

A New Thing to Behold

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 12 February 2023

Preacher: Rev Iain Macritchie

[0 : 0 0] Well friends, we're here to worship God and we're going to begin our service by singing to his praise from Psalm 25. Psalm 25 in Sing Psalms, that's on page 29 of the Blue Psalm books.

Reading at the beginning of the psalm. To you, O Lord, I lift my soul. I trust in you continually. Do not let me be put to shame, nor let my foes gloat over me.

No one who sets his hope in you will ever suffer such disgrace. But those who act with treachery, humiliating, shame will face.

We'll sing down to the end of the verse, Mark 9, to the praise of God, standing to sing. To you, O Lord, I lift my soul. To you, O Lord, I lift my soul.

I trust in you continually. Do not let me be put to shame, nor let my foes gloat over me.

[1 : 3 1] No one who shares his hope with you will ever suffer such as fear.

And those who act with treachery, humiliating, shame will face.

O Lord, reveal to me your ways. And all your paths lead me to hope.

I say, come guide me in your truth. Instruct me in the way to go.

You are my Savior and my God. All day I hope in you alone.

[3 : 0 2] Remember, Lord, your love and peace, which strong past ages you have shown.

Do not recall my sins above you. Do not recall my sins above you. On my rebellion, see the wind.

get you personally. Get you composition. I am 1997, making you represent.

budget. I am historia. To you on earth, I good always.

He shows His hand to all who stray. He guides them in what is right, and teaches them His holy way.

[4 : 3 4] Let's unite our hearts in prayer. Let us pray. Gracious and ever-blessed God, we come this hour of worship as a people who have much to be thankful for, not least the reality that you are our God.

That you are the one whom we desire to come and to worship and to praise this day. That our affections are not set upon the idols dumb of this world, but rather we seek to come in our hearts and bow down with that sense of adoration before the Creator God.

The one who is high and lifted up. The one who inhabits eternity. Yet the one whose, although His vastness is beyond our comprehension, He is nonetheless the God who is near.

Not one who is distant nor detached, but one who has revealed Himself through the person and the work of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The one who continues to reveal Himself through that special revelation of His word. And as we come around your word this day, we acknowledge that without you, we can do nothing.

[6 : 25] We are wholly dependent upon your Holy Spirit to illuminate our hearts and our minds, to incline our ear unto your voice.

And so we pray that indeed this would be the case this day, that your Holy Spirit would tarry in our midst and reveal to us the wonders of your kingdom.

So that even today we would see Jesus. We long to see Him more and more. We are in no way content with mere outward forms of ritual or religion.

We strive after that which stems from those fountains of living water. That life and that light that comes from knowing you as our Lord and our Savior.

That life and that light that comes by walking with you day by day as our Lord and our Savior. Savior, forgive us, we pray for the many times that even as your people we stray from that path that our feet have been set upon.

[7 : 37] That perhaps we find ourselves submerged in a sea of doubt or even unbelief. And that in doing so we take our eyes off the cross.

We lose sight of the majesty and the wonder of who we are in Christ. And so we pray, O Lord, that even today we would see you afresh.

And if there are any here who are yet to see you or to know you in their hearts. Who perhaps know you in their heads but are yet to come to know what it is to say, My beloved is mine and I am his.

That today would be the day where your Holy Spirit would truly meet them at their point of need. So that they too would be able by faith to cry out, My Lord and my God.

And so we pray, O Lord, for this dear congregation. We thank you for them and their witness in this community over many years. We pray that the seeds that have been sown in past ministries that are perhaps yet to come to fruition would indeed do so.

[8 : 49] That your Holy Spirit would water that seed and give it the increase. So that even those who have perhaps been under the sound of your gospel for many a year.

Who are yet to come and taste and see that you are good. That they would do so. That much fruit would be seen for the labors of those who have labored in the past.

And as we look forward, O Lord, we give thanks. We give thanks that although many blessings have been enjoyed in the past, you are the God of the present and the future.

You are the God whose work continues. You are the God whose work will continue until that day when you return triumphantly.

And bring your church in fully to yourself. But until then, O Lord, we pray. We pray that even here in North Tolstah, we would see days of revival and renewal.

[9 : 51] Refreshment of the souls of your people. That you would use the ministry of Donald mightily as he seeks to go forward with this congregation.

As one rod in your hand with that shared vision and desire and longing to see souls saved. Well, that you would bless this ministry.

