

SERMON FOR APRIL 7, 2019

TEXT: ISAIAH 43: 18-21

THEME: THE LORD IS DOING A NEW THING, DON'T YOU SEE IT?

<sup>18</sup> "Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old.

<sup>19</sup> Behold, I am doing 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.

<sup>20</sup> The wild beasts 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, <sup>21</sup> the people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise.

In the name of Jesus:

A few years ago a man in New York City was kidnapped. His kidnappers called his wife and asked for \$100,000 ransom. She talked them down to \$30,000. The story had a happy ending: the man returned home unharmed, the money was recovered, and the kidnappers were caught and sent to jail.

But, don't you wonder what happened when the man got home and found that his wife got him back for a discount? What if the negotiations went something like this: "\$100,000 for that old guy? You have got to be crazy. Just look at him! Look at that gut! You want \$100,000 for that? You've got to be kidding. Give me a break here. \$30,000 is my top offer."

"I don't know who you identify with in that story, but I would like to think if I were in a similar situation, there would be people who

would spare no expense to get me back. They wouldn't haggle over the price. They wouldn't say, 'Well, let me think about it.' I like to think that they would say, 'We'll do anything for you.'"

The point of this story today is this: God will go to any length to lavish His love on you! That is the story of the Bible, and it is the focal point of the Old Testament lesson for today. God is doing a new thing, because He is a God of love, can't you see what God is doing?

Isaiah relates the story of the Exodus in our text for today. He reminds his hearers who were Jewish that God had done great things for them and for their people. At one time, the people of Israel were prisoners in a foreign land. They did back breaking work as bricklayers under Pharaoh. But God had mercy on this people, He heard their cry for deliverance, and sent to them a leader, Moses. Moses was blessed by God and was used by God proclaim freedom for those held captive. Moses proclaimed to Pharaoh, "Let my people go." But Pharaoh would not listen. So God sent ten plagues, the final plague resulting in the death of the firstborn in Egypt, and as a result, God's people were granted freedom.

The Bible then tells of the journey of God's people, through the Red Sea, into the wilderness, all the while led by God and fed by God.

For forty years God led His people and after their journey, God led them into the Promised Land, a land flowing with milk and honey, a land that the people of God could call their own. God had done a great thing. They were a people blessed by God to live for and follow God.

But they didn't. They didn't follow God. They, instead, paid lip service to God. Even though Israel was a nation formed by God, blessed by Him, to follow Him, the nation of Israel consistently rejected God and followed a path of their own making. This would be a path that would lead to destruction. God's people would eventually be taken away to a foreign land, with their homes and livelihoods destroyed. Their lives and homeland were laid waste, they were a people without hope and a people without a home.

But watch, what God would do! He would do a new thing! Just as He led the people out of Egypt and through the Red Sea on dry land, so now was going to do something even more spectacular. God would begin anew, there would be another type of Exodus, that would not be confined only to Israel, but would encompass all people, including you and me. Whereas the old Exodus took place by God conquering and separating the waters to deliver His people, now this new Exodus would take place where God would use water to make for Himself a new

people, a people who would love and serve Him forever. God saved the nation of Israel in the Exodus, now God promised to make for Himself a new people. Watch, Isaiah writes, for God was going to do a new thing! Can you perceive what God is doing?

Jesus says:” Every one who commits sin is a slave to sin. Since the fall of Adam and Eve into sin each and every one of us are slaves to sin. None of us love God the way we should, our love for God grows cold, and we don’t love each other the way God wants. Our lives are filled with bitterness, anger, apathy, and indifference toward God and the needs of others. We offer up excuses for our mistakes by saying: “Well, no one is perfect,” and how right we are! Not one of us is perfect, we are all sinners, and Bible says sin pays off with death. The wages of sin is death, so death will come to all of us, we can’t escape it.

But note what God has done and what God is doing! God is doing a new thing; don’t you see it? For the Bible says that God loved the world, He loves you so much, that He sent His only Son Jesus to be your Savior. The Bible says that at the right time in history God sent His Son, Jesus, into the world, to bring all people into a relationship with Him. God sent His Son into the world not to condemn the world but to save the world through Him.

Jesus says of Himself: I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one can come to the Father except by Me. So God gives us a new Exodus with Jesus as our Savior. God links us to Jesus, makes us children of Jesus, through the waters of Holy Baptism. Baptism is no child's play, but it is God at work today. Eight children in all baptized today. The Number eight is significant, as 8 means a new creation, Jesus rose on the eighth day. There are eight sides on the baptismal font. God is doing a new thing, something great in our midst. Don't you see what God is doing?

Today our congregation was blessed to baptize these young children into God's family. God attaches wonderful promises to Baptism. God Himself stakes His honor, His power, and His might on it. Jesus tells us that His Church is to go and make disciples of all people, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. When you are baptized, God places His name upon you. His name was placed on these children today. His name is also upon you because of your baptism. Jesus promises that He who believes and is baptized shall be saved. If anyone is baptized into Christ that person becomes a new creation, all things have passed away, behold, God makes all things new. God has created a new people, called the Church, a people formed by

Him in Baptism, strengthened by Him by His Word in the Church, who are forgiven of all sin and brought from death to eternal life. We come to Baptism trusting in Jesus and His promise. And Jesus always keeps His promise! Faith in Jesus and eternal salvation are given to those who are baptized, and when Jesus comes again, He will take His own to be with Him to live with Him forever in the new heavens and new earth. God saved His people of old who trusted in Him, and they were taken to the Promised Land. And still today, God saves His people in the waters of Baptism, so that following Jesus by grace through faith in Him; all who believe and are baptized will be with the Lord in the Promised Land of eternal life.

There was a desert valley in southern California that was hot, barren, and desolate. Only the hardiest of Native Americans had lived there. The Spaniards passed by it and the state's early growth had hardly touched it. The only sizeable body of water is the Salton Sea, and that water is absolutely useless for it is filled with salt water, as its name suggests. So at the turn of the last century, some promoters got an idea. They knew that the valley would bloom and come to life if only water were brought to it. So they gave the land a new name, Imperial, to attract potential farmers. And then in 1901, they brought irrigation and

water to the valley. Now, with one of the longest growing seasons in the United States, some 300 days, and over a million acres of land irrigated with water, the Imperial Valley now produces an abundance of cotton, dates, grains, and dairy products. It is one of the most important sources of winter fruits and vegetables for the northern parts of the United States. A new thing took place, and because of the water, a whole region was brought to life and produced tremendous growth.

So too God says that He is doing a new thing. And He has! For in the waters of Baptism these children have been brought to faith and given new life in Jesus. In your Baptism God the Holy Spirit has brought you to faith and has given to you new life in Christ. Today we see what tremendous things God is doing, and we give thanks to God for the blessings of Baptism and the blessings of being baptized, for in Baptism we are God's children and have been given eternal life with Christ, a life that we share with others. In Jesus' name. Amen