

This sermon was preached at Good Shepherd Baptist Church
By Rev. Stephen Guantai
On July 18th, 2021

Text: Isaiah 65:17-25

Message: "New Beginnings"

When something unpleasant is happening, we all yearn for a time when it will end, so they can start afresh and have a new beginning. We long to hear some words of comfort, at least telling us this too will pass.

As human beings, in our fear and doubts, we will check see whether what is happening has ever happened before. And if it has, what was the results? Other questions such as why and how did the people survive? Will be asked.

As beloved children of God, when we read the Bible, we hear the word of God calling us to draw comfort from past events and open ourselves to hear God's plans for us. From today's scripture, the spirit of God is calling us to shake off fear and doubts and prepare ourselves for a new chapter of our lives. Be ready for a new beginning.

That's what I want to share with you this morning. Today I am not going to dwell on the historical details of the prophet Isaiah, but let me say that Isaiah's message is expressing God's redemptive love and future plans for those who trust in him. As prophet Isaiah reminds us in Isaiah 40:31 (From New Living Translation), "*...those who trust [other translations says hope] in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.*"

In Isaiah 65 from verse one, God is speaking of a people who were faced with a dilemma and were perusing their imaginations. People who were defiling the name of God by their practices. Which includes worship of idols, pride, and discrimination based on seeing themselves as chosen and favored over others. As a result, they fail to meet God's expectations. But God continued loving them anyway.

In many ways, like the people of Israel, we too have failed to measure up to God's expectations. Tragically, we're caught up in the storms of life, and many do not know where to start. especially after Covid-19, which is still claiming lives around the global, we find ourselves somehow stuck; perhaps wondering what to do or not to do.

But the good news is, God's promises are fresh every day, for the God we worship is in the business of doing new things! Even when we do not know how it will happen.

Listen to what God says in Isaiah 43:19, "*I am about to do something new! See, I have already begun! I will make a new pathway through the wilderness. I will create a river in the dry wasteland.*"

Brothers and sisters in Christ, perhaps when you look at your life, everything seem dry and thirsty for a relief, don't give up yet. For the God we worship is a mighty God, God of possibilities. Who is always ready to give us a new beginning.

When the Corona virus broke out, the whole world was coming to a standstill. Nobody knew what was going to happen, but God knew he would use his people to develop vaccines that would give people a new beginning. And today, we can gather again in our lovely sanctuaries in person.

On this note, may I appeal to those are debating whether to take the vaccine or not. Would you please get vaccinated and leave the rest to God? Trust that this is God's plan to rescue his people from the paramedic. Many have taken it trust God will protect us from any harm.

I don't know about you; but I believe that most of the things we do, eat, or drink are dangerous, but it's God who protects us.

Sisters and brothers in Christ, I don't know what you may be going through in your life; but today, prophet Isaiah is reminding us three things; one, that those who trust in the Lord "will not toil in vain or bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed of the Lord they and their descendants with them" (Isaiah 65:23).

Secondly, This is what God is saying to those who believe in Him; *"Before they call, I will answer; while they are still speaking, I will hear"* (Isaiah 65:24)

Wow! I don't know about you, but I pray and wish God can help me reach that level where He can do that for me.

This is also my prayer for this Church and those who are listening to this sermon over the internet: that whenever we open our mouths, may God answer us, and when we speak, may He hear us and come to our rescue.

Thirdly, God promises His Peace to us. Prophet Isaiah tells us this is what is going to happen; Isaiah 65:25, *"The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain."*

I believe this particular verse refers to Christ's second coming, and those who will be alive that time will enjoy true peace, for there will be no more discrimination, hatred, violence, or wars.

I don't know who I am speaking these words to, but listen to what God is saying in Psalm 91:15 *"He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him(her) in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him (her)."*

If we can claim these promises, we will be able to accept news beginnings in our lives. And *"When God gives you a new beginning, it starts with an ending. Be thankful for closed doors. They often guide us to right ones"* (from an unknown writer).

Perhaps there are things that you had planned before the pandemic, and they didn't happen. Or something ugly has happened for whatever reason. In the name of Jesus, I urge you, don't give up, because God is still in the business of doing new things.

I don't know about you, but I'm looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth. Listen to what apostle John in Revelation 21: 3-4 *"And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and their God. He will wipe away all the tears from their eyes. There will be no more death, no more grief or crying or pain."*

What a glorious will that be. For that eternal home where all God people will live forever and ever.
Amen.