That you would work mightily through it. So that above all else, your name would be high and lifted up. We pray for the office banners.

We give thanks for them. For the gifts that you have given to them. And indeed for every person in this congregation. You know them better than they know themselves.

But what we long to see is that their gifts might be used also. That they would not hide their light under a lampstand. But rather that they would with that desire in their hearts to serve and to worship you.

[10 : 52] That they would use that which you have given to them. For the furtherance of your gospel here in this place. And so we pray, Lord, then that you would be with us as a community, as a nation.

Perhaps especially as we reflect upon occurrences in our world at this time. That you would be with those in Turkey whose lives in many ways have been turned upside down.

In the twinkling of an eye. A reminder to us all of the brevity and the fragility of life. Help them, O Lord, we pray. We pray that even in the midst of such chaos.

They might know something of that peace that passes knowledge. That can only be found entrusting in you. We are in many ways not qualified to give explanations for such atrocities.

But yet all we are called to do is to believe. To believe that you are God. And that your purposes ultimately are for good.

[11 : 58] And so although we cannot see it. We pray that even through such a disaster. Good would come. That men and women, boys and girls would turn to Christ.

For surely time is short. And eternity is long. Bless Donald this evening. We pray as he proclaims the wonders of the kingdom in this congregation.

For the first time as their minister. That your hand would be upon him in blessing. That he would know that unction from on high. We know that in the months and even years that lie ahead.

As he embarks on this new chapter in his experience. There is much which can overwhelm and discourage. Help him we pray oh Lord. To remain focused on you.

That he would lean upon his beloved every step of the way. That even although the tides of providence overwhelm him from time to time.

[13 : 00] That he would lay hold of that glorious promise. That he can do all things. All things. Through Christ who strengthens him.

Bless us now we pray. And forgive us for Jesus sake. Amen. It's nice to see young folk with us today. Hope you're all well.

What I'd like to do just very briefly. Is to show you. How you can. Excuse me. My voice is a bit croaky. How you can come. To know Jesus.

Through a sheet of paper. Do you think that's possible? Yeah. Now you've maybe seen this before. Well don't give anything away if you have. How can we get to know Jesus.

Through a sheet of paper. Well. There's many different ideas. Even in our own community. As to how. We can come to know. The Lord Jesus Christ.

[14 : 00] I'll show you one. Nisha. What have we got here? What does this look like? You're allowed to speak.

What does this look like? It's a house isn't it? And what do we need to build a house? Any idea what we need to build a house?

Wood. Wood. Absolutely. But I don't think wooden houses would stand the gales in North Tolstah. We need something a wee bit stronger don't we? Cement. Cement.

Absolutely. Or more specifically. Blocks. And the cement will keep all the blocks together. Now. What's this got to do with getting to know Jesus? Well some people. Some people think.

That they can build their way to knowing Jesus. And in their minds. There are all these different blocks. That they think. That if they have in their lives.

[14 : 58] They can build a life. That will be pleasing to God. So if they're kind to their neighbour. That's one block. They can put into getting to know Jesus. Or if they come to church.

That's another block. Or if they read their Bible enough. That's another block. Or if they say long prayers. That's another block. And so there's all these ideas.

How we can come to know Jesus. And they're all good things. And they're all important things. But it's not how we'll get to know Jesus.

How will we get to know Jesus? Well. What am I going to make here? What does this look like? No idea what this is.

No idea what this is. It's a plane. Isn't it? No idea. You cannot go down to the airport in Melbourne. And hop on a plane.

[15 : 58] Can you? And fly up to heaven. Can you do that? That sounds ridiculous. Doesn't it? But it's not as ridiculous as you think. Because there are people in the Bible.

Who decided that it would be a jolly good idea. To build a tower. Higher. And higher. And higher. Into heaven. So that they could be. Almost as high.

As God himself. So it's amazing. The ways people think. That they can come. To know. The Lord Jesus Christ. All kinds of ways. That are wrong.

How do we come to know Jesus? Well. We need to know Jesus. Don't we? Because we live in a world. That is all broken. And torn.

And full of upset. And full of sin. And that's the way our lives are. They're all crooked. And they're all torn.

[16 : 56] That's the way we are. Where the Bible says. We're conceived. We're born in guiltiness. And sin. And so we need Jesus. We can't build our way to Jesus. We can't fly up to heaven.

