "moved" upon the face of the waters. The word "moved" is the same word for "brooding" which is likening the behavior of the Holy Spirit to a mother chicken who broods over her little chicks." God moved with compassion over the yet unformed earth, contemplating what it shall become. If you have lost everything, imagine this: God is brooding over you with thoughts and plans beyond your comprehension as He says in Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." Yogi Berra used to humorously say, "It's not over 'til it's over." I've got some news for you: when the Devil and all this world says, it's over and all evidence confirms that it is so, God is hovering just above us with thoughts and plans that will not be thwarted by man's puny disabilities. In other words, it is not over even when it's over. Eight years ago my wife and I stopped by Eufaula, Oklahoma to visit Dr. Jerry McDonald, founder of Calvary Boys' Ranch. He was dying from a combination of Lou Gehrig's Disease and cancer. His tongue was paralyzed and he could no longer talk. He took a white writing tablet and wrote in a shaky handwriting, "Pray that it will be soon." He was referring to his home-going to Heaven. Ah, even in the Christian's darkest hour, God will take His hurting child home and give him a new body and one day a new Heaven and new Earth. For us, the end is just the beginning. Please never forget that for a Christian, the worst thing is never the last thing!

3. THE BEGINNING IS A GOOD PLACE TO BEGIN AGAIN.

Genesis 1:3, "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light." We often hear the phrase, "This shed light on the subject." God spoke and there was light. I pray the flock here at Christchurch will be illuminated this year in God's will, in God's way by God's Word. Even as God spoke and there was light, keep listening - He will speak light to your world!

Genesis 1:4 says, "And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness." God is willing in this new year to separate us from the darkness that we may have been in and place us in that "good light." He loves us and is willing to give us mercy, "...because he delighteth in mercy" (Micah 7:18).

In William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Act 3, Scene 4, Hamlet confronts Gertrude and implores her to repent. She replies, "O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain." Hamlet responds by saying, "O, throw away the worser part of it, and live the purer with the other half...Assume a virtue, if you have it not." A reminder that darkness and light need to be divided. Even if you feel like a loser because you have allowed that awful darkness that so pervades the world to come over you, you may, as Hamlet suggested, throw away the darkness and run to the light, cultivate the light and, as a believer, we say, let Jesus, Lord of the Light flood you with His merciful light. He can undo the damage from the darkness. "Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones" (Proverbs 3:7 and 8). This will require the faith of a child. C. S. Lewis put it like this in *Mere Christianity*, "When you are not feeling particularly friendly but know you ought to be, the best thing you can do, very often, is to put on a friendly manner and behave as if you were a nicer person than you actually are. And in a few minutes, as we have all noticed, you will be really feeling friendlier than you were. Very often the only way to get a quality in reality is to start behaving as if you have it already. That is why children's games are so important. They are always pretending to be grown-ups - - playing soldiers, playing shop. But all the time, they are hardening their muscles and sharpening their wits, so that the pretence of being grown-up helps them to grow up in earnest." Matthew 21:22, "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Mark 11:24: "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." And when it comes to prayer, our Lord teaches us that we are not "playing" when it comes to believing!

Let this be a time of beginning again. God wants to do a new thing! The Lord's mercy and grace have not run short. Believe and act on your belief! It's a new day, a new year – a new life!

-Pastor Pope-