

Sunday, April 6, 2025 – Fifth Sunday in Lent

Isaiah 43:16-21

16, 18 - Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters:
Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old.

Usually we are told to remember what God has done – to remember His great acts of deliverance.

And His act of delivering His people from slavery in Egypt was certainly among His greatest.

Here we are told not to remember the former things, the things of old.

I think the point is to also anticipate that the same God who did great things in the past will also do great things in the future.

It is important that the account of the exodus is true - a story of things that actually took place. Our confidence that God can deliver is based not upon a hopeful wish – a fable that may or may not have happened. Rather it is based upon a firm confidence that a God who did it once will keep His promise and do it again.

He will bring His people out of exile in Babylon through the wilderness back home.

He can and will also deliver us from whatever holds us in bondage.

19 - I am about to do a new thing; I will make a way in the wilderness.

20-21 - I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise.

Cf. the Stoneman Road in the McDowell Sonoran Preserve

Psalm 126

1 - When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, then were we like those who dream.

2 - Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy.

Then they said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them."

3 - The LORD has done great things for us, and we are glad indeed.

What are greatest things that God has done for you?

What are some things that God has done that were so great that you were wondering if you were dreaming?

What are some things that were so great that they caught the attention of other people?

4 - Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like the watercourses of the Negeb.

Philippians 3:4b-14

Those who seek salvation by works – through their efforts to please and satisfy God – will go in one of two directions – either pride or despair.

Martin Luther – before he discovered the Gospel – went the way of despair.

Saul of Tarsus – before he met Jesus on the road to Damascus – went the way of pride.

4-6 - If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

Meeting Jesus changed everything.

Cf. last week's second reading – 2 Corinthians 5: 17 – If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation. Old things have passed away; behold the new has come.

7-9 - Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith.

12 - Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

Focus – verse 13 - This one thing I do

Forget – verse 13 - Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead

Forge ahead – verse 14 - I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

How are you doing at maintaining your focus?

What do you need to forget? What do you need to let go of and leave behind?

How are you doing at forging ahead? What hinders your forging ahead?

John 12:1-8

1-2 - Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him.

Jesus had just raised Lazarus from the dead (chapter 11), so Lazarus and his sisters wanted to show their gratitude.

Lazarus invited Jesus and His disciples over for dinner. Martha served the perfect meal (cf. Luke 10: 38-42). What was Mary going to do?

3 - Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

What is the most extravagant thing that you have done because of your love for someone – because of your love for God?

4-5 - But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?"

When have even your best of intentions been questioned and even severely criticized?

6 - He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.

Was stealing from the common purse one of the first steps to Judas' becoming the one who betrayed our Lord?

7 - Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial.