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Sometimes I just can't see it. Maybe this will help (*looking with binoculars*). Well, it does help me see things closer, but I'm still not sure I see it. Look around. Do you see it?

I'm just doing what the prophet Isaiah invited us to do when God suggested: "Be alert, be present. I'm about to do something brand-new. It's bursting out! Don't you see it?"

Binoculars may help me see some things more clearly, but I'm not sure they will help me see what God is up to. Do you ever have a hard time seeing what God is doing?

When you're waiting for health to return for yourself or a loved one, do you wonder what God is up to?

When you recognize that some people don't have homes and they wander the streets, have you wondered what God is doing?

When a nation invades another country and kills innocent women and children while fathers die trying to defend their homes, do you wonder what God is up to?

When large groups of citizens unhappily leave their homes and settle in another country, do you find it hard to see what God is doing?

Are these questions you have been asking recently? Sound like questions in regard to Ukraine? I imagine so, but I was also thinking of those living 2500 years who were asking these same questions, for they had been forcibly relocated from their homes by the Babylonians and sent into exile in a foreign land.

The prophet invited his listeners to recall what God has done in the past: the one "who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty water." What event does that recall? What story is the prophet remembering? ... The Exodus—escaping from the Pharaoh.

Isaiah continued remembering more about this Exodus event: the one "who brings out chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise." That recalls what happened next—those soldiers of the Pharaoh riding on horse and chariots got stuck in the mud and were drowned in the water. They could not rise.



"who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty water."



"who brings out chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise."

In the midst of Babylonian Exile, away from home, God invited God’s people to recall their past, to remember how they had escaped once before. Just imagine the spark of hope that may have ignited into those listeners. And then the prophet suggested something that occurs nowhere else in the Bible—to forget: “Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old.” Throughout the rest of the Bible, we are encouraged to remember what God has done in the past as way to find hope for the future. Why would the prophet invite them to forget the events of the past?



“Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old.”

The next line gives us a hint: “I am about to do a new thing.” What is it that God has in mind?



Isaiah suggested that rivers will run in the desert, the animals will have plenty to drink, the people God loves will have lots of life-giving water!

Rather than remembering water washing away the enemy, God is bringing water to sustain life. God is doing something new!



“I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.”

Remember the story in Genesis about an ark Noah built to save the animals from flooding waters? Rather than remembering water destroying

people as did the flood during Noah’s time, forget it. Something different is going to happen. God is doing something new!

Rather than remembering walking through the desert in the hot sun for many years, God is bringing a river of water to sustain your weary lives. God is doing something new!

Sometimes it’s difficult to see what God is doing anew, for we often hold onto what we remember from the past. We remember the good ole days, and even though the past was also filled with struggles, we tend to romanticize the past, remembering an idealized version of what happened. You may have offered such comments: *Remember when it was so good and we didn’t have today’s problems... Back in my day... We used to have...*

I once saw a sign that said, *At one time “Good Old Days” were referred to as “These Trying Times.”*



Each generation has its own struggles, and I think the prophet Isaiah was inviting his listeners to move beyond their past and to anticipate what God was doing now. If they remained in the past,

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recalling only that water brought flooding, they might be like the little boy asking his grandfather



if he had been in the ark with Noah. The grandfather chuckled a little and told his grandson that he was not on the ark. The confused grandson asked, "Then why didn't you drown, Grandpa?"¹

What are we holding onto from the past that might prevent us from seeing what God is doing now? What bitterness from the past do you hold onto that prevents you from experiencing joy today?

Sometimes we may miss what God is doing if we're not paying attention, if we tune ourselves out from listening to God. To see what's new, we may need to pay attention rather than live in the past, which is something prisoners discovered while

in a German POW camp during World War II. Somehow, unbeknownst to the guards, the American prisoners had managed to scrape together enough electronic components to build a makeshift radio. They kept it tuned to



the BBC. One day, news came over the radio that the German high command had surrendered. The war was over, although the word had not yet filtered back to the camp's guards.

Suddenly, a change came over the prisoners: one that, to the guards, seemed incomprehensible. They sang, they waved at the guards and smiled, they laughed at the German shepherd dogs, they shared jokes over meals of watery soup and stale bread. On the fourth day after the news broadcast, the prisoners awoke to discover that their captors had fled, leaving the gates of the camp wide open. At long last, their captivity had come to an end.²

Something new had happened. The prisoners were tuned into the news. They heard what was happening. How might we tune into what God is doing among us? God is doing a new thing. Do you see it?



¹ Hodgin, Michael. *1001 More Humorous Illustrations for Public Speaking: Fresh, Timely, and Compelling Illustrations*

for Preachers, Teachers, and Speakers. Zondervan. Kindle Edition, #21.

² HomileticsOnline, April 4, 2022.