

LENT 2017 – day 18 – March 27th

Isaiah 65:17

"Behold, I will create a new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind."

The thought I would like to put before you is: God is always doing something new and that is the characteristic of God. That's why our desire for God is built into our nature.

That's why the search for new is put into our hearts. We want new clothes, new friends, some people even want new marriages. ☺ We want the new because it's engineered into our system because God is always doing something new.

Ultimately you don't get old physically, but to get old is to stop looking for the new and start holding on to the familiar. We become insecure and fragile and when that happens, we tend to hold on to what we know. It happens to young people as well. We get stuck with our thinking.

God is always doing something new, and here is the promise given in symbolic form in the first reading. This newness of God is what keeps us alive inside and makes us motivated and moving right through into the future. There are older people who never lose that newness but there are younger people who never have it also, because of their nature. God is speaking about newness and saying, "I am doing something new."

How to approach that newness is given in the gospel:

Jesus is talking about how to enter the dimension of the new.

John 4:47-48

When this man heard that Jesus has arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death. "Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe."

Jesus says, "Unless you see signs and wonders, you will never believe." *In other words, Jesus is saying that there is another foundation for faith.* Normally we see something happen to someone and we build on that. We see a testimony of someone being healed and we build on that, and I think that's valid. But Jesus is saying, "Don't only depend on testimonies." When you don't have a testimony you'll fall apart. How do you have faith without a testimony?

The priest in the mass gives a short reflection but it is amazingly accurate. He is really able to pick it up clearly. **He explained and said that it is through a relationship. You must know Him.**

A lot of people don't invest in knowing God. We invest in getting results.

Testimonies is the shortcut. "This happened to this one, that one and the other one - so I am going to believe that God is going to give it to me as well." While it is better than nothing - of course a testimony

can encourage you to believe - your faith doesn't have a depth. That's why, when you don't have a testimony, the very people who believed so enthusiastically last week, are down in the dumps the next week. There is no depth to their faith.

How does one build that depth? By a consistent, constant relationship with God. That's why I am now convinced, without a regular prayer time, we are going to get hit by the next crisis that comes and down we will go.

- Depression,
- sadness,
- sleeplessness,
- anxieties,
- Stress - we carry it all because the depths of that relationship aren't worked out.

Like in a marriage or an intimate relationship, you have to work out this thing with God. Then, faith in a situation becomes effortless and it flows from your depths.

Signs and wonders invite us and tell us there is a miracle waiting and a supernatural power of God at work. But you'll never live in it if we don't build a relationship with the Lord.

We build a relationship through a life of prayer. You sit in His presence, have intimacy and spend time with God and you allow Him to minister to your life. If you don't do that, one little crisis and we believe in God, then another one comes and we fall down and believe in God. We will have fits and starts of the journey.

The second thing I want to show you is the way to access the secrets of God. Until you come to the life of faith, we normally have a system by which we come to belief. We first try to understand what's taking place. Once we have understood the process and we have looked at the logic of it and put it into our mind and heart, then we believe. If you go to school and start science that's how they will teach you. Science has a formula and the formula says that if something is true it should be duplicated or recreated in the environment of the experience. If you can recreate it and understand the process by which it is recreated, then that is reality.

From our smallest days we have learnt science. In the middle centuries of Europe, Greek philosophy became popular. It was called the renaissance. Greek philosophy is basically on mathematics and it has a strong similarity to Buddhism - where your mind does analysis and understands the process, you work through the cause and effect and then you work the logic. If you look at modern theology, most of modern theology is based on this philosophy: Understand what's taking place, work out the process and logic and then you have grasped it.

So we are people who have understood how the faith has been articulated. We know exactly that this is the first truth, second truth and so on - but that faith is not a living one for them because it is not related to their lives. So you continue to worry, you continue to be depressed, you continue to have ego battles

where you're always projecting yourself. All the internal life has not been touched by the faith you can so wonderfully analyze and show.

The problem is we have somehow separated faith from a life experience, and worked it out into a lot of theories and systems, and we are able to handle that as well; and it is also intellectually satisfying because you're in a tremendous journey of understanding. You can analyze, explain, discuss and do a lot of stuff, but internally, our insecurities, fears, struggles, sinfulness, addictions haven't been dealt with. That's the problem in the modern world. Faith begins by a relationship with a God who says, "I promise you this is true." Because I know Him; I trust it. I don't have a base to it.

Anyone who is outside that relationship thinks we are stupid and naturally they must, because you have no base. Our base is the relationship. The priest explained this in his sermon as well: You know God, He reveals His love, He gives you a revelation of His presence and that becomes the foundation of an experience. Without that, trying to use your mind to understand what God is doing is only going to cause you a short circuit and make you collapse.

So you believe; but it isn't blind faith - it is a faith that is based on a relationship and intimacy with God.

Many of us have faith blocks in certain areas.

- Some people have faith blocks in financial areas - they can't believe that God will give them a breakthrough, and they're stuck there. So they are always having financial issues.
- Some people have a faith block in relationship areas - they can't believe that God can sort out their relationships for them, so they are always fighting and in fear and struggles.
- Some people have a faith block in healing - you can't believe God can heal.

