

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

*I am about to do a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?*

I speak to you in the name of one God, Father Son and
Holy Spirit. Amen.

When I was a little girl, I was brave. I believed the stories
my mother told me, that I could do anything, be anything:
strong, confident, clever, joyful. But like any brave little girl,
there were times I was afraid. Remember what it felt like,
as a kid, to dream a nightmare? Waking up in the middle
of the night, terrified, small, alone. As a brave little girl, I'd

run to my parent's room, crying out for a hug from my Momma.

That fear reaction is in all our hearts: go back to the safe place. Sometimes that's literally a hug from momma; sometimes, it's a safe place of memory. When we are scared, we hide in memories of better times. But our scripture today challenges that instinct:

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

Nostalgia is a temptation. It can be soothing to amble down memory lane, especially when the current reality is frightening. Remember then? When things were simpler? When times were hopeful? When life was better? Be

cautious: as James reminds us, your enemy the devil prowls like a lion - even in our memories. Nostalgia is like an Instagram filter over the reality of the past: smoothing out the wrinkles, adjusting the lighting, dreaming a false memory.

I am about to do a new thing;

now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?

God calls us to the future. Time marches on.

Yes, history repeats itself; but every iteration is new.

History is worth studying, not because it is predictive, or because we could construct the past again, but because it helps us to understand possibility. Helps us understand who and whose we are. We read scripture because it tells the story of God's intentions for us: hardship and hope, sin

and salvation. The dreams and worries of your memory will never repeat, not precisely. Your memories will meet a new thing. *Now it springs forth; do you not perceive it?*

Time will pass, no matter what we do. That is the sovereignty of God. It is utterly out of our hands. On the canvas of time, we can leave our mark; but we cannot stop it, nor can we speed it along. Time just is, and so are we. What does it mean to be here, now, in this precise moment? Not the past, not the future, but right. here.

God is about to do a new thing.

Who is Isaiah talking to? A people in exile. A people who experienced violence and destruction; their city, their daily life, their dreams, thrown into disarray. No control. Isaiah

is responding to his people's question: *has God abandoned us?*

Has God abandoned us?

This question comes up often in scripture. Hagar, despised by Sarai, fled to the desert. The Israelites, wandering the desert after fleeing slavery, feel such distance from God they construct golden calf idols. Ruth's mother Naomi lost her family, her land, her means of survival and cried out, *the LORD's hand has turned against me*. Even Jesus, in Gethsemane, asks God the Father to take this cup, this trial, from him. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus cries out from the cross: My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"

There is no shame in this question. It is an honest one, one most of us will ask at some point or other. It's a question for yesterday, tomorrow, and today. Has God abandoned us?

We might be tempted to move too quickly from this question.

From Isaiah today, God promises:

*"I give water in the wilderness,
rivers in the desert"*

Do not rush to the water - do not rush to the water. Not yet. Dwell in the wilderness. Recognize the desert.

The esteemed Ron Boggio led a moving Sunday forum the other week on John of the Cross' spirituality. Ron focused on this stanza from John's "The Dark Night of the Soul:"

O, guiding night;
O, night more lovely than the dawn;
O, night that hast united
The lover with His beloved,
And changed her into her love.

The dark night of the soul, the desert, the wilderness, is a guide. John of the Cross warns us: do not move so quickly to the dawn. Don't run away from the darkness of the soul. Dawn is coming, we will say our hallelujahs! - but first, we

must face the darkness. In times of difficulty, we stand and name it.

Bravery is standing in the desert and crying out, “where is my God?” Bravery is losing your job, losing your country, losing a loved one, losing your health, and, with all your strength, calling out to God in lament. Because lament is love. Lament pours out of a broken heart.

Ours is the way of the cross. That means we go where it hurts. We walk alongside hurting people; we step bravely into the desert.

We know the answer to the question: God has not abandoned us. God has not abandoned you. God has not abandoned the poor, the frightened, the imprisoned, the

lonely. God is at work, even now, *about to do a new thing*; in the deepest wilderness, God gives water! In the driest desert, God carves a river! In the dark depths of fear, God lights a fire of hope.

About to do a new thing. About to. But not quite yet. When we are afraid, we instinctively turn to places of refuge. The here and now is painful; we can turn to another time, past or future. If a part of your life feels like a nightmare, you could rest in the sweet dream of nostalgia, or you could jump straight ahead to dreaming God's future.

Stop, for a moment, and hear the silence. Whatever is on your heart, precisely here, precisely now. Not your memories; nor your hopes for the future. Right here, on

the cusp between the past and the future. Dwell in it.

Name it before God.