

Isaiah 43:16-21 ¹⁶ Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea And a path through the mighty waters, ¹⁷ Who brings forth the chariot and horse, The army and the power (They shall lie down together, they shall not rise; They are extinguished, they are quenched like a wick): ¹⁸ "Do not remember the former things, Nor consider the things of old. ¹⁹ Behold, I will do a new thing, Now it shall spring forth; Shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness And rivers in the desert. ²⁰ The beast of the field will honor Me, The jackals and the ostriches, Because I give waters in the wilderness And rivers in the desert, To give drink to My people, My chosen. ²¹ This people I have formed for Myself; They shall declare My praise.

Every month I receive the magazine Popular Science. I can honestly say that I get this magazine primarily for one reason. In the front pages of every issue, there is a section entitled "What's New." In this section, they show and tell about all the latest technological gizmos and gadgets. They show what future spaceships might look like. They show the latest automobiles that run on everything but gasoline. And they show kitchen gadgets that will make the world of food preparation so very easy. I like most Americans must admit some fascination with the new. We as Americans tend to tire quickly of the old and wait for something new to come along. Everything we buy seems to be outdated by the time we get home from the store. Isaiah in our Old Testament lesson for the day proclaims something to the nation of Judah which should be music to the ears of those who tire quickly of the old. He says, "Behold I make all things new."

Isaiah prophesied specifically about the time when the nation of Judah would be in captivity to the Babylonians. But this was certainly not the first time that an enslaved Israel needed to hear a message of hope in the midst of suffering. Indeed Israel underwent 400 hundred years as slaves in Egypt. They worked hard making brick after brick to build a land that was not their own. But then God called Moses to proclaim to Pharaoh that the time of captivity was over and the Israelites would be free. And God backed up these words with actions. He sent plague after plague upon the Pharaoh and his house until he finally agreed to let the Israelites go free. It took ten plagues in all, but Pharaoh finally gave in. He instructed Moses to leave and take his people with him. And even when Pharaoh regretted his decision to let the Israelites go and tried to chase after the Israelites to capture them again, God used the Red Sea as safe passage for the Israelites and quick destruction for the armies of Pharaoh. God took the people from slavery in Egypt through the desert into the

Promised Land. He well could have said to the Israelites in Egypt, “Behold I do a new thing.” They were brought out of slavery into a land where they could rest and enjoy the blessings of God.

Nearly a millennium after their enslavement began in Egypt the Israelites would find themselves once again captive, this time in Babylon. The prophet Isaiah foretold by God’s inspiration this captivity before it even happened. He spoke as if he and the Israelites were already in slavery to Babylon even though the actual event would not take place until after Isaiah’s death. But in the midst of the word picture he paints of this difficult time, Isaiah cries out the word of the Lord, “Behold I do a new thing.” He promises them that the same God who parted the Red Sea to give freedom from Egypt would now make a path in the desert and streams in the wilderness that they might be free once again. Yes, the Israelites were in captivity away from their homes. But yet God would do a new thing. He sent Cyrus the Persian to take over the Babylonians. And then through Cyrus’s rule and dictates, God released Israelites to return to the land of promise. He allowed them to rebuild the temple and go about temple rituals once again. He did a new thing. They were brought out of slavery into a land where they could rest and enjoy the blessings of God.

Today we near the end of Lent. And with its calls to repentance, our bondage to sin has made very evident. Although we were freed from that bondage in our baptism, all too often we allow ourselves to be rebound and retied to our sinful ways. All too often we give our flesh the upper hand. And in this recognition, we realize that by ourselves are very much helpless. We are as helpless as the slaves of Israel were. Without God’s help we would simply be enslaved the devil, our flesh, and the world for the rest of our lives. But today in the midst of our Lenten recognition of our bondage, God proclaims to you and to me, “Behold I do a new thing.” Indeed all of God’s acts of salvation throughout the Bible pointed forward to the final complete act of salvation that He would accomplish in Jerusalem. Indeed it was nearly two thousand years ago when Jesus would scream, “It is finished” and mark the completion of God’s plan of salvation. There He made sure that slavery to sin could be broken, that bondage to death would be loosed, that enslavement to the world’s fleshly desires would no longer hold His people. There He secured salvation to you and to me. We were brought out of slavery into a land where we could rest and enjoy the blessings of God.

There is an unfortunate truth about God's people throughout time though. We don't always respond well to God new things. The Israelites went into the Promised Land and soon forgot God and his ways. The exiles returned from Babylon and went searching for other gods. And most regrettably, much like the Israelites who entered into the Promised Land and the nation of Judah that returned from exile, we all too often get tired of God's new things all too quickly. Why? Perhaps it is because God's way of making things new is by giving to us the old. Essentially He gave to Israel, He gave to the exiles, and he gives to us the blessings He gave first to Adam and Eve in the garden. They too first lived in a land where they could rest and enjoy all of God's blessings. You see, God doesn't make us new by changing how He deals with us but rather by continuing to do the same things He always has. When God goes about His old ways of forgiving sinners, bringing them to rest, and granting them all His blessings, He makes us and all things new. When week after week he gives to us His word of forgiveness, things are made new. When sermon after sermon proclaims to us essentially the same old message of His grace, things are made new. When month after month He feeds to us His body and His blood, things are made new. And if we get bored with God's old ways of making us new, we show that we have forgotten that in these old ways is God making us new. Oh to be sure, we as Christians don't rejoice just because something is old, but rather we rejoice when the old ways of God bring to us His renewing grace. We rejoice in the ways in which He makes us new each week and look forward to that final day when He will complete His work of making all things new.

For while we know that God already finished His work of salvation on the cross and brings that salvation to us now in word and sacrament, we still realize that we sit in a world full of sin because it is a world full of sinners. We know that Christ has made all things new by His death but yet our eyes cannot yet perceive it. This is why on this earth we walk by faith and not by sight. But yet, it will not always be that way. Indeed one day, perhaps soon, the trumpet will blow and God will truly make all things new. He will destroy all of the corrupted things of this earth with fire and create a new heavens and a new earth. And when we see that our Lord Jesus will proclaim one final time, "Behold, I make all things new." And this time all evil will be gone and the new things which God recreates will remain forever perfect. Then fully will He make all things new. There He will grant to us an eternal land where we can rest and enjoy the blessings of God.

Yes, God making all things new is quite different than the items on the “What’s new” pages of Popular science. For all of the items all these pages seek to be something that nothing has ever been before. They are not trying to reinvent the wheel, but to invent something as revolutionary as the wheel. But God is making things new by using His same old ways of grace and forgiveness. The story from Genesis to Revelation is really a journey from Eden to Eden. God does not make new by reinventing Eden which was already perfect. Rather He will deliver us to a new heaven and a new earth not much unlike Eden. Yes, there He will return us unto a land where we can rest and enjoy the blessings of God. There will all things be made new forever. Amen.