

We like new things, don't we? There's always something new, something different, something better, than what we have right now. A new phone. My daughter recently purchased the iPhone 10, She gave my wife her iPhone 8, and Mike Villemure gave me his iPhone 6s. There is a great desire on our part to have the latest in technology.

At our recent Ladies Fashion show, new outfits were worn by our Open Bible models, trying to motivate our ladies to buy new outfits.

Lots of new things! New technologies! New styles! This morning, in the book of Isaiah, God says, "I am doing a new thing!" What is this new thing that God is doing? How can anything related to Christianity be a new thing? I thought Christianity was an old thing – a religion that has been around for almost 2000 years – something from the past. Let's find out more today on how, "God Is Doing Something New For You."

Memories of the past. Wonderful things that you recall and reflect upon. I still remember when I was in 5<sup>th</sup> grade at St. Pauls Lutheran School in Saginaw. I was the worst speller that walked the planet. Heh, Mark, how do you spell believe? Beleive. Wrong. But then my mother told me, that she was going to get me up 3 days a week at 5:00 A.M. and drill spelling words into my head. I entered the spelling bee in my 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade years. I remember going down my 6<sup>th</sup> grade year on the word: pamphlet. I spelled it, "Pamflet!" But my mom kept after me. I entered the spelling bee every year. Finally, in my 8<sup>th</sup> grade year, I took 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the Lutheran Spelling Bee, and got a trophy! What a memorable day that was in my life. My mom took me out to Johnies Bonanza to celebrate. And I would be able to have a pop instead of water with my meal. Wow. Delivered from being a lousy speller.

How about you? Do you have some fond memory? A time in your life, when things were not going well, you thought things would never improve, and then, low and behold God does a miracle, and your situation changes dramatically. Was it a bad marriage that went on for years, and finally it is getting better? Was it an illness? Was it some sort of financial deliverance. Plug in your happy remembrance of a deliverance from a rough time in your life.

If I was to interview a young Jewish girl, and ask her to tell me a deliverance from the past, that every time she thinks about it, she thinks happy thoughts, what would it be? Well our lesson for today, gives the answer to that question. She would say, "I love to think about how God delivered my people from the 450 years we spent in the land of Egypt.". Before Pharaoh would let us go, God displayed his power with ten different plagues. Then, even as we left, Pharaoh and the greatest army at that time pursued us. God actually opened the Red Sea, and allowed us to walk across on dry land. When the Egyptians followed they were drowned. God continued to guide and protect us as we made our way through the desert. He provided us water where there was none. He gave us bread from heaven, and even quail to eat. He gave us sandals that did not wear out during their 40 years of wandering. Wow. This is an awesome thing to remember and never forget.

But God says to that young girl and to us, Heh, "Don't dwell on this deliverance! You ain't seen nothing yet. There is an even greater one coming. God was going to rescue his people again. God's people would be trapped in another country that was surrounded by one of the most barren, most deadly deserts in the world. His people would be spending 70 years in the land of IRAQ. Even if they escaped from their captors,

they would never make it through that desert. But God was going to do a new thing. God was going to do the impossible – he was going to set up a highway for them to walk on. He was going to provide water for them as they journeyed back to the promised land: “The wild animals honor me, and the jackals and the owls, because I provide water in the desert and streams in the wasteland to give drink to my people, my chosen, the people I formed for myself, that they may proclaim my praise.” Even the wild animals would notice all the good things God was doing for his people. Not only would those animals praise God, but the people of Israel would praise God too, for all the amazing new things God was planning to do for his people.

This is the “new thing” that God eventually did do for the Jews during that time in history. They were eventually released from captivity. They eventually survived that difficult trip through the desert, and returned to their homeland. What does this have to do with us? Can you see Christ in these words I have read to you this morning? God says, “I am making a way in the desert.” Jesus says, “I am The Way, the truth, and the life.” God says, “I am making streams in the wasteland.” Jesus says, “Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst.”

