

1. For several years I have shared, normally at the beginning of the year, what I have called a word from the Lord for that year.
2. This group of messages I am going to begin this morning fit into that category.
3. But in my prayer time, seeking the Lord for what he would have me to share with you, I have asked God for more than just a word for the coming year.
4. As you well know, 2020 has been a difficult year. Lots of stuff going on. Lots of stressful stuff going on. Lots of stuff that doesn't make much sense going on.
5. So, because of that my prayer has been, Lord. How does what has happened in 2020 relate to what you are up to in 2021?
6. Out of that time of extended prayer and seeking the Lord came the passage of scripture I am about to give you.
7. I first heard this word from the Lord a few months ago. And then several weeks ago I printed this passage of scripture, put it on my desk in a place where I would see it often, and I have read and re-read it multiple times.
8. Turn with me if you will in your bibles to Isaiah chapter 43.
9. The phrase that has overwhelmed me for months is the phrase New Thing. I have sensed the Lord saying, **I am doing a new thing**.
10. How does what has transpired in 2020 relate to what God is up to in 2021. The answer. God says, I am doing a new thing.
11. This concept of God doing a new thing is not, well, new.
12. In fact, God told the people of the nation of Israel through the prophet Isaiah that he was doing a new thing.
13. In just a moment I am going to read two verses of scripture to you out of the book of Isaiah.
14. And the two words we are going to pick up on and consider several times this morning are the words "New Thing".
15. We are only going to consider these two verses in Isaiah this morning. And because of the lack of time, the reality is we are not going to be digging down really deep into the meaning of what the Lord is saying.

16. In fact, this may be one of the most simplistic messages you have heard in a long time.
17. However, I would like to give you a couple words of caution as you consider this basic message.
18. Please don't take this simple message and run away with it without considering everything the Lord has to say about the subject.
19. Even though I am only going to read two verses, the reality is these two verses are actually a part of a chapter of 28 verses. And it will take all 28 verses to fully understand what this new thing that God is doing is.
20. Secondly, we need to remember that this word that Isaiah spoke was directed to the nation of Israel at that time. It was an explanation of what God was doing for them and to them in that period of time in history.
21. You and I are not Jewish. And we don't live in the timeframe in which Isaiah spoke the message. So, to take every single thing Isaiah says and try and apply it to ourselves in 2021 would be a mistake.
22. Yes, I hope and pray the Lord will say much to us through these verses, but we have to put what is said into the proper context. In other words, we have to consider the circumstances that form the setting for an event.

TEXT: **Isaiah 43:18-19** "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. 19 See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland."

TITLE: **The Thing.**

INTRO:

1. So, what is the Lord up to? What is he doing? Isaiah says that he is doing a new thing.
2. Now, what is interesting about this new thing that God is doing for the Israelites is that it is entirely possible, and maybe even likely, to miss this new thing that God is doing.
3. How could they miss this new thing?

4. For starters, Isaiah says now it springs up. Said another way, it comes out of nowhere. They didn't see it coming.
5. And then Isaiah asks the question...Do you not perceive it? Said another way. Even when it is happening, it is possible that they are missing the reality of what God is up to. God's purpose is not apparent.
6. And then in the last part of verse 19 the Lord gives some insight into exactly what it is he is doing. I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.
7. Wilderness implies being lost or unsure. And wasteland implies barren, or not fruitful.
8. But what God is doing is he is making a way (a path or direction) in the wilderness. And he is creating streams (life giving water, fruitfulness) in the wasteland.
9. And who in the world wouldn't want to celebrate and praise the Lord for that? Let's get excited because this new thing the Lord is doing is really wonderful and awesome. And that is very true.
10. But before we get carried away, let's make sure we don't miss what is necessary to experience this new thing.
11. Verse 18 says, forget the former things; do not dwell on the past.
12. To be clear, that is not an easy thing for us to do. To forget the former things and forget about the past.
13. Most of us, including me, have this tendency to think about the past continually. And we also have the tendency to allow our future to be shaped by what has happened to us in our past. Whether good or bad.
14. So why is it possible to miss the new thing God is doing?
15. It happens quickly and as a result we might miss it.
16. And even though the new thing God is doing is exciting and wonderful, what is not so exciting is letting go of the very things, the former things, the past things, that will keep us from experiencing the new.
17. How many are still with me?
18. Now, I think all of those principles can be applied to our lives today.