To get to know Jesus. How do we get to know Jesus? Where do we go to get to know Jesus? Any idea? We come to church. But what do we hear about. In church. I'll give you a clue.

Where did Jesus. Where did Jesus die? On the cross. On the cross. On the cross. And that is. Where we find. Jesus.

On the cross. Of Jesus Christ. And we have to stay at the cross. And no matter what we do. Coming to church is fine.

But if we come to church. And we don't come to the cross. In many ways. We're wasting our time. We come to the cross. And on the cross. It's not the cross we look at. It's who was on the cross.

[17 : 53] The Lord Jesus Christ. The one who died. So that you boys and girls. And mums and dads. And grannies and shens. That we can live. Forever. And ever.

And so always remember. Where am I going to come to know Jesus? On the cross. Of Calvary's hill. I'm just going to say a wee word of prayer. Lord our God. We. Thank you for our young friends.

We. Pray that they would remember their creator. In the days of their youth. That your Holy Spirit. Would touch them in these. Young and tender years.

And that they might even grow up. And be used mightily. In this congregation. Or one like it. As servants. Of the King of Kings. And the Lord of Lords.

Bless them now as they go out to Sunday school. That all. That they learn. Would indeed be applied to their hearts. We give thanks for them. And those who teach them. We pray now. Forgiveness for our sins.

[18 : 50] In Jesus name. Amen. Well we're only going to have three singings today. So we're going to go straight to our reading. And as we start our reading. Our young friends can go. To Sunday school.

We're going to read from Sam. Not Sam. Isaiah rather. 43. Isaiah 43. And we're going to read the whole chapter.

If you're using the Pew Bibles. That's on page 5. 6. 5. 5. 6. 5. 5. 6. 5.

5. 5. 5. 5. 5. 5. 5. 5. 6.

6. 6. 7. 7. 7. 7. 8. 8.

[19 : 59] 8. 9. 8. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers they shall not overwhelm you. When you walk through fire, you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.

For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour. I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you, because you are precious in my eyes, and honoured, and I love you.

I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life. Fear not, for I am with you.

I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you. I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold.

Bring my sons from afar, and my daughters from the end of the earth. Everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.

[21 : 13] Bring out the people who are blind, yet of eyes, who are deaf, yet of ears. All the nations gather together, and the people assemble. Who among them can declare this, and show us the former things.

Let them bring their witnesses to prove them right, and let them hear and say, It is true. You are my witnesses, declares the Lord, and my servant, whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me, and understand that I am he.

Before me no God was formed, nor shall there be any after me. I, I am the Lord, and besides me there is no Saviour.

I declared and saved and proclaimed, when there was no strange God among you. And you are my witnesses, declares the Lord, and I am God. Also henceforth I am he, there is none who can deliver from my hand.

I work, and who can turn it back? Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. For your sake I send to Babylon, and bring them all down as fugitives, even the Chaldeans, in the ships in which they rejoice.

[22 : 33] I am the Lord, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King. Thus says the Lord, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, who brings forth chariot and horse, army and warrior.

They lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick. 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 honour me, the jackals and the ostriches, for I gave 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.

Yet you did not call upon me, O Jacob, but you have been weary of me, O Israel. You have not brought me your sheep for burnt offerings, or honoured me with your sacrifices.

[23 : 45] I have not burdened you with offerings, or wearied you with frankincense. You have not brought me sweet cane with money, or satisfied me with the fat of your sacrifices, but you have burdened me with your sins, you have wearied me with your iniquities.

I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins. Put in remembrance, let us argue together, set forth your case that you may be proved right.

Your first father sinned, and your mediators transgressed against me. Therefore I will profane the princes of the sanctuary, and deliver Jacob to utter destruction, and Israel to reviling.

Amen. We pray God's blessing on that portion of his own holy, inspired, and inerrant word. Before we consider some words from that chapter, we're going to sing once more from Psalm 85, this time from the Scottish Sauter, on page 339 of the Blue Psalm book, Psalm 85, reading at the beginning of the Psalm.

O Lord, thou hast been favourable to thy beloved land. Jacob's captivity thou hast recalled with mighty hand.

[25 : 19] Thou pardoned thy people hast all their iniquities, thou all their trespasses and sins hast covered from thine eyes.

Down to verse 8, I'll hear what God the Lord will speak to his folk, he'll speak peace and to his saints, but let them not return to foolishness.

Standing to sing Psalm 85, to the praise of God. Amen. O Lord, thou hast been filled up in, to thy beloved land.

