

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

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Look Ahead – the Lord is Doing a
New Thing

February 7, 2021

Sermon Text: Isaiah 43

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 43

1 John 2:15-17 ESV Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (16) For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. (17) And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

Do you like new things? New toys, new places, new foods, new ideas, new discoveries, a new hobby? To a greater

or lesser extent, I suppose everyone enjoys experiencing something new, especially if it turns out that they like it. I like new things – new in the sense that I haven't tried them before. I have known people who are very resistant to anything new – and sometimes for good reason! But some just seem to thrive on the old, the familiar, the routine. And you have to admit, there is some sense of security in that.

But there is an irony here. And that is, it seems to me, that while new things are fairly popular, *change is not*. And here is the catch – new things necessarily involve *change*. A new generation of iphone comes out and geeky types do their almost “sacred” unboxing videos, caressing the thing. But the new for most people becomes less exciting when they realize that the thing has changed. There is a new learning curve – so you hear them say things like “why did they have to change that? I liked the old way better.”

You may think that you like change, but how do you react when some procedure at work is turned all around by a new

directive from HR? “Why can’t they just quit messing with us?!” Many churches and pastors today seem to think that they have to be constantly throwing new things into the worship service format or else people will get bored. (By the way, the Lord’s format for worship in the OT was quite fixed and unchanging).

Well, this morning I want to talk to you about new things and change. Specifically, I want to show you from Scripture that *the Lord is doing a new thing. That He is effecting radical change – not aimless change just for change’s sake – but a new thing and change that is moving toward a very intentional goal.* And because of this, we, those who truly are in Christ...we must be very careful not to cling to the old else we will find ourselves at odds with what the Lord is doing.

Let’s start here:

Isaiah 43:18-19 ESV “Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. (19) 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.

Now, let’s not fall into the trap of misusing this phrase – *Behold, I am doing a new thing.* Many fake, counterfeit preachers have used that as a theme phrase and proof text for whatever crazy or even wicked “new thing” is that they want to push on people. So we have to be sure we consider the whole context here.

Listen to it again:

Isaiah 43:1-7 ESV But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. (2) When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.

(3) For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you. (4) Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you, I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life. (5) Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather

you. (6) I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, (7) everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”

As is so common in the OT prophets, we have here a *near and far view*. And they are mixed together so that sometimes it can be difficult to know which – the near or the far – the prophet is speaking of. Clearly here Isaiah is sometimes speaking about the captivity of Israel in Babylon (Chaldea) and His judgment upon those who oppressed Israel -

Isaiah 43:8-17 ESV Bring out the people who are blind, yet have eyes, who are deaf, yet have ears! (9) All the nations gather together, and the peoples assemble. Who among them can declare this, and show us the former things? Let them bring their witnesses to prove them right, and let them hear and say, It is true.

(10) “You are my witnesses,” declares the LORD, “and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he.

Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me. (11) I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior. (12) I declared and saved and proclaimed, when there was no strange god among you; and you are my witnesses,” declares the LORD, “and I am God.

(13) Also henceforth I am he; there is none who can deliver from my hand; I work, and who can turn it back?” (14) Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: “For your sake I send to Babylon and bring them all down as fugitives, even the Chaldeans, in the ships in which they rejoice. (15) I am the LORD, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King.” (16) Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, (17) who brings forth chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick:

Notice all of the Exodus language and imagery here. Making a way in the sea, chariot and horse and army....quenched like a wick.

And so we have here the Lord’s promise to bring Israel back from

captivity and to judge her enemies. But the language Isaiah uses next reveal that there is far more here than an earthly restoration of the Jews in their land –

Isaiah 43:18-21 ESV “Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. (19) 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. (20) 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, (21) the people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise.

It is another Exodus, only this “new thing” the Lord is doing involves His chosen people and speaks of a restoration *in which the curse is lifted*. The wild beasts will honor Him – that is, *the creation will function as it was meant to. There will be water in the wilderness and rivers in the desert – just as He gave water from the rock in the days of Moses, only this time the people He has chosen will declare His praise*. They will be the witnesses, the royal priesthood, that He intended them to be.

So just what is this new thing that the Lord is doing?

19) 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.

