

“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.”

We always want something new. We look at church, and say, nothing new here. Jesus still died on the cross and rose again. Same pastor as six years ago. The people here look the same. What’s there to be excited about when it comes to the faith that we’re taught, our faith that trusts God, and Faith Lutheran Church on 14th and Main? Nonetheless, our God is the God of fresh starts, new beginnings, and life where there was once death. **THE LORD MADE, IS MAKING, AND WILL MAKE ALL THINGS NEW.**

First, I. The Lord made all things new in the Exodus. We take our text from Isaiah which begins in verse 16: **“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:”**

This event reflects upon the Israelites’ escape from Egypt. They were trapped in slavery in Egypt, yet God did a new thing: He rescued them from slavery by raising up Moses to lead his people out of Egypt by showing the power of God through ten plagues. When they finally escaped Egypt, they were trapped between Pharaoh’s armies and the Red Sea. The Lord parted the waters of the Red Sea letting the Israelites pass through the waters as though on dry land.

When Pharaoh and his chariots pursued the Israelites, the waters returned, drowning them and defeating the threat of them bothering them ever again. And the Lord did something new. He made a way in the wilderness for the Israelites. For forty years He sustained hundreds of thousands of the Israelites through bread from the heavens, quail from the skies, and water in dry wastelands.

He took them to the promised land. A land flowing with milk and honey. He brought them victory as they fought their enemies, and they became a new nation. All this happened through His mighty power as He defeated their enemies.

The astonishing thing that the Lord tells them is “**Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old.**” He is pointing them to a new thing, a better thing, something that would make the Exodus from Egypt pale in comparison. II. The Lord made all things new in His death and resurrection.

It started as John the Baptist proclaimed in the wilderness “**Prepare the Way of the Lord, make his paths straight.**” John the Baptist told the people that God was about to do something new by sending a savior, so turn from sin.

But even as Jesus stepped on the scene, He said that what He was doing was something new compared to the old ways of John the Baptist and the prophets before Him. He used the analogy that nobody puts fresh cloth on an old garment, and nobody puts new wine into old wineskins. In both cases, the new would make the old rupture. What Jesus is teaching, and the age Jesus is ushering in cannot be contained in the old ways of the Old Testament any more than the photos stored on your phone would fit in your first computer from the 90s. Paul says the ways of the Old Testament “**These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.**”

At the end of the Bible, Revelation 21:5, God sits on His throne and tells us, “**Behold, I am making all things new.**” Jesus came to this Earth to make all things new. Some people leave a trail of destruction in their wake. It seems, everything they touch turns to ash. Jesus did the opposite. Throughout His ministry “**the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them.**” He was working to restore creation.

This reaches its climax as He is sentenced to death, is crucified, died, and buried. In this act, He takes on the sin of the world, serving as the perfect sacrifice to pay the penalty our sins deserve. When He rose again, He showed us a window into all things being new as He will come again to restore creation fully. All of this is part of Jesus making all things new.

But that brings us back to our first question, what’s new there? Why be impressed or excited about it? I’m not going to tell you a new

detail about Jesus' death and resurrection, or give you a sudden plot twist you've never heard before. But what can happen is that the Holy Spirit can use this same story to do something new in *you*. III. The Lord is making all things new in His Word and Sacrament.

Garrison Keillor, a radio personality who made a cottage industry of making fun of midwestern life, recounted a thanksgiving dinner in *A Prairie Home Companion*, we read, “Everybody in the family knew that Uncle John couldn't pray without talking about the cross and crying. Sure enough, Uncle John prayed, talked about the cross, and cried. Meanwhile, the rest of us shifted nervously from one foot to the other and longed for the prayer to end. All of us knew that Jesus died on the cross for us, but Uncle John had never gotten over it.”

Admittedly, those hearing that story might have laughed at John. Keillor often makes jokes at the expense of Lutherans. But what a heart warming account of a Christian who truly believed in Jesus Christ and all that He had done for him. Would that all of us here never got over Jesus dying on the cross for me and for you.

The way that we never get over it is not by conjuring up some religious feelings in our hearts, but as the Lord does something new in us by making a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” How can we get a better illustration of this than to have the baptism of little Arolyn this morning? With today's imagery of deserts, water, and growth, I can't help but think of the succulent plants such as cacti or aloe that grow even in deserts. Through the water and the word, Arolyn has been made new. It didn't take much water—just a few splashes—for this little sprout to grow, but before you know it, she will be declaring the praises of God.

Baptism is the river that pours from Christ's side and makes you new. Through Christ covering you in baptism, you put on the new self every day. Luther calls this a daily dying to sin and a new man daily rising up as we repent from our sins.

The Lord makes a way in the wilderness through His Word. He uses His word to encourage us and to strengthen us for this life. He makes with us a new testament through the Lord's Supper which feeds

us with Christ's body and blood so that we are renewed in body, soul, and spirit.

Jeremiah writes, **“Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.”**

It is through these means of grace that the Lord makes you both like a willow tree that sucks up the water like a straw to grow and thrive. Likewise, as these means of grace transform you, He simultaneously makes you like a cactus that can endure drought without fear. In good times and bad, He's sustaining you and never letting you get over Christ dying for you.

In this life, He is making all things new as He works in your heart to give you more peace, more love, more kindness, and more patience. You have been fully and wholly saved through Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection, and He is making you new, even if the story of the Bible hasn't changed. He is doing this that we might declare His praise.

Finally, IV. The Lord will make all things new at His second coming. One last point as we finish our sermon. We see this mysterious passage here in verse 20: **“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,”** We may not know exactly what this means, but we know that all this renewal culminates in Christ coming again to make all things new.

In this life we will suffer, but Christ works to make all things new when He comes again to restore creation. **“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”** May that day come soon! Amen!