19. All of those principles can be applied to the transition we are facing as we go from 2020 into 2021.
20. I believe that a central part of this word from the Lord for us is that **God is in fact doing a new thing. But this new thing may not be that easy to identify, and it probably will not be all that easy to accept.**
21. Because this new thing is not like a new pair of shoes, or a new toy, or a new vehicle, or a new house.
22. Most of us like those kinds of new things.
23. This new thing may more resemble that new thing that doesn't function anything like the old thing, and it is confusing until you get used to it.
24. Or, that thing that is in a new place in the store, and you have to walk around the store 3 times before you find its new place.
25. New may not always feel exciting. But anytime God does something new we know it is for the good and for our good.
26. When God is up to something new, you can bank on the fact that God will make a way in what seems like wilderness.
27. And he will cause a stream to form that sustains and refreshes you in the midst of your wasteland.
28. So, in order to help us not miss the new thing the Lord is doing in our lives, I want to share with you 3 very clear words the Lord gave me concerning the thing.
- **This is not your thing.**
 - **This is God's thing.**
 - **Let Him do His thing.**
29. So, let's break down these three messages.

This is not your thing.

1. If it's truly new, it's not from you. It is from the Lord.
2. You and I don't have the ability to create. Only God has the ability to create. He is the creator. You and I are not the creator.
3. That matters because it has everything to do with weight or responsibility.

4. This new thing the Lord wants to do is not about what you and I can achieve or not achieve.
5. Go with me to the book of 2 Samuel. In this chapter, king David comes up with the idea to build a temple made of wood and stone. A permanent structure.
6. **2 Samuel 7:1-3** After the king was settled in his palace and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, **2** he said to Nathan the prophet, "Here I am, living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent." **3** Nathan replied to the king, "Whatever you have in mind, go ahead and do it, for the LORD is with you."
7. David thinks to himself. Here I am living in this beautiful palace, while the ark of God is out there in an old tent.
8. I need to build a temple for God's presence to dwell in.
9. So, the next time he is around Nathan the prophet he says to him, you know what Nathan. I want to build a temple for God.
10. Let me paraphrase Nathan's response. Do your thing David. God is with you.
11. Now, to understand what kind of man Nathan was, we need to remember this is the same Nathan that confronted David when he committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband Uriah murdered.
12. David thought he had gotten away with it, but through the mouth of Nathan, God let him know he had not.
13. So, Nathan was not some yes man who agreed with whatever David wanted. David told him his idea and Nathan thought, I like it. Go for it David. Do your thing.
14. But later on, that night, the Lord spoke to Nathan with a very clear message. **2 Samuel 7:5** "Go and tell my servant David, 'This is what the LORD says: Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in?'"
15. Again, let me put God's response in my own words. Hold on David. Not so fast. This is not your thing to do.
16. Now, eventually a temple was built, and God showed his approval by very powerfully filling that temple with his presence. But God needed David to be clear that this was not his thing to make happen.

17. What is the application? **This new thing God is doing in your life, is not your thing to do.** This new thing will happen, but not because of what you do.
18. Maybe you need a way through the wilderness. Maybe you need a stream in your wasteland. Not a problem. But we need to get out of our mind that what we do is the source of our victory.
19. We are not the source. The Lord God is our source.
20. Only the Lord can do the new thing that will truly bring you through. This new thing is not about trusting in ourselves; it's about trusting in the Lord.
21. Secondly...

