

What's New

Isaiah 43: 18&19

By Dave Urbanski

To begin this past Sunday morning's message — which happened to fall on New Year's Eve — Pastor Scott asked a question all of us should consider: "What do you want to bring into the New Year, and what do you want to leave behind?"

In exploring the answer to that question, Pastor Scott went through a number of verses from the Bible. Let's look at them again.

Isaiah 43:18-19 — "Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. 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."

Pastor Scott reminded us that a lot of things happen in our lives that will limit the potential of our futures if we hold on to them. We may have regrets or fret about having wasted so much time — but if we dwell on the time we cannot get back, we may just nullify what we can do in the present moment and in the future, which we cannot measure. However, if we ask God help us to stop dwelling on our past mistakes and help us to perceive what he's doing NOW and what he will do in the future, that is the best way to live.

In the same way, he said that we can focus on GOOD THINGS too much. Resting on our laurels, our successes. Doing that also may nullify what we can do in the present moment and in the future, which we cannot measure. Let's not put God in a box. What is the new thing that God wants to do in our lives?

Isaiah 46:9 — "Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me."

Wait a minute! Didn't we just get done with verses that told us to not focus on the past? Yes, we did. But Pastor Scott emphasized that this verse can be summed up with the mandate to remember what God has done for us in the past — so that we can apply his character and promises in the present and in the future.

Philippians 3:13-14 — "Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

Moving 800 years into the future — just after Jesus' time on this planet — we see the Apostle Paul leaving behind what is old, even his vast accomplishments and accolades. Instead, he presses forward, desiring only the heights he can reach in Christ. Shall we do any different?

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

As believers in Jesus, we are all new creations. And just because he created us at one point in the past, the Lord is CONTINUALLY creative. That means he wants to add to us — to do a new creative work in our lives that will help our walks and help us to see what new thing he wants to do in our lives.

Lamentations 3:22-23 — “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning.”

Pain and loss is a reality all of us deal with, and the Lord cares about us in the midst of it. But rather than making the pain and loss disappear, Pastor Scott said the Lord wants to show himself to us by putting his arms around us in the midst of our pain and loss. Can you picture that? Pastor Scott added that the words “steadfast love” come back to the beautiful and rich Hebrew concept of “hesed.” We’re familiar with that word from previous messages we’ve heard recently, and it also can mean “tender mercy” and “covenant faithfulness.” In the end, it’s an act toward us from the Lord alone: All him; nothing from us. And Pastor Scott reminded us that a covenant from God is forever — and it’s even “new every morning.” If we chose to accept that singular love — which no one can match on earth — it will drive our confidence in the Lord and in his promises.

Ezekiel 36:26-27 — “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. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.”

In short, if we have soft hearts, Pastor Scott said that helps us be sensitive to the needs of others. And with the Holy Spirit inside us, how can we not be empowered to do all the things he wants us to do?

Psalms 40:3 — “He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord.”

The author of this psalm — King David — lived an intense life, Pastor Scott said. One that included everything from military battles and personal problems that all of us can relate to in one way or another. If we let the Lord take the wheel of our lives, and allow him to show us what new things he wants to do in them, “many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord.” What could be more exciting and fulfilling than that?

Ephesians 4:22-23 — “To put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds.”

With this verse, Pastor Scott talked about our new selves coming out of our personal relationships with Jesus. We know God wants to renew our minds so we can know what new things he wants us to do. But the only way we'll be able to see it is if we let old things go.

And finally, let's remember Pastor Scott's helpful suggestion as folks tell us, "Happy New Year!" this week: Every time we hear that phrase, let's do our best to refocus on what new things God wants to do in our lives.