



RIVERSIDE CHURCH

MAY/JUNE, 2024

RIVERSIDE APOSTOLIC LUTHERAN CHURCH - NEWSLETTER

Isaiah 43:18-21

“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. 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, the people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise.

Dear Friends in Christ.

Here in Isaiah 43, The nation of Israel is in bondage, far from home, slaves to a foreign government. They have no hope of escaping and returning home. On top of the miserable living conditions at the hands of their captors, they know that it is ultimately because of their rebellion towards God that their current situation is so distressing.

That’s what makes the words of God so astonishing. “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past.” Wait a minute! Wasn’t forgetting God’s amazing redemption precisely the sin that led to the Exile? Psalm 106 is the classic description of Israel’s disastrous forgetting. God was always telling his people to remember. How, then, can God tell them to forget the former things in the past?

Well, God might be talking about the recent past of the Exile, the trouble they had been experiencing for the past 30 or so years. That’s possible, but the most obvious referent of “former things” is what God had just rehearsed, namely, their founding story.

But why would God tell them to forget that? Well, the story of those former things was complex, involving complaint, scarce resources, divine absence, and the judgement of death over an entire generation. Is this a call to forget the negative things of the past, even though the past was dominated by the miracle of the Exodus?

That’s possible, but the most likely reason for God’s call to forget the past is that God wanted them to concentrate on the future. “Forget the former things” was a way of calling Israel to hope in the future things God would do. Perhaps they had begun to think that salvation was only a thing of the past, that their best days were behind them, that God can’t act now, that there was no hope for another Exodus.

That is precisely what God promises them— another Exodus, but in reverse. The God “who made a way through the sea” will make “a way in the desert.” The God who dried up the Red Sea will make “streams in the wasteland.” The God who did the impossible when he led Israel out of Egypt will do another impossible thing by leading Israel out of Exile. He will make a way through all those miles of burning sand. He will provide water for his people, not just the fountain of water that gushed from the rock, but streams, even rivers, flowing through the wasteland. The desert will bloom, as Isaiah 35 prophesies, and the wild animals will join the people in praising God for this miracle.

It is important to remember that God does not deliver his people because they are good people. The very next verses point out that these people have burdened God with their sins and wearied him with their offenses. Even when they prayed and offered sacrifices, their religious activities were half-hearted. From the first days of Israel’s life to the present, they have not been faithful covenant partners. That’s exactly why they are in exile in the first place.

So, God will deliver them again, not because they deserved it, but because he is a God of grace who forgives the undeserving. Verse 25 says- “I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.” He will lead them out of

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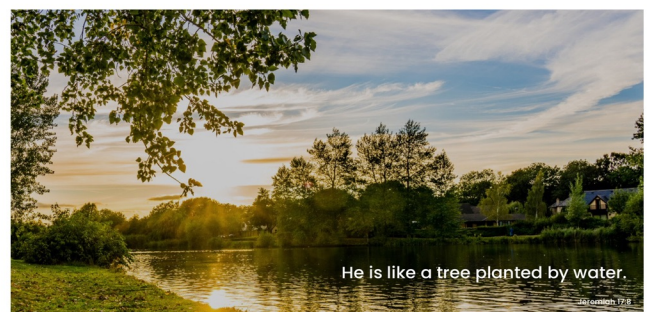
Riverside Apostolic Lutheran Church

Pastor: Ray Stenersen

3500 W Deschutes Ave. Kennewick, WA 99336

Phone: (509) 820-9934

Visit us online: riversidealc.com



He is like a tree planted by water.

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Exile and provide water for their journey, so “that they may declare my praise (verse 21).” In other words, God redeems us again and again, not because he sees how good we are, but because he wants a people who trust Him and praise him for his grace.

God’s question for his exiles is a good question for us to ask ourselves. “Do I perceive it?” “See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?” Our answer is almost always, “No, I don’t perceive it. I don’t see the new thing God is doing in my life, in our world.” We walk by faith, not by sight.

So, once again we are reminded to believe that God is doing a new thing even though we cannot see it. We haven’t finished our journey yet. The cross and empty tomb have just been celebrated a few weeks back. God did an astonishing new thing there on Good Friday and Easter, but we can’t see it. But, we believe it. And the return of Christ is still before us. God will and is doing a new thing at this very moment, redeeming and recreating a whole new world. But we can’t see that yet. Thus, we are called once again to believe it.

And even as we rehearse the founding story of the Christian faith and look forward to its future fulfillment, we believe that the God who acted in the past can still do new things in our own personal futures. We all know people who are stuck, it may even be ourselves at times, imprisoned by forces beyond their control, who cannot imagine that God can or will set them free, who have despaired of getting back home where peace and prosperity can be found again. We must remind them of The Story and assure them that God will send streams of mercy and rivers of grace into their lives, not because they deserve it, but because God is full of grace and faithful to his covenant. So, let’s praise the Lord, even as we wait upon Him.

Gods Peace!

Pastor Ray.

PRAYER REQUESTS

Guatemala mission trip

Prayers for our confirmands

Safe summer travels

Recovery and healing for any that are unwell

He is like a tree
planted by water.
Jeremiah 17:8

LOOKING AHEAD

May 4-11 - Mission trip

May 15 - Last Youth Group

May 19 - Last day of Sunday School

May 26 - Church cancelled

May 27 - Memorial Day

June 2 - Confirmation Sunday

June 19, 20, 21 VBS (Register online)

June 27-30 - ALC Conventions in Hockinson

June 30 - Church cancelled