He comes captivity thou hast recalled with mighty hand.

That our covenant, that our people have all their iniquities, the holy test passes and sins, that's covered from thy hands.

[26 : 54] Thy took stoff of thy night and turned from thy wrath's puriousness.

Turn us, God, all our health and cause, Thy wrath is just to cease.

Shall thy displeasure Thou send you against us without end?

Will thou to generations all thine anger for Christ stand?

And in thee may thy people joy, Will thou not us revive?

[28 : 22] Show us thy mercy, Lord, to us to thy salvation give.

I hear what God the Lord will speak to his folk, speak peace and to his saints, but let them not return to foolishness.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Well friends, just for a short time, let's turn back together to the chapter that we read.

Prophecy of Isaiah. Isaiah. Prophecy of Isaiah.

And we're going to take our text from verse 19. You can perhaps read verse 18 as well. Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old.

[29 : 53] 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.

Behold, I am doing a new thing. Friends, for a short time I'd like us to look at this text that we have before us through two different lenses.

Firstly, we're going to very briefly look at this text in its immediate context. Who is this text speaking to and why?

And then as you begin this new ministry together as a congregation, the Reverend MacLeod, we're going to look at this text in the context of your own experience.

That's the beauty of the word of the Lord. It's not an abstract word. It's not a word that's confined to a different day. It's a living word. It's a true word.

[31 : 04] It's a word that can be applied to you and to me even today as we meet together. So the year is 539 BC.

We find ourselves in Babylon. Now Babylon, of course, was already recognized as that enemy of God.

That place whereby the people have captured the people of God, the Israelites. They've enslaved them. They've taken them into that place of bondage.

Now we know in many ways, we're not going to go into that just now, but we know in many ways that this bondage, this enslavement, was the fruit of the Israelites' own doing.

They've turned their back upon the Lord. They've taken their eye off the Lord. They've turned to their own ways.

[32 : 04] They've become weak because they've turned to their own ways. And in their weakness, they find that they're overwhelmed by the Babylonians.

And so here they are in Babylon. Here they are, God's chosen people in a foreign land, a land that is ruled and reigned by pagan leaders, a land where the God of Israel essentially was replaced by the God of self.

And I suppose in many ways that's the way the Lord's people feel today as we find ourselves in this world. The Bible tells us that we are strangers in the authorised version.

It even uses the word aliens, that this is not our home. We are strangers. We are pilgrims. We are sojourners. We're just making our way through this world, this land, until we go home to that place where we belong.

And of course, because of this, because as God's people, we find ourselves in this world that are times that we're reminded that this is not at home. We can be discouraged, deflated.

[33 : 15] We feel that as God's people, as the church, we're getting nowhere fast. That the Babylonians of our day, that they've got the upper hand, that they're in control, and that we're trapped quite tightly, quite firmly within their grip.

That's the way it feels, isn't it, as God's people. We feel like we're on the back foot, as it were. So much so, so much so, that even perhaps, I hope not, but even perhaps at the dawn of this new ministry, there's that danger, is there not?

There's that danger to allow what we see happening in the world around us to inform how we think the future will be.

And so we say, ah well, can you look at the future? Things aren't the way they were, and neither they are. Things aren't how they used to be. And if the truth be told, if we search out hearts, we perhaps think that they never will be the way they were.

We look back on that Lord's Day morning, as we heard our brother Donald share with us on Friday evening, on that Lord's Day morning in March of 1963, when Reverend Murdoch Campbell preached in this pulpit, and we read there in his memoirs, that the Lord let fall the dew of his grace upon the souls of the people.

[34 : 58] And we look back, quite rightly so, with fondness and with gladness to those days. But here's a challenge. Here's a challenge.

Do you believe that these days will ever come back? These days whereby there'll be a tangible sense of the very presence of the very God in this very building within your very soul.

Friends, yes, we may be living in a day of small things, but we don't have a small God. And to go forward with such a spirit is dishonoring to our Lord.

And you know, friends, it's often the case that it's the darkest hour that's before the dawn.

We see that often in the experience of the church, in the experience of God's people, when things can appear at a low ebb. This church isn't full. The church in Grava isn't full.

[36 : 04] The church in Bach isn't full. People aren't coming to worship the Lord as they once did. They don't see their need of God because they have all the props of life to uphold them, to keep them where they need to be.

