

“I Will Do a New Thing”
Isaiah 43:16-21,
Advent Evening I December 3, 2014

Beloved of the Lord.....In the season of Advent, one of the themes we should understand is that God has power over our enemies, the devil, the world, and our flesh. Which one of these enemies has Christ not conquered? Is there an enemy God doesn't have power over? Both Advent and Christmas should be seasons without fear, for Christ has been born. Believers in Christ thus need not fear such enemies. It is as the angel said, “Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” God's power over our enemies thus is twofold. FIRST, as long as the world stands, His Gospel goes forth with a message of peace. This Gospel has power over our enemies in that it convert the very hearts which oppose Him. SECOND, and God also has absolute power over all our spiritual enemies in this world. He can do with them whatever pleases Him. Their persecution of His Church will be met with perfect justice on the Last Day, but the Father will happily receive into heaven, each believer in His Son. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

Today's message thus by way of Isaiah is given for the comfort of the Church of the New Testament. The first two verses are a kind of introduction to the main idea, that God is going to perform a new thing. “Thus saith the Lord which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters.” This is a reference to the crossing of the Red Sea by the children of Israel. The Lord thus reminds us of His mighty power, whereby He delivered his people from the hands of the enemy. God delivered His people out of the slavery of Egypt with a mighty hand, and they were free to serve the Lord in gladness. Not long after their Exodus however, Pharaoh changed his mind and pursued the Israelites with 600 chariots. When the army drew near the Bible says, the “angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night.” Every night when we go to bed, this is still true. His angels watch over us.

During that night by the Red Sea however, the Lord caused a strong wind to dry out the bottom so the next day they walked through on dry ground. As Isaiah said, “the Lord maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters.” We also know a little later God removed the cloudy pillar before Pharaoh so they pursued through the Red Sea. So God set a trap for their enemies, and in the blindness of their unbelief they drove their chariots to their own grave. This is why Isaiah said, “They shall lie down together, they are quenched as tow.” Unless sinners repent, they also experience the same fate. Those who oppose God and His mercy through the Son will find a far worse judgment upon death. The second death is far worse than the first death.

Why is this important and of what relevance is it to us today? God explains it all to us so we will not fear this enemy which we call “the world”. Though they hate and persecute us, God has drawn a line for them, a boundary which they cannot cross. And while it is true we don’t know where God has drawn this or that line in our own life concerning our enemies, for often enough we are vexed without and within, the point is God knows what He is doing, and God has it all planned out. Most importantly because He is a gracious God who has given us His Son, we don’t really need to fear these enemies, for Christ has conquered the power of Satan himself by the cross.

Think then of David when he stood up to Goliath. He was not afraid of this mighty enemy because David believed God’s Word. Also consider how no one in the army of Israel was willing to take on Goliath, not even King Saul. More often than not in life, we are that cowering army which trembles and is afraid. But the point here is we don’t need to be, for the same Lord who protects and saves and watches over us, is also the Lord who has graciously delivered us from all sin by the cross. Our enemies then may have power today, but tomorrow they die. Why should we be afraid of a man who will die? Man’s strength and power is always short-lived, especially those who hate Christ. This is why David writes in Psalm 37, “When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever.” In other words, God only allows them to have great power for a while, so He can destroy them with His greater power in the end, and thus be magnified. Likewise it is written “Evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.....For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholdeth the righteous.”

Of course the greater victory God gives us is through Christ and the cross. Here lies the real strength of each believer, namely in Christ our Rock, our Savior, our Resurrection and Life. While the devil may work so that we are fearful and afraid of God’s judgments for sin, we fight this enemy knowing all sins are now forgiven. Forgiven sins are somewhat like dinosaurs who have gone extinct. Can you be hurt by a forgiven sin? Can you be devoured by any certain sin that God has already put away? Is there any sin which has power to keep you out of heaven, when “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin?” In a manner of speaking, sin is extinct. Sin is like a flame which just had water poured upon it. Sin is like a fading puff of smoke which has no fire. On the other hand, even if our faith is so small that it is like a little spark, God will not quench or extinguish that faith. This is why Isaiah writes, “A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.” No matter how hard our trials or crosses the Lord also promises, “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee.....For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. Fear not: for I am with thee.” Is. 43

All this and more is God's gift to His New Testament Church, every believer in these Last Days. So the Lord says, "Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth." The former things, the things of old, are all the miracles and workings of God in the Old Testament. They are great and wonderful naturally, but even they are small in comparison to the birth of Christ, His life, death, and resurrection, the Gospel which poured forth from His sacred veins in the New Testament. Never before had it been said "The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." Never before had it been said, "I am the Bread of Life" or "I am the Life of the world" or "I am the Light of Life." Never before had it been said "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

How, for example, can you compare the great miracle of the crossing of the Red Sea, with the miracle of Baptism, where God pours out His gracious and forgiving Spirit from above, by the water connected to His Word? Isn't that a new thing? Consider also the miraculous passing through of the Red Sea by God's people, yet by the preaching of the Gospel a path to heaven is set before us? Certainly the Gospel was in the Old Testament with the same power to save, but the Gospel in the New Testament is much sweeter because of the lips of Jesus. Or what about Elijah and the fiery chariot which took him to heaven? How can that be compared to the Bread of Life who came down from heaven, only so He could lift us up? Or what about the "new thing" of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper? This is true manna from heaven! Truly the "new thing" of our text is the pouring forth of the Gospel into all the world after the ascension of Christ. It is not the Gospel within the veil of the Old Testament Jewish Church, but it is the New Testament Pentecostal Church which is openly and richly being given to the Gentiles. Strictly speaking the "new thing" here is the New Testament Means of Grace. So the Bible says "I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert." Baptism is especially a river which runs throughout the world wherever the Gospel is preached.

When the Gospel comes to lost sinners, those who hunger and thirst to be forgiven are filled, quenched, and satisfied. While the preaching of good works never quenches any thirsty soul, the preaching of the Gospel does. This is even what the Virgin Mary said in Luke one. Mary said, God "hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away." This is quite similar to what Jesus cried out to the people in John seven. "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Similarly Jesus said "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." To believe in Him dear friends, is to drink of Him and be satisfied.

As for the last couple of verses our Lord says "The beast of the field shall honour Me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen." The beasts, dragons and owls is a reference to ungodly lands and places where the wicked live. God will bring water there also, even "rivers in the desert to give drink to my people, my chosen." It could be that the wicked themselves are converted by the Gospel, for we do hear "the beasts of the

field shall honor Me”, that is, they are going to honor God. This would be comparable to Isaiah 11 where the Bible says, “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid.” The wolf and the leopard there are the ungodly who are converted, becoming Christians. Those who were once wild are tamed by the Gospel. But it is also possible this verse may teach the ungodly unknowingly honor God. How is this done? When unbelievers sing Christmas songs, or false teachers preach Christ. God is still honored there by the power of His Word, though they themselves remain under His wrath for their unbelief. Even unbelievers know how to make a buck or two at Christmas time by playing music which glorifies Jesus.

In any case, the good news is that God has given you the Gospel dear believer. You were not His people, but now you are His people by grace alone. So our Lord says, “This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.” Sing His Gospel praises this Advent season with a joyful heart. And may your Lord fill you with good things, as Mary said and believed. Amen.

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