

Thought For The Week

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Behold, I Am Doing a New Thing!

A New Year's Message from Isaiah and Paul

As 2026 dawned, a congregation gathered to hear a timely word from Scripture: “Do not remember the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth. Shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert” (Isaiah 43:18-19). Coupled with Philippians 3:12-14, where the Apostle Paul declares he forgets what lies behind and presses on toward the upward call of God in Christ Jesus, the sermon titled “Behold, I Am Doing a New Thing” spoke directly to the hopes and struggles of a new year.

Tom began with warm New Year greetings, noting varied celebrations—family gatherings, quiet evenings, or extra work shifts—and the sense of possibility in an untouched year full of joys, challenges, and opportunities God has prepared. The turning of the calendar prompts reflection on the past twelve months: gratitude, pain, victories, and unresolved battles. Many make resolutions for health, finances, relationships, or spiritual growth, yet the familiar pattern emerges—January enthusiasm, February struggle, abandonment by spring. Why? Human effort alone cannot produce the deep, lasting change our souls crave.

Into this reality, God speaks breathtaking hope through Isaiah: “Forget the former things... I am doing a new thing.” This is no suggestion but a divine declaration from the Creator who brings life from death and streams from deserts. The promise echoes throughout Scripture, finding ultimate fulfillment in Christ and lived out in transformed lives like those of Moses and Paul.

The sermon explored Isaiah’s promise under three headings.

1. Forgetting the Former Things: Releasing the Grip of the Past

God commands Israel—and us—not merely to think less about the past but to stop dwelling there. The Hebrew conveys lingering or setting up permanent residence in yesterday. The past, whether glorious or painful, holds power to shape our future if we allow it. In exile, Israel remembered the exodus miracles yet was paralyzed by both nostalgia and regret over centuries of rebellion. God declares He will do something greater; clinging to old memories blinds them to it.

Paul models this release. Despite an elite Pharisee pedigree—“the Michael Jordan of Pharisees”—and a horrifying record of persecuting Christians, calling himself the chief of sinners, he refuses to let pride or shame paralyze him. He treats both achievements and failures as rubbish compared to knowing Christ, deliberately choosing not to let yesterday define tomorrow.

For us entering 2026, former things might include lingering shame from sins, unresolved broken relationships, crushed dreams, wounds from betrayal or abuse, or even past spiritual highs we try to recreate. Dwelling on any is like driving while staring only in the rearview mirror—crash inevitable.

Moses illustrates the cost of past failure. At forty, he tried to deliver Israel in his own strength, killing an Egyptian and fleeing as a fugitive. Forty years tending sheep in Midian, he likely felt disqualified, purpose evaporated. Yet at the burning bush, God effectively says, “Forget the former things—both your failure and obscurity. I am doing a new thing.” Moses had to release his past to embrace God’s future.

Paul’s transformation was even more dramatic. Saul, breathing threats against disciples and approving Stephen’s stoning, met Christ on the Damascus road. Blinded, then healed, he became the greatest missionary. Neither erased their past, but both refused to live in it. God redeemed it; they released it.

We carry into 2026 only what we choose. Confess, repent, forgive, give thanks—then hand the past to a sovereign God who removes transgressions “as far as the east is from the west” (Psalm 103:12) and casts sins into the sea’s depths.

2. Perceiving the New Thing God Is Doing

God does not leave the command to forget without something better: “See, I am doing a new thing. Now it springs up. Do you not perceive it?” The urgency is striking—happening now, bursting forth like rivers in wasteland, highways through wilderness. Even in barren places, God brings explosive life.

For Israel, this foretold a new exodus from Babylon, greater than Egypt’s deliverance. Ultimately, it points to Christ: “Behold, I am making everything new” (Revelation 21:5). In Him we receive a new covenant, new heart, new spirit, become new creations, destined for new heavens and earth.

Paul lived this: the church-destroyer became church-planter. Moses, the stuttering shepherd, confronted Pharaoh and parted the Red Sea. What blinds us? Fixation on former things—regret, shame, nostalgia. Paul strains forward like a runner leaning toward the finish line.

We cultivate perception through mind-renewal in Scripture (Romans 12:2), expectant prayer, worship declaring God’s present faithfulness, and community where others help us see. In 2026, God is already at work: new opportunities to serve and share the gospel, deeper relationships, healing, boldness, fresh joy. We must pray, “Lord, what new thing are You doing in my life, family, church, city? Help me perceive it.”

3. Pressing On in True Renewal Through Christ

God’s new thing demands active participation. Paul presses on to take hold of that for which Christ took hold of him, using athletic imagery—straining, pursuing the prize. Yet this is not self-powered; it is grace-empowered. “I can do all things through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13).

The difference between failed resolutions and lasting renewal is the power source—human willpower exhausts; Christ’s strength never does.

Moses initially offered excuses—“Who am I? I’m not eloquent”—but once he obeyed, God used him mightily to lead Israel, receive the Ten Commandments, and become an Old Testament cornerstone. Paul immediately preached Christ post-conversion, later enduring beatings, shipwrecks, imprisonment—driven by purpose.

Practical steps for 2026:

- Begin with surrender—offer your body as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1).
- Put off the old self, put on the new (Ephesians 4:22-24).
- Establish daily rhythms in Word and prayer as delight, not duty.
- Pursue accountability—walk with others who spur you on (Hebrews 10:24-25).
- Serve actively—renewal often flows as we pour out.
- When you stumble, confess quickly, receive grace, press on.

God restores “the years the locusts have eaten” (Joel 2:25) and works all things for good for those who love Him (Romans 8:28).

In closing, God declares over us: “See, I am doing a new thing.” Forget what chains you, perceive the fresh streams, press on empowered by Christ. Moses became deliverer, Paul apostle—what will God do in you this year? For the unchurched, today is the day to become new in Christ. For believers carrying burdens, lay them down. The altar remains open; do not miss what God is doing.

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On the first Sunday of 2026, the sermon drew from Isaiah 43:18-19: “Do not remember the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth... I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.” Paired with Philippians 3:12-14, where Paul speaks of forgetting what lies behind and pressing toward the goal in Christ, the message offered hope for a fresh start.

Tom acknowledged the mixed emotions the new year brings—gratitude for blessings, pain from hardships, and the common cycle of ambitious resolutions that fade by spring. Yet human effort alone cannot produce lasting change. God, however, declares He is already doing something new.

The sermon unfolded in three parts. First, “forgetting the former things.” Dwelling on past failures, sins, broken relationships, or even former spiritual highs can chain us. Like Israel in exile clinging to old memories or Paul refusing to let either his impressive résumé or shameful persecution of the church define him, we must release yesterday to God.

Second, “perceiving the new thing.” God’s renewal is happening now—springing up like rivers in a desert. Its ultimate fulfillment is in Christ, who makes us new creations. We perceive it through Scripture, prayer, worship, and community, asking daily, “Lord, what new thing are You doing?”

Third, “pressing on in true renewal.” This requires active pursuit—discipline, obedience, service—but powered by Christ’s strength, not mere willpower. Practical steps include surrender, daily spiritual rhythms, accountability, and quick repentance when we stumble.

God redeemed Moses from failure and Paul from persecution, turning them into mighty instruments. In 2026, He invites us to lay down old burdens, open our eyes to His present work, and press forward in grace. Behold, He is doing a new thing.

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