And so we find ourselves in a day where spiritually speaking, things are not perhaps as bright as they once were. Well, friends, often it's then, often it's then that the Lord chooses to intervene.

And that's what we see before us here. Yes, God's people, they're enslaved, they're trapped. Yes, they find themselves in a hopeless situation. But what does the Lord do?

This is interesting. What does the Lord do through the voice of the prophet Isaiah? What does he do? Well, before he speaks in detail to them in their immediate context, what he does is this, friends, and this is important.

He reminds his people who he is, firstly, and who they are in him. Let's look at verses 1 to 3 together.

[37 : 14] Verses 1 to 3. 1. Sorry, it's not verses 1 to 3.

I thought that didn't look right. It is verse 1. I beg your pardon. The middle of verse 1. Fear not, the middle of verse 1.

Fear not, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name. You are mine.

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. And through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you. When you walk through fire, you shall not be burned.

And the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour. And don't we, friends, today, don't we need to be reminded afresh of this reality, that before we can believe in any of God's promises for us, any of God's extended promises in relation to his promises in furthering the gospel and bringing his people to himself, we need to lay hold afresh of this reality by faith.

[38 : 38] Maybe this is where we're going wrong. And when I say this, I'm not talking about this congregation. Just generally, maybe this is where we're going wrong. Maybe it's time we came back to basics.

That he has redeemed us. That he has called us by our name. That we are his. That he is the Lord, our God.

And because of this, we are not to fear. That we have confidence of who we are in Christ. Is that something, friend, that you ponder on when you awake every day on mercy's ground?

Do you go straight in your mind's eye to bemoan the state of the day? Or do you come with that spirit of praise and worship and marvel at who you are in Christ?

And you know, when we truly lay hold of this, when we remind ourselves of this, we will then have that boldness to go on and to lay hold of all else that God promises to us in his word.

[39 : 41] And you know, the Israelites, they needed such a foundation. They needed such faith because what the Lord would go on to suggest to them, humanly speaking, would appear completely impossible.

And that's why we can sometimes think that God is not going to work. We think his power is somehow diminished because we've lost sight of the power that he has shown in taking us from darkness to light, from death to life.

And you know, what he suggests to the Israelites, humanly speaking, in verse 14, seems impossible. For your sake, thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, if you can turn to verse 14, the Holy One of Israel, for your sake, I send to Babylon and bring them all down as fugitives, even the Chaldeans, in the ships in which they rejoice.

The Babylonians, they lived by the water and they would carry out extensive trading by means of the Tigris and the Euphrates River as well as the Persian Gulf. That was their means of trading all kinds of different goods and providing for themselves in that way.

And so what God is saying in these verses is this. He's saying that he's going to free Israel, his people who are in bondage, by way of him causing the Babylonians to effectively take to their ships to leave the Israelites on their own so that they are free to go.

[41 : 23] And for the Israelites, of course, this would have seemed like an impossible prospect. There's no way the Babylonians would ever do such a thing or a ridiculous thought.

And of course, friends, that's always where faith has to spring into action. That's the essence of faith. There are many ridiculous thoughts that can be proved by the outworking of faith and the power of God and his promises.

God tells us many things in his word. Maybe he's given you promises in your life for someone or something that are yet to come true and you doubt them.

You say, never. How can this ever, ever be? If I was to say to you that in two or three years' time this church would be full, be honest now, in your mind, in your heart, what's your reaction?

Never. That's the way we are. That's the way we're programmed in our DNA to veer towards the negative, the impossible.

[42 : 36] It's probably self-preservation, self-protection. We don't want disappointment and so we don't set ourselves these targets, these great visions of what could happen just in case they don't happen.

But imagine that you were told that in a few years' time this church would be full of men and women, boys and girls, thirsting and hungering after righteousness.

Would you believe? Well, friends, today on the 12th of February 2023, you and I with you, we all need reminded. Reminded of what?

of the power of God. The power of God. Remember I spoke on Friday evening of the pneuma, the spirit, the power.

You know, the Israelites, they were no different. They too, they needed reminded and as we read this, it's almost as if the Lord anticipates their reaction.

[43 : 34] He knows us better than we know ourselves and so before they even have the chance to launch their objections at how impossible this is going to be at what he proposes, before they say, ah, ta, this, this and this and oh, but what about this, this and the next thing, you know, the way we are.

He comes up with this reminder in verses 16 and 17. Thus says the Lord who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters who brings forth chariot and horse, army and warrior.

They lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick. What's this a reminder of, friends? What's this a picture of?

Well, this is, this is none other than a reminder or a reference to a past experience of the children of Israel. A reference to how the Lord had dealt so mightily with God's people as they fled Pharaoh.

You remember the story, there they were literally running for their lives with the sound of Pharaoh and his men and their countless chariots booming within earshot.

[44 : 52] There they are running, fleeing for freedom and then what happened? They came to that vast ocean in front of them. Nowhere to go, nowhere to hide, nowhere to turn and as far as they were concerned, it was game over.

But God had his eye on his people, a people who undoubtedly like you and me with you were flawed, unfaithful, a people who strayed but nonetheless a people who ultimately were not under the power of Pharaoh nor any other human and neither are you if you're the Lord's but rather under the power of God.

And that ought to be an encouragement for all of us here today. I don't know what you're going through in life, maybe very difficult providences that are bitter to swallow and I don't make them small, friend.

but remember, just remember that God is in control, that he knows. We always say that text, he works all things together for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose.

And it's so easy to let those words roll off the tongue glibly when we're not going through hard things ourselves but they are through, friends. They are through.

[46 : 17] But it's not until we come to the other side of that providence that we see that. They often say that providence is best read backwards.

It's only as we look back we can see ah, that was why God was doing this and that's how he did that and that's so it is here with them. Because as God's people come to this sea, as they think what's happening, what has God done for us, not until they come to the very waters does he come and help them at their point of need.

That's what grace is, helping us at our point of need. That's what faith is, trusting and relying that the Lord will come to us at our point of need. Not before it, not after it, but at that point of need.

And so he does. He divides the water with his power, a power and a force that makes his path through the sea, taking God's people across to safety.

The impossible made possible. The enemies of God dealt with. The God who we read, verse 17, brings forth chariot and horse, army and warrior.

[47 : 32] They lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick. That's how God deals with the almighty Pharaoh. He extinguishes him and his people, he quenches them, he snuffs them out, just like a wick, but not with his people.

In fact, quite the opposite with his people. Another encouraging scripture that we read in the previous chapter, what does he say about his people?

A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoking flax he will not quench. You might feel, dear Christian friend today, that you've got nothing, that your light is well and truly extinguished, that you're no better than those who are living in the darkness of this world.

We've all felt like that from time to time, but no matter how low you go, a smoking flax he will not quench.

where there is smoke, there is fire, and where there is fire, there is the grace of God that has been ignited in your heart. Lay hold of that dear struggling Christian friend, because it is true.

[48 : 55] And so at this point we might think that God is saying, don't you remember, don't you remember what I did for you in the past? Don't you realize that I am the same God?

He's saying to the Israelites, just what I did for your forefather, I can do for you. I have the same power. I am sovereign. I am almighty. I am God.

I am God. Verse 11, I, I am the Lord. I love that emphasis on I, I am the Lord.

And what a lesson for us today who need to be reminded of the power of God, God, that the same God who parted the seas, is the same God who can fill this church in two or three years time, in two or three weeks time.

He is able. The same God, as we even take it to our own context here, who brought 9,000 souls from all across the island to Mount Mornach, just over yonder there in the Barvis Moor, he brought these thousands of people to come in 1824 to hear Finley Monroe preach from Isaiah 25, 6, on this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all people a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.

[50 : 24] 9,000 souls. Imagine. This is fact. It's not fiction. 9,000 souls, yet to you and to me today, we say impossible.

Why? Because we've lost sight, and I include myself in this, of the power of God unto salvation. And you know, when we come by faith, we do so knowing that he is able.

In 1824, in 2023, he is able to work mightily again in our midst.

And you know, friends, as you look forward to this new ministry here in this congregation, isn't that the most liberating of thoughts? An exciting thought, and we ought to be excited by the gospel.

If we're not excited by the gospel, it's not the fault of the Lord Jesus Christ. Something else has gone wrong, gone awry. We ought to be excited today with that sense of anticipation that God is still calling people like Donald, and like me, and like Colin next door, and every other minister to congregations, just as instruments in the Redeemer's hands.

[51 : 48] That's all we are. That's why we always want to play down this pedestal that ministers are put on. We are not the Pope. We are not the Church of Rome. We are servants of the Lord.

We are instruments in his hands. We are no different to you, other than the fact we have been called to share the good news from one beggar to the other, showing them where to get food.

