

Sermon, November 13, 2022

Isaiah 65:17-25  
“A New Creation”

To begin with, I have to confess that I struggled with this one. Through Isaiah God declares that he is about to bring something new into the world. He says, “I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating”. And this idea of a New Creation is not unique in Isaiah but appears numerous times in both Old and New Testaments. At the end of the last book in the Bible, that is, Revelation. We hear in John’s vision, “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away...and I heard a great voice from the throne saying: Behold, the dwelling of God is with men...he will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more, for the former things have passed away...Behold I make all things new.”

Obviously, these were proclamations of what is to come, and just as obvious is the fact that none of this has come to pass when we look to the way things are in the world today. But then listen to this passage from the 43rd chapter of Isaiah. “Remember not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing, even now it is springing to light, Do you not perceive it?” Listen, again, to those last words, “Even now it is springing to light. Do you not perceive it?” It seems to suggest that the New Creation is in the works, but, for some reason, we cannot see it!

Each of these prophetic statements speaks of doing away with the old, but what former things are they referring to? I think we can say all those things are contrary to a New Creation, things such as prejudice and hate, greed and the lust for power, violence, and war. And what may also be missing is our understanding the role we have to play in bringing about the New Creation. I remember a saying popular in the Charismatic Movement, “Let go, and let God”. In other words, place our problems in God’s hands. But I don’t believe that God expects us to play such a passive role in bringing about something new. Perhaps that is what we fail to perceive, that God’s power resides in persuasion and inspiration, while we are the hands and feet, as well as the brains and heart to make things new.

In a sermon entitled, “I Am Doing a New Thing”, Paul Tillich said, “We cannot be born anew if the power of the old is not broken within us...”. We, as Christians, must strive towards bringing an end to the former things - that the church as a whole must be a model of what a New Creation is all about.

Again, we have a role to play, but a role that is doomed to failure without a partnership with the Lord. Quoting Tillich again, "The really New is that which has in itself eternal power and eternal light". It is not "Let go and let God", but to look to God, and depend on God, to help us find the faith, the courage, and the strength to make things new.

In the fifth chapter of 2 Corinthians Paul writes, "So, if anyone is in Christ, there is a New Creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" If we place our trust in the Spirit of Christ - if we look to the teachings of Jesus, we, as individuals, and as a church, can play our part bearing witness to the possibility of a new world. And what is at the very heart of Jesus' teaching? Well. If I may turn to Tillich once more, "Love is the power of the New in every (person) and in all history. It cannot age; it removes guilt and curse. It is working even today toward new creation. It is hidden in the darkness of our souls and of our history. But it is not completely hidden to those who are grasped by its reality. Do you not perceive it? Asks the prophet. Do we not perceive it? Amen.

**Let us pray:** Holy God, we praise and bless you for creation and the gift of life, and for your abiding love which brings us close to you revealing to us the hope of New Creation. We thank you especially that in the fullness of time you sent Jesus, born of Mary, to live in our midst, to share in our suffering, and to guide through life. We celebrate the prince of your Holy Spirit who gathers your church so that your work may be done in the world and through which we share in the gift of eternal life. With the faithful in every place and time we praise with joy your holy name. Today we remember to you those in special need... Amen.