This is God's thing.

1. Why is it so important to not become confused about whose thing it is?
2. One of the reasons is that **sometimes our thing, and God's thing, are two very different things.**
3. Our thing will most often lead us to trouble. God's thing will most often lead us to triumph.
4. Listen to why God told David this was not his thing to do.
5. **2 Samuel 7:6-7** I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling. **7** Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?"
6. Let's be clear. David's motives were pure and noble. The thing David wanted to do was not a bad or wrong thing.
7. When the Lord says to us, hey. This is not your thing it is my thing. It may have nothing to do with the fact that our thing is wrong.
8. Now, sometimes our thing is wrong. But that's not always the case.
9. You and I can love the Lord, care about the Lord, want to please the Lord, and still be confused about exactly what it is God wants to do in our lives.
10. Here was God's message to David. David. I'm not saying your desire is wrong. But when have I ever made having a temple a priority?

11. Did I ask you to do this? Have I ever asked anybody to do this?
12. This thing may be important to you, but have you ever stopped to ask if this thing is important to me?
13. Why must this new thing be God's thing and not our thing?
14. Maybe the new thing we want isn't the thing we need. What if the new thing we need is actually the thing we don't want?
15. This is not our thing.
16. It is God's thing.
17. We need to...

Let Him do His thing.

1. What is the application for this third point? Don't fight what the Lord is doing. Don't resist. Surrender to the thing God wants to accomplish.
2. How did David respond to God saying to him, hey David? This thing you want to do is not really what I want you to do.
3. He didn't fight or resist. He surrendered.
4. David didn't build the temple.
5. Here is a thought. **What if the thing that made David a man after God's own heart was what he didn't do, rather than what he did do?**
6. We know for a fact what David wanted to do. He wanted to build a temple.
7. Verse 1 in this chapter says that the Lord had given David rest from all his enemies.
8. I tend to think that because of his age and what he had accomplished in his lifetime, that David may have been thinking about his legacy. What are people going to remember me for after I'm gone.
9. What he wanted to be remembered for was his love for the Lord, and a brand-new shiny temple would have been a continual reminder of that love.
10. But God said no. And David didn't fight him. He let the Lord do His thing. Which was allow David's son the honor of building and dedicating the temple.
11. What if David had spent the remainder of his days here on earth trying to do what God never intended him to do in the first place?

12. I wonder if David would have been miserable.
13. One of the surest ways to live a life of misery, or at least go through a season of misery, is to insist on doing what God doesn't want us to do.
14. And again, I repeat. We're not talking about sinfulness or even wrong motives. We can sincerely love the Lord and want to please him, and yet get sidetracked into doing our thing, rather than allowing God to do His thing.

Conclusion:

1. As we close this morning, I want to reiterate what I shared earlier.
2. I believe the very clear word from the Lord for us as we leave 2020 and enter into 2021, is that the Lord is doing a new thing.
3. And one of the purposes of that new thing is to lead us out of our wilderness and our wasteland.
4. I think the words wilderness and wasteland fitly describe how I feel about 2020.
5. But rest assured, it is not God's desire to leave us in that condition or state. His longing is to make a way for us and to provide the refreshing we need along the way.
6. But that requires cooperation on our part.
7. Stupid question of the day. How many want to stay in the wilderness or wasteland? None of us.
8. So, what is the key? We need to...
 - Lay aside our thing.
 - Embrace God's thing.
 - And let God do His thing through our surrender to Him.
9. Each week I ask you to do something with the Word the Lord has spoken to us. This week is no different.
10. I'm asking you to respond today by meeting the Lord on His terms.
11. How do we do that. Pray.
12. Lord I believe you are doing a new thing. And that you are leading me out of this wilderness and wasteland.

13. Lord, I lay aside what I want.
14. I embrace what you want.
15. And I surrender to how you want to do your thing.
16. Salvation call.
17. Closing.