So please don't put your minister on a pedestal. I know he doesn't want that, because we don't see that in scripture. We don't see that with the Lord Jesus Christ.

We don't see him with servants. We don't see him ringing bells waiting for his table to be set. We don't see any of that. Culturally, we might have in the past, but not in the Bible.

The Lord is able. He is calling men to share the wonderful news of the gospel. Does that mean that the detail of his plan will still be the same as the past?

[52 : 53] Not at all. And this is important. Verse 18, remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old.

No sooner has God reminded his people of his almighty power in the past, that it appears that he is going on to tell them to forget these former things. What is God saying here?

Is he contradicting himself? What he is saying to his people is this. Yes, I did this in the past. I parted the sea.

I made a path to safety through the waters. That is all true. I did that, but don't dwell on this. God knows us. He knows how we like to dwell on the past.

It's good to think on the past. Of course it is. And when it says remember not the former things, it's not saying never call to mind the former things. This is talking about using the former things to inform the present things.

[53 : 53] That they are your basis for the present. What he's saying is don't dwell on this. Don't keep going back to this previous exodus and somehow think that your exodus will be the same.

Look to the future. Look to the future. And in looking to the future, be aware that as God, I am not bound to replicate the detail of how I worked in the past.

You know, there's always a danger that we think if we can recreate certain circumstances that God will come. If we make church look exactly as it was, that God will come.

That somehow he blesses our furniture our dress. That is to put God, that is to completely and utterly disrespect the power, the majesty, the honour of the God that we worship.

And aren't we so pleased we don't worship a God who is confined to a box like that? A God who we think only blesses us when we are programmed like robots to behave in a certain way.

[55 : 08] That is not the God of the Bible. Well, behold, I am doing a new thing. In other words, he is saying to the Israelites, listen to what I am saying.

These past events pale into insignificance in the face of the new things that I have in store for you. Why? Because this exodus will be your exodus.

This deliverance will be your deliverance. This manifestation of my power will be for you. A particular people at a particular time.

What happened in the past was good and is to be praised. But it's not to inform our everyday in the present. Because God is living.

He's here. He's amongst us by his spirit. We're not to bind God to set any script as to how we think.

[56 : 09] He's to work in the future. At this point we might ask what is this new thing that the Lord is doing?

What is this new thing? For the Israelites on the surface it was essentially a work of deliverance from Babylonian bondage so that they were permitted to return home.

He wasn't going to part the seas like he did in the past. He was going to deliver them in a different way. A new way. It wasn't going to be the exact same detail of the past but it was still going to have the same effect as the past.

But more than that and deeper than that because this freedom from exile it had wrapped up within it the beginnings of a far greater redemption as this whole scene finds itself set against God's great plan of redemption redeeming sinners from the bondage of sin.

And so yes the Israelites would return home that is true but where they would return would be to that place in which the coming Messiah would eventually be born from this very people and what a new thing that was to be.

[57 : 37] A child being conceived supernaturally in the womb of a virgin. The world had never seen anything like it before nor since. God becoming flesh and dwelling among us.

What a new thing that was. What a new thing it was when he died on that cross and he took to himself the hell that was due to his people the hell that you and I deserve.

What a new thing that was. What a new thing it was when he rose triumphant from the grave on the third day and ascended to be at the right hand of the Father.

What a new thing that was. All so that you and I could know a new thing for ourselves.

That by his grace and mercy and love we could know that new and living way so that we could sing that new song a song that magnifies our God a song that speaks of the fact that we have been delivered from the bondage of sin that we have partaken in our very own exodus from Egypt released from the power of Pharaoh and Satan himself.

[58 : 57] I wonder do you know that new thing? That's the new thing that he's going to do in North Tulsa I hope and pray that souls even in here today who don't know of that new thing they cannot see Christ on that cross as their saviour they cannot see or you cannot see the wonder of his resurrection and ascension and what that means for you.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if many new things took place in this congregation many men and women boys and girls would be born again of the spirit that the scales would be taken from your eyes so that you would be able to see this world with new eyes eyes of faith eyes that lead you yes to come to church but more than that to praise and worship in your heart are you doing that today just now are you filled with that adoration do you see Jesus in all his beauty not as much as you would like but nonetheless you see him as the altogether lovely one is that you well if not there is still a new thing to happen here in this congregation and we believe that God is able not through the words of your new minister

