

"See, I am doing a New Thing!"

The biblical story, from the opening words of creation to the closing Amen of Revelation, is a complete connected account. Picture it as a flowing river. Its waters begin as a mere trickle in the opening chapters of the Bible as we hear of creation, the Fall, and God's promise to send the serpent-crushing Redeemer. As you continue to watch that river flow, it grows in size through centuries of time. It gets deeper and wider. God continues to add more and more rescue promises to that river. The river grows until it finally reaches its widest and deepest depth. God's Son comes to this world. Through his perfect life and innocent death, God fulfills the promise that he gave way back at the beginning of the river. Yet, the river continues to flow a little further downstream until it pours out in the grand and glorious ocean of heaven. As one might travel down the river, it is important to see where you have been. Yet, the current of the river keeps moving. There may be sharp turns. There may be rapids and sand bars. Yet, we travel without fear because we are looking forward to that glorious end that awaits us in heaven. It's been promised to us because of what Jesus did on the cross. Through faith in Jesus it is ours. That's the message of hope that Isaiah is comforting God's people with the words of our text. **"See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland."**

Have you ever heard people say: *"Boy, those were the good old days."* *"Remember when?"* *"They don't make them like they used to."* Maybe you have used them yourself. I'm not really sure if any of those statements are true, even though we might like them to be true. As time moves along in our lives, we forget the painful, hurtful events and occasions of life. As time moves along, the pain doesn't hurt so much. We forget the bad and hold on the "good" of that former time in life. There are times that I have had enough time to remember what happened last week compared to what happened 40 years ago. It sometimes is good that things are not made the way they used to because the way it is made today is much better. As we travel along on this river of life, we should look back at all the things God has done for us on this journey.

The children of Israel needed to be reminded about all the great things that God had done for them. They were being held in captivity by the Babylonians. Things weren't going well for them. Plans weren't going as they had planned. They were 600 miles away from their promised home. Much of their home resembled a wasteland. They were a crushed and defeated nation. God needed to remind them of who he was. **"This is what the Lord says — he who made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters, who drew out the chariots and horses, the army and reinforcements together, and they lay there, never to rise again, extinguished, snuffed out like a wick."** He is saying to them: *Look at me. Look what I have done for you. I have never let you down. NEVER!* Yet, they were stuck in the past. They couldn't see how things were going to work out. They needed to be comforted. So, Isaiah in this section of his book writes these words: **"Comfort, comfort my people. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed."** (Is: 40:1-2) **"Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired and weary."** (Is. 40:28) **"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine."** (Is. 43:1)

God had even greater plans for them. **"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland."** God is telling them: *You think I have done some great things? That's nothing. Wait to you see what I am going to do in the future! I'm going to send my Son to crush the head of Satan.* God had this wonderful plan for his people. Yet, it was so hard for them to trust those words of God.

How about you? Do you ever get stuck in the past? You know that God has done great things for you in the past, but what about the future? It is hard, is it not? This past week, I read an interesting article online in *the Smithsonian Magazine* from 2012. It said that: *"Thomas Jefferson, together with several of his fellow founding fathers, was influenced by the principles of deism, a (belief) that envisioned a supreme being as a sort of watchmaker who had created the world but no longer intervened directly in daily life."* Even though Jefferson did believe in Jesus, he literally removed with a pen knife many of the things and pages that Jesus taught. The article goes on to say: *"Much of the material Jefferson elected*

*to not include related miraculous events, such as the feeding of the multitudes with only two fish and five loaves of barley bread; he eschewed anything that he perceived as “contrary to reason.”*¹

We would never do that would we? Or do we? Do we follow Paul’s words in our second lesson for today: **“I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things.”** As you heard the parable in our Gospel Lesson, do you see how incredible it is that God doesn’t give up on us at least 4 times? How amazing it is that he sends his own Son to die for sinners like you and I. What is even more amazing is that the Son goes, knowing full well what was going to happen to him.

Jesus came to rescue sinners. He didn’t come to for the righteous but for those whose lives are full of one failure after another, for his is a love that never fails. He came to die not for the clean but for the dirty, for his blood washes away even the filthiest of stains embedded in your soul. He came to search out not for just those who come running to him, but those who have fled from God, who hide in the darkness of their doubt and unbelief. He came to find you no matter where you are, to give you hope in place of despair, faith instead of doubt.

May we find comfort in the words of Isaiah: **“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.”** Amen.

¹ <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/how-thomas-jefferson-created-his-own-bible-5659505/#5jC81kAGHC2MB7td.99>