This is New Creation language. Isaiah is not merely speaking of some restoration in this present world of Israel at Jerusalem. It is far more radical than that. The subject here is the New Heavens and Earth. Isaiah will continue-

Isaiah 44:1-5 ESV “But now hear, O Jacob my servant, Israel whom I have chosen! (2) Thus says the LORD who made you, who formed you from the womb and will help you: Fear not, O Jacob my servant, Jeshurun whom I have chosen. (3) For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. (4) They shall spring up among the grass like willows by flowing streams. (5) This one will say, ‘I am the LORD's,’ another will call on the name of Jacob, and another will write on his hand, ‘The LORD's,’ and name himself by the name of Israel.”

And before Isaiah is finished, he will make it very clear that this entire work of the redemption of all creation is effected by the Lord Jesus Christ, the Servant of the Lord-

Isaiah 53:1-6 ESV Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? (2) For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. (3) He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

(4) Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. (5) But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. (6) All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Do you begin to understand? The new thing that the Lord is carrying out in Christ is the removal of the curse, the end of death, the restoration of all creation as Eden, the final and forever destruction of sin and evildoers. And understand this...*it is already happening*. Let me show you:

1 John 2:15-17 ESV Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (16) For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. (17) **And the world is passing away** along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

Do you see the present tense – *is passing away*? This is good change, the best! We must not resist this change or cling to the old. The person who loves this present world is like the rich fool whose soul would be required of him the very night when he just said “I have many days left to enjoy all of my wealth.” He loved this present world and it passed away.

Listen to Paul –

over it as if it were the end to which the Lord has taken us.

By the way, the church has very widely erred in this regard, especially when it comes to marriage and family. *Let those who have wives live as though they had none.* What Paul means, as we have said, is that *marriage and family are not the end goal of all things.* What awaits us in the New Creation, and which in part we already have in Christ, is going to be quite different – and better – than marriage and family. And yet we have seen the church and various Christian organizations focus their entire message and goal on *marriage and the family.* It is a setup for great disappointment.

There is much more on this matter of the New Creation and our need to increasingly understand that Christ is doing a new thing -

Colossians 3:1-4 ESV If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. (2) Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. (3) For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (4) When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will

1 Corinthians 7:29-31 ESV This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, (30) and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, (31) and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

Now, don't misconstrue what Paul is saying. We aren't to conclude that he wants married people to live the single life and party on. No. What he is saying here is explained by *the present form of this world is passing away.* He is telling us to live in light of the New Creation. Yes, we will mourn sometimes and we will buy things and we will have certain material dealings in this life. BUT, as we do, Paul is telling us to keep it all in perspective. The present form of this world is passing away. It is on its way out and it is being replaced by the New Creation. *So don't live and think as if this present world and this present life is all that there is. Don't love it. Don't cling to it and grieve over it or rejoice*

appear with him in glory.

Your real life has not appeared yet! If you know Christ, then one day *you will appear*. The real you. The new you. The changed you. We see you now, in part. I know myself now, but only through fog and in part. My real life in Him right now is *hidden*. It is obscured. But when He comes, all the veil and fog will be lifted. *I am changed, and I will be changed. I am new, and I will be fully new.*

Galatians 2:20 ESV I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

See it again? *It is no longer I who live.* There has been a radical change in my very identity. I am NEW. And this making of His people *new* is a very big part of the new thing the Lord is doing.

2 Corinthians 5:17 ESV Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

All through the Bible, and most clearly in the New Testament, we see the Lord's new thing, this great change:

Galatians 6:15 ESV For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, **but a new creation.**

See it? No religion, no philosophy, counts for anything except – *you must be born again. You must be made a new creation in Christ.*

Ezekiel 36:24-27 ESV I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. (25) I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. (26) **And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you.** And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. (27) And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

Isaiah 65:17-18 ESV “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into

mind. (18) But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness.

And again:

Ephesians 4:20-24 ESV But that is not the way you learned Christ!— (21) assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, (22) to put off your old self, which belongs to **your former manner of life** and is corrupt through deceitful desires, (23) and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, (24) **and to put on the new self**, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

1 Corinthians 13:11-12 ESV When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. **When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.** (12) For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

Hebrews 8:10-13 ESV For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days,

declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (11) And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. (12) For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.” (13) **In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.**

The Lord is doing a new thing. He has done it in His Son, and He is doing and He will complete it when He comes. This is the *new* and this is the *change* that the Christian must understand and welcome. It is our joy and hope. Do not make the error of focusing your life and mind and affections on this present world, this present life. It is the old. It is passing away. And if you are in Christ, you do not belong to it anymore.