God uses these words but these words must be accompanied by power the power of the Holy Spirit and so friends that is your duty every time you come into this building and before and after pray pray oh Lord oh Holy Spirit won't you come won't you bless the word won't you apply the word won't you bring life from the word that your coming together would not be mere routine or lifeless religion but rather that living expectation that as we come around the living word we are going to meet with the living God and as we do so even as God's people we reap the rewards the benefits what does he say he says

I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert that's what he promises for us as we're weary along the way of course your new minister will share the good news of the gospel to those who are still to know this new and living way but he will also build you up in your faith he will feed your soul he will direct you and redirect you and redirect you again to those streams in the desert don't we need a drink aren't we thirsty don't we faint and fail in this dry parched land yes we do and so we need that stream in the desert of this world that watering hole that place of replenishment and refreshment we are in Christ you might be here today saying well what's happened that's a good question and I don't mean for

North Tolstoy I mean for every congregation what's happened why is it generally speaking that we're not really seeing many converts we see the odd one we're thankful for that but why aren't we seeing new things taking place in the hearts of those around us in our community here why is that it's an important question well if we look at verse 22 what do we see we see a rebuke yet yet you did not call upon me oh Jacob but you have been weary of me oh Israel maybe friends we don't get because we don't ask or if we do ask we don't really truly believe we've lost sight of the reality of faith then you know that is I believe with all my heart our greatest problem we can talk about worldliness we can talk about x y and z till the cows come home our greatest problem is unbelief we don't believe as

[64 : 05] God's people in the promises otherwise if we did what would we be doing we would be pleading them we would be crying out to God to come and to work mightily through his word are we doing that you turn a new page in the chapter as your congregation today God is saying this to you behold look upon this I am doing a new thing just like we heard on Friday night the word doesn't change the word isn't new but he applies the word in new ways and in new lives that's a wonderful prospect and it's something that I would plead with you to lay hold of with all positivity and sincerity and expectation there is absolutely no place and I say this as a minister with experience relatively little experience granted but still experience there is no place for unbelief or negativity in the work of the gospel it drags us down it slows us down it holds us back it takes our eyes off the cross let us let you let Donald together keep the main thing the main thing don't get embroiled in church politics don't get embroiled in secondary issues keep Christ at the forefront of all that you seek to do for if I am lifted up he says

I will draw all men to myself lift him up with that spirit of expectation and believe that the God who has blown the wind of his spirit on this community in the past he's not lost any of his power it's the same God it's the same power to deliver souls from death to life from darkness to light I wonder friend have you experienced that do you still need to be delivered from Babylon from Egypt from sin well today if you're not in Christ the answer is yes you do but perhaps I should rephrase that question and this is the answer to this is telling and I speak from experience with this because I know what it's like not to be a Christian do you want to be delivered from sin in your heart of hearts do you really want to be a Christian do you but if you do if you do you will be that is fact

God does not lie if you want it ask for it and if you ask for it you will get it he will do a new thing in your life and just like for the church perhaps our greatest problem is unbelief so it is with a non-Christian unbelief we don't we don't believe we don't really believe we need a saviour we're happy to go through the motions why because it's easy but when it comes to giving our lives to Christ no a step too far if you want it if you really want it ask for it and he will provide these streams in the desert that will give refreshment to your soul behold I am doing a new thing now it springs forth do you not perceive it that every one of us here today would know this in a very real way not in an abstract way not in our head but in our heart that we would know this for ourselves individually collectively as a congregation as you go forward that you would do so with a distinct sense of anticipation and indeed expectation in the coming weeks years and months that the power of

God unto salvation is a power that can and will he has called our dear brother here to be your pastor can and will do a new thing maybe even in your life let's pray we thank you lord for the gospel and we pray forgiveness for the many times months even years perhaps even decades that we've lost sight of the gospel and that mission that is ours as your people go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in forgive us oh lord if we have repelled if we have not shown forth the love of god and christ through our words and our actions if we have even ascended our own lofty pedestal thinking ourselves better than others help us oh lord to remember that we are nothing but sinners saved by grace and that what we have for ourselves that we would one and all seek that this community would have also that they too would come and behold a new thing that they would know what it is to see

Jesus and call him call you their father and their friend bless in this dear congregation we thank you for them once more that your hand would be upon them for good as they go forward with Donald in whatever lies ahead that they would do so clinging with all of their might to the glorious promises of your word part us then with your blessing and forgive us for Jesus sake amen