Just as God was doing a new thing for Israel, rescuing them, so also right now, God is doing a new thing for us – he’s rescuing us, rescuing us from this world, which is passing away, rescuing us from our sins. “Do you not perceive it?” God asks you this morning. A new thing is coming.

There are so many religions today, and they are obsolete, they don’t work, they don’t get you to heaven. “I will try to be good and earn my way to heaven” – a very common approach to religion today. But it doesn’t work, because you can never be good enough. “I will trust in myself. I will try hard and be everything God wants me to be and earn his favor!” But it doesn’t work, because God wants you to be perfect! That sort of religion is obsolete, it’s a dead end. Deep down you know it, and God knows it too. And that’s why God says to you this morning: “I am doing a new thing!” God is creating a new way for you to get to heaven, a new way for you to be right with God, a new way for you to have the sure hope of eternal life. And that new way is through Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is our highway in the desert. He is our oasis, our stream in the wasteland. Jesus is the new thing that God is doing for us. A brand new religion, not focused on you trying to earn your way to heaven. A brand new religion, where Jesus Christ does everything for you.

As God’s people looked at their past, they could see great victories, how God had delivered them from the land of Egypt, and how He would soon deliver them from the land of Babylon. But at the same time, as God’s people looked at these great events, they still felt regrets. What had led to these times of imprisonment in a foreign country? Why did all the Israelites over the age of 21 not make it from Egypt to Palestine? Why did only a small remnant return from Babylon? Because God’s people had grumbled, complained, and constantly pursued other interests outside of a close relationship with their Lord. But God had continued to be gracious and merciful to them. As a result, God’s people were experiencing a great deal of regrets about their past history. What about you and me? Don’t we have regrets from our past? Stupid things we did, that were not right. Oh, how we yearn for this New thing, that God has promised.

God says to us in Isaiah 1:18 *"Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord, Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as*

*crimson, they shall be like wool.*”, There is no detergent in the world that can make that claim. Jesus takes out those spots that cannot be removed even by Super All Powerful Dominant Cheer. “I can take the stain out,” He says, “I can clean your conscience. I can clear your memory. I want to set you free from past regrets so you can get on with the future.” JESUS says, “I don't want to rub it in, I want to rub it out.” That's what Jesus did at the cross with our sins. He didn't rub them in. He rubbed them out.

If we don't believe we're really forgiven, we start thinking every time something bad or wrong happens to us that God is trying to get even. When we carry guilt around and then have car trouble we think, "See! The Lord is trying to get even with me!" Or if there's a problem at home or at work then we think, "God's punishing me."

God does not operate that way if you're a Christian. For all those in Christ, there is no condemnation. Jeremiah 31:34 *"I will remember your sins no more."* What an amazing verse! God forgets. He chooses to forget. God does not forget anything. He does not forget anything except one thing -- He chooses to forget your sin because of the work of Jesus at the cross. That's good news! If you were to die of a heart attack tonight, and stand before God in heaven tomorrow morning and say, "Lord, about that sin I committed this week..." God would say, "What sin?" When a sin is forgiven it's forgotten in God's eyes.

Someday, when you stand before God on Judgment Day, you won't have to worry that God will remind you of your sins. God won't say to you, "Remember when you did this? Remember when you said that?" Because of Christ, God, as it says right here, "remembers our sins no more."

To take away your guilt – that's the new thing that God is doing for you. To take away your doubt you are going to heaven when you die. To give you confidence that every day, things are OK between you and your God – these are the new things that Christ is doing for you right now.

Memories. We all have them. Some good, some bad. Today, Jesus says don't dwell on them. Rather, forget about them. Because something much better is here to remember. Deliverance from sin, death and the devil. Righteousness before God. God by your side. A God who will deliver you from any captivity or trial you face. It doesn't get any better than that. So Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord! God has done something New For You. Amen.