*I’m Doing a New Thing*

Isaiah 43:16-21

I caught a news article this week about what our sun would look like in 5 billion years. The Hubble telescope has pictured the progress of the destruction of a nearby sun, showing its transition into a white dwarf, the death throes of a star like our sun. The big hope in that is that ours sun’s death lies in the far distant future. But the thought of our ability to capture such events in photos fired my imagination. And here is the realm of possibility I imagined. What if in the extensiveness of the galaxy there were other life forms that have yet to be discovered? Does that make our faith irrelevant? Is it possible that there are other Christ stories in the universe? Certainly that is a possibility. But I kept coming back to this Isaiah passage and God’s ability to do new things. God did a new thing when he sent Abraham from his familiar home to the unknown to become the father of a new peoples. Then God did a new thing when Moses saw the burning bush and God’s named people were freed from slavery and marched toward and overtook their promised land. Then God did a new thing when he set a great king over his people Israel, and then again when he allowed the temple to be destroyed and the people to go into exile for their waywardness. Then God did a new thing when he gathered the people back again and sent his Son to show them the way. End of story? God has been doing new things for the centuries following the resurrection of Jesus. God has been continuing to transform the world. But does God limit his re-creation to the known world. Isn’t His goal to transform the entire universe, the whole of creation itself? If there are other beings in the universe, in the entirety of creation, then wouldn’t God want them to know what we have learned in Jesus Christ? It’s an intriguing thought. What would be the ramifications for us as Christians if we met our counterparts in the universe? Would our sharing the gospel story extend to them as well? Would space be a new mission field? Would space be God’s “new thing” in the far future?

Well, let’s return back to our known world and what God is doing with it. Our concern right now, right here is to share God’s story so that this world can be transformed. God’s new thing might just be coming with the advent of the internet and our ability to reach around the world with the Good News. Unfortunately, others have learned to use the internet for their own self-serving purposes. But having said that, I am seeing an explosion of faith based websites, church services, ideas, theology, stories, and words of inspiration. When I googled the word “Christianity” I got 25,900,000 hits. And when I googles the word “Jesus” I got 63,900,000 hits. We now have the capability of letting the world know about our church and what we do. We have the possibility of being even more invitational as people move into the community. Of course we can get bad theology from the internet, people out to make a buck using religion as its selling point, sites that have to be filtered through who have left the Gospel message behind. We are on a learning curve with this technology that has basically opened up the world for sharing the Gospel. But no matter how far from truth this new technology wanders, God has new opportunity to continue to transform people. Self-serving sites will continue to rise, then fall apart as they are exposed, then new ones will take their place. But the sites that will survive are the ones that God chooses to use because they share the basic truth about Jesus and the new thing God did more than 2000 years ago. New seeds can be planted! Christ can breathe new life into this world through the inspiration received online.

It isn’t just about these websites bringing people to God and the Good News. It is about God using what is planted online to bring people to the truth. It is about what gems people glean from the inspiration provided by good writers and prayers and story tellers and faithful people. So in the internet we can see the possibility that this is a new thing that God is doing.

But the overarching theme of creation itself is God’s work in it, God’s ability to do new things until all is where God wants it to be. God has given the universe a powerful tool in making creation right again to serve its purpose. We don’t have to worry about other worlds, aliens, and the ebb and flow of forces outside our knowledge. But we are called to carry the hope that God will make all things right again, that God will continue to do new things until creation is completed.

I find great hope in that thought. When the world seems to be falling apart, when we see horrible things happening over and over again in human history, when we see evil seem to win, it is the hope of faith that draws us back to God. And why do we seek God? Because this is the entity who created all things for purposes that are often quite beyond our understanding.

We cannot care for the whole of Creation. But God knows what is happening and needs to continue happening. But we can care about what is around us. We can begin by growing our faith through good solid spiritual disciplines. We can begin by sharing our faith in what we say and do.

God will always be doing a new thing as society and the world changes. But the base upon which we stand is Jesus Christ. Jesus helps us filter out the truth and the untruths about our Creator. It is through Jesus that we come to know God best. It is through Jesus that we see the compassion, the love, the grace, the passion for creation, the mercy, the faithfulness of our God through all generations. We are not a directionless species haphazardly chanced into creation, but an intentional creation of a purpose filled and planning God. We are created for a purpose that we can only see dimly in limited capacity to see into the mind of God. And we are asked to believe in what god is doing in creation, even if we only see in part. Writers of scripture have at times grasped glimpses of the purpose of creation, that believing in God’s purposes and ways leads to the fulfillment of all things.

So, when we get crushed by the bad news of the day, we find our glimmer of hope in knowing that God is alive and well and continuing to work with this world, and maybe others to see the transformation of creation through to its intended purposes.

My hope in the future is that there will not always be an ISIS, that there will not always emerge people bent on harm and destruction and holding power over others, that evil will not triumph, that Christ will ultimately reign victorious and that a New Creation will come about. In the meantime we have our work to do and sharing the story of God’s work in the world is our task. This Easter is a great time to share that story. During Easter we hear the story told in as many ways as we can think to do that. We will share the story of communing with disciples, of praying hard to let the cup pass, of arrest and trial, of evil seeming to triumph at the cross, of darkness and desolation and then of joy and triumph as the grave is found empty, as the risen savior walks with us once again for all times.

We do not live in darkness and despair. We live in hope and the joy of triumph! We are a people of the light, a people who carry the story, who know the truth about God’s work in the world. Are we living as people of God’s triumph? Are we able to believe and to say that God’s will is going to be accomplished? And finally are we able to participate in the truth of Jesus Christ in ways that shed light upon all corners of darkness? God didn’t make hands and feet to be still. God didn’t make mouths to be quiet. God gave us the very tools that are needed to give the world what it needs to be made whole. And god gave us the ultimate guide to lead us in transforming God’s creation.

I wonder if the first thing I would tell an alien about is how we perceive and believe in God through the revelation of our Creator in Jesus Christ. Would their hunger for their creator be satisfied? Maybe we should be prepared (lol)