

Lent Sermon Series: With All Your Heart

Sermon Topic: See, I Am Making A New Thing (by Rev Bernard Chao)

Sermon Text: Isaiah 43: 16-21

¹⁶ This is what the Lord says— he who made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters, ¹⁷ 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: ¹⁸ “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. ¹⁹ See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland. ²⁰ The wild animals honor me, the jackals and the owls, because I provide water in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland, to give drink to my people, my chosen, ²¹ the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise.

Introduction and Context of Bible Text

Isaiah was prophesying in a time when Israel was exiled in Babylon. Isaiah had earlier rebuked the Israel for their blindness and deafness (Isa 42: 18-25) as they paid no attention to God’s message.

The condition of the people of Israel was in a state of “plunder and loot”, with some people being commodified and dehumanized. Some people had been taken into exile in Babylon while others remained in the land, but both groups suffered to varying degrees the debilitating effects of being a conquered people.

Isaiah’s messages polarise: As he called Israel to recall God’s past miracles of salvation, there was also an abrupt transition to forget these past events and to look forward to God’s work to come.

Are We to Look to The Past or Forward Into The Future?

1. Isaiah begins with a call to remember (Isa 43: 16-17)
 2. Isaiah then calls Israel to forget these deeds (Isa 43: 18)
- Isaiah’s intentions were to shape our posture and perspective, preventing us from over dwelling on past events as they harness a false sense of security which may not be dependable today. It also acts as a drag on existing situation as we attempt to draw parallels with past successes.
 - Isaiah further communicates the message that God is always doing a new thing and hence, we should be forward looking and alert.

- At times, the church pays too much attention to the problems but not on the Problem Solver, God. We can remain so fascinated and discouraged by the fear of illness and death that we pay no attention to the Life-Giver. Isaiah reminds us by telling us to watch out and pay attention as God is on the move.

- God will be doing this new thing right in the middle of the mess. (Isa 43: 19-21). This new thing will be mindboggling as it goes off tangent the conventional wisdom known.

- God will turn the mess into His instruments and use these fearful things into a display of His glory. God will care and nourish His own people, sustaining us through these terrible times, if we pay attention to what He is doing.

- If we pay attention and respond as God's people, not godless people, He will turn our sorrow in to dancing and worries into witness, only if we pay attention to Him. Amidst a world of fearfulness, love and gospel will go hand in hand, demonstrating our witness.

- Do we see what God is doing now? What might be some of these new things?
 - Individually, a new perception of life perhaps? A suggested perspective would be the steering our lives towards living into eternity; this period of fear may give rise to a closer walk with God.

 - As families, perhaps discovering new responsibilities, discipling the young and mutual accountability across generations and for each other.

 - As churches, we may be pointed to a new way of being the church, of imagining church beyond the narrow spirituality that predominated by service once a week and being done and dusted with discipleship for the week. Broadly, the new arrangement could also give rise to self-reflection of what being a church means, what a disciple means and what a Christian means.

Questions For CG Discussion And Personal Reflection:

- 1. In light of this new thing, how can we join God on His agenda and mission?**

- 2. What does He want us to be and do?**

- 3. Where does He want us to be?**

Once we start answering these questions, we can be more like the church Christ wants us to be and not the church we are accustomed to. Perhaps then, the fullness of Christ can be fully displayed in and through us.

- 4. What is God doing in Singapore, what is He doing through the minds of both believers and non-believers?**

Through deeds by Christians globally, God is moving and making a new thing, inviting us to join Him in His mission. Let's not be preoccupied by the things of the church but by the things of God. Only then will we be truly a church.

4 Ways To Live As Followers of Christ in Times Like This

- i. Recover our faith and recognise God is doing a new thing
- ii. Reset our posture, to be alert and expecting the new thing
- iii. Renew our thinking and jettison worldly thinking
- iv. Reshape our witness as we live in the new things that God is doing

- 5. Which of the above 4 ways is God challenging you towards? Express why.**