

Intro: Eugene Peterson: “God is at work fulltime!”

- a. Sometimes God does a new thing, and when God does God shares His excitement!
- b. The LC has chosen Isaiah 43:18-19 for our theme this year: God is speaking...

***Forget the former things;
Do not dwell on the past.
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.***

Three Questions:

1. What is the new thing God was doing in Isaiah’s context?
2. When did Jesus do a new thing?
3. What new thing might God be doing in our context?

I. What is the new thing God was doing in Isaiah’s context?

- a. Background: 587 BCE Judah was conquered by the Babylonian Empire and Jerusalem was sacked. The leaders and many people removed and enslaved in Babylon.
 - i. 2nd Isaiah 550- 515 BCE in Babylon... to the weakened people in exile. Faith weakening and identity as the People of God is withering...
 - ii. Judah – a land in ruins
 - iii. BUT God speaks to and through Isaiah about doing a new thing...
 - iv. Cyrus of Persia is on the rise Cyrus and the Lydian Empire is gaining strength by God’s will and power. Judah can return to the land!
 1. Streams in the desert as you return... a way in the wilderness!
- b. The people returned to the Promised Land and a recommitment of the people to God.
- c. ***Psalm 126: “When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion we were like those who dreamed!***

II. When Jesus did a new thing.... When he provided a lost, lonely and hurting woman with an unexpected stream of living water in her desert.... John 4.

- a. **Jesus, lying low in Samaria, John 4:1-6**
- b. **Alone at the well...**
 - i. No one is coming to the well at mid-day
 - ii. He sees her coming out of town to the well...
 - iii. But he speaks to her, “Will you give me a drink?”
 - iv. Her guard goes up..
 - v. Jesus pulls a switch, to engage her with a dialogic turn of phrase - You should be asking me for living water... Living Water.. Eternal life... A quality of life..
 - a. John 17:3 “To know thee, the only true God and Jesus whom you have sent.”
 - b. Not confined to a place of worship... But a relationship of belovedness with God through Jesus.
 2. Available to one from Jesus, like this woman. Not just a relationship of God with God’s people.

3. **She would not have known and received if Jesus had not engaged her.. at her deepest pain and accepted her.**

- c. **The new thing of God in Isaiah** – faithfully rescuing the people from oppression and oblivion as God’s people.
- d. **The new thing God is doing in John’s Gospel** – For the woman at the well... Jesus is doing a profound, unexpected new thing! Faithfully caring for the one lost sheep; Giving living water to the soul thirsting in the desert... Are you there? Jesus meets us one-to-one.... God is always ready to do the new thing for the lost one? Even you and me...

III. **What new thing might God be doing in our context?**

a. **Calling the world and the Church back to God’s self....**

- i. A long time since a spiritual awakening / renewal...
- ii. The unease in the world right now is very intense... War... A divided America?
- iii. In the past, God has often used suffering and troubling times to invite the people/church... “In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be our strength.” Isaiah 30:15.
- iv. These are conditions in which our God, who is at work fulltime, usually wants to do a new thing....
- v. **Perhaps the Awakening on college campuses** in America is the new thing?!
- vi. **Presbytery Leadership ---**
 - 1. **God has already been doing the new thing among us...** Already providing streams in the desert! List...
 - 2. But more to come!

IV. **Conclusion: Eugene Peterson: “God is at work fulltime!” – and joys to do the new thing!**

Holy Spirit Living Breath of God

By Keith Getty

Holy Spirit, living breath of God,
Breathe new life into my willing soul.
Bring the presence of the risen Lord,
To renew my heart and make me whole.
Cause Your Word to come alive in me;
Give me faith for what I cannot see,
Give me passion for Your purity;
Holy Spirit, breathe new life in me.

Holy Spirit, come abide within,
May Your joy be seen in all I do.
Love enough to cover every sin.

In each thought and deed and attitude.
Kindness to the greatest and the least,
Gentleness that sows the path of peace.
Turn my strivings into works of grace;
Breath of God show Christ in all I do.

Holy Spirit, from creation's birth,
Giving life to all that God has made,
Show Your power once again on earth,
Cause Your church to hunger for your ways.
Let the fragrance of our prayers arise;
Lead us on the road of sacrifice,
That in unity the face of Christ
Will be clear for all the world to see.