When you have a faith block and you're unable to have a breakthrough, the solution is not to try and do it by your own efforts - because you're going to get stuck. The solution is you deepen your relationship and pray for a revelation from God. At one point, in that particular area, He will give you a revelation. Suddenly that struggle disappears and it looks so simple and you feel like such an idiot for not seeing it earlier. That's called enlightenment. Buddhism also has enlightenment. You're in the process of detachment and you're in the concept of letting go, and suddenly into that space comes illumination and suddenly you see things differently. That's why it's a living religion. People are actually internally liberated by the journey.

You can't break it by mere superstition and say, "God will give you this." For a person who has had an experience of illumination that becomes like an insult. It looks as if you're juvenile and telling people, "I'll give you toffees and sweets," when they are way beyond that. Many of us are still in the toffees and sweets stage. "God will give me this, you don't know how quickly He gave it to us." That's the journey of illumination. With that illumination you transcend, and suddenly that block has been broken, you have gone past it and your life has grown to another level.

Remember: no block is insurmountable. God can take you through it. No challenge is too deep. All we need is a revelation and an insight and He will take us through it. We didn't understand that, and that's why we thought, "I see the challenge, I have to generate the faith and I have to overcome it." Most of the time you see that it's self-effort that is put there.

I'd like to share a reflection I was reading: *In the natural, first we have to experience. We perceive through our five senses, then we reason it and finally we believe it.* You can see how the whole process has to go through before faith comes. *But in God, when you believe, you are ready to have the experience - then you understand.*

That's what we are trying to do. First you experience and then you try to explain it in the best words you have and communicate it. Unfortunately, because many people are trained in the way of understanding only, they never touch the experience.

That is because the supernatural must first be experienced. Many have tried to submit the supernatural to the judgment of reason. Many try to take the supernatural and do analysis on it first. *They think that if they don't understand something, it is not real and does not exist.* See how limited we have become in the world!

But this is not true. If it was understood by human logic, it would stop being supernatural. Today, I encourage you to have a supernatural encounter with God. He is not a theory or a force, but a person.

The Holy Spirit has emotions, a mind and a will and He wants to lead us to a relationship with our Heavenly Father. We have to focus on building this relationship rather than getting things done. Be willing to experience the love and the presence of God, not just today but everyday. Prepare yourself for a supernatural encounter.

Focus on building this relationship. When you say that nothing is impossible for God, expand your perception. When I look at my own life, I am a diabetic for 15-16 years and I think that maybe for me it is too late. You have this tendency to do analysis, you've read the literature on your disease, you know what the situation is - so logically and rationally, 15-16 years means you have to live with it for the rest of your life.

So when I am to say that nothing is impossible for God, I simply have to break that barrier within me - which is actually built by medical science and rational logic. I have to tell myself, "No. Nothing is impossible for God." When I say that, then I start having a relationship with the Lord and telling Him, "I'm waiting with you until you make this a reality within me."

Whatever the block you have - it is simple. First, in principle, you accept the fact that nothing is impossible for God. In financial matters, by experience we have come to that. We as a movement believe that financially, nothing is impossible for God, because He has provided continuously for so long that it is no longer a stretched faith - we know that He will find a way somehow or the other. But when it comes to other areas, like the struggle I have with diabetes, or someone else with a relationship - you live with a person who has been abusive for many years and you come to the stage

where you say that person is never going to change. For someone who is dealing with an addiction you think that addiction is never going to go away.

The first thing we need to do is break the grip by saying, "Nothing is impossible for God." Once you break that grip, then you keep the relationship and you wait for a revelation. When the revelation comes you are going to have a breakthrough.

There is this testimony of a man who was raised to life, even after he was dead for five days. That isn't a hearsay testimony but the first man to be converted was the one who did the embalming. After five days this man was raised to life. It's an impossible thing but there is a whole book written on it. The key factor in that is the wife who would not let go. When the husband died and was kept in the mortuary of the embalmer - in Africa, the tradition is that she had to stay with the father-in-law until the embalming was over. She began to pray with the scriptures because her husband himself was a man who served the Lord.

A text from the letter to the Hebrews 11 or 12 jumped out at her and the text said, "Even the dead were given back to the women of that time." This normal text for anyone of us became a source of revelation, and she wouldn't let go. Her father-in-law almost killed her for trying to take to this crusade, but she wouldn't let go. When they took her to the crusade, the armed guards that the president of the country had sent, thinking there would be a Muslim fanatical attack, thought she was bringing a bomb in this coffin, and they put the coffin on the ground and pulled out the corpse and they thrashed her. Still she wouldn't let go. Then she insisted for them to pray for him. They took the person in and when they prayed, five days later, this person came back to life. Today he is alive and witnessing all over. It is not his miracle - the miracle belongs to this woman. Fortunately, she was not raised in western education. In western education we believe the logical process quicker than anybody else. That's how we have been raised. Our whole background and foundation is there.

Here was this woman who was an African, and she believed the words of the gospel. What we have done is, we have done analysis of the Bible so much that it is like an onion. We have stripped it so much to the point that the supernatural is no longer there.

In this book it says that this man smelled of chloroform for over two weeks, because they were pumping chloroform through his feet into his system. Still, God raised him because a woman was daring enough to believe.