

Bluffton Church

1-08-2012 Teaching Notes

Forget the Past – Streams in the Wasteland Ahead  
Isaiah 43:18-19

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Bluffton Church

Pray for the word

Last week we had our new years' recap, looking back at the long list of things we did and enjoyed and accomplished as a church in 2011.

I'm amazed at all we accomplish year to year, and how much fun we have doing it! If you couldn't be here last week you might want to go to our website and Blufftonchurch.com and listen to the teaching time.

We also discussed our plans for 2012:

More outreaches like the church without shoes and our pumpkin party and yoga on the beach and blessing of the pets and our free ice cream socials in the summer.

More serving the hungry and visiting people in the hospital and in Jail

More people getting born again and baptized and healed and delivered

More picnics and pot-lucks and parties and fellowship, hanging out with each other and making new people feel at home.

More new believer's classes and bible study and Sunday school so we can really get to know the Lord's word for us.

More building projects like our new stage – and maybe a new roof

More of you inviting your relatives and friends and making visitors really feel at home and appreciated.

More helping each other through the challenges life throws at us

And a whole lot more just loving Jesus and letting him love us

We really have a great church, and that is not because Kathleen and I are so great, it's because of you, giving your time and money and helping and loving and We're really thankful you are here!

So now I want to talk for a few minutes about the year to come. Let's look at

**Isaiah 43:18-19**

<sup>18</sup> *“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past.*

<sup>19</sup> *See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?*

*I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.*

Isaiah is one of the old testament prophets, speaking several hundred years before Jesus was born as a man. He prophesied many things including that God was going to send Israel into captivity in Babylonia because they had fallen away from honoring God. He prophesied the Messiah coming, and so many other things.

And here he is saying to Israel, something new is coming! So What can we get out of this, as a principle to us today?

Verse 18 says to forget **the past**.

## 1. What should we forget?

Well, one thing we can forget about is (A) **all of our past sins**. You know, Jesus died so that our sins can be forgiven – and God even forgets them!

### **Psalm 103:12** - New Living Translation

<sup>12</sup> *He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west.*

Or how about this: (not in notes)

### **Colossians 2:13-14** New Living Translation (NLT)

<sup>13</sup> *You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins.* <sup>14</sup> *He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.*

Don't dwell on the things you've done wrong. As Isaiah says, forget those former things!

I mean you may need to go to someone and tell them you are sorry. But if you've asked God to forgive you as a follower of Jesus, he has forgotten them, they are gone, so don't let past mistakes drag you down. If we could be perfect there would have been no reason for Jesus to die for us! So give yourself a break – but resolve to ask the Holy Spirit to help you be more like Jesus going forward.

When I was a teenager a fun hobby of mine was to go to a local comic book collectors shop and sneak into the back room and shove some comic books under our shirts and leave. I kind of knew it was wrong but I wanted them and I did a lot of things I felt were probably wrong but did not care.

When I was 19 I gave my life to Jesus and he forgave me of everything I'd done. But I knew I had to make some sort of restitution. It was wonderful to be forgiven by the Lord but I knew I had hurt someone and I needed to try to make up for it.

I didn't know exactly which comics I had taken that were in my collection, so I took my entire "mighty thor" collection, my favorite comic book character, boxed them up into this huge box, and brought them back to the store. And I showed up at the store and told the story to the owner, that I had taken the comics, and that I had become a Christian, and I wanted to give them back. And he said "I knew you kids were up to something". And I hope God got the glory for that.

God forgives our sins, they are gone, but do any of you have someone you need to honor God by making up for a past hurt of mistake or dishonesty? Just something to pray about.

Another thing to forget about is (B) the hardships we went through.

The bible says we will have trials and frustration and even painful situations. But the promise is that we have Joy ahead!

### **1 Peter 1:6** New Living Translation

<sup>6</sup> *So be truly glad.* <sup>[a]</sup> *There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you have to endure many trials for a little while.*

Just like this verse says, many of you have had some pretty substantial trials this year. The things of God come in seasons though, like this verse says, if you are enduring trials for a while there is wonderful joy around the corner! The promise is, even when we are enduring the trials, we can be really glad, because there is joy ahead.

This can be hard but I encourage you to leave behind the trials and difficulties you had to endure and focus on the joy that is coming.

So again,

**Isaiah 43:18**

<sup>18</sup> *“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past.*

So do we forget everything that has happened to us?

2. What should we not forget?

**2 Thessalonians 2:15**

<sup>15</sup> *So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.*

Many of you have come a long way this year – more praying, more reading your bible, more serving others, more loving others – stand firm – keep doing the good things you learned, going further on the spiritual path the Lord is leading you on!

So we forget the things the Lord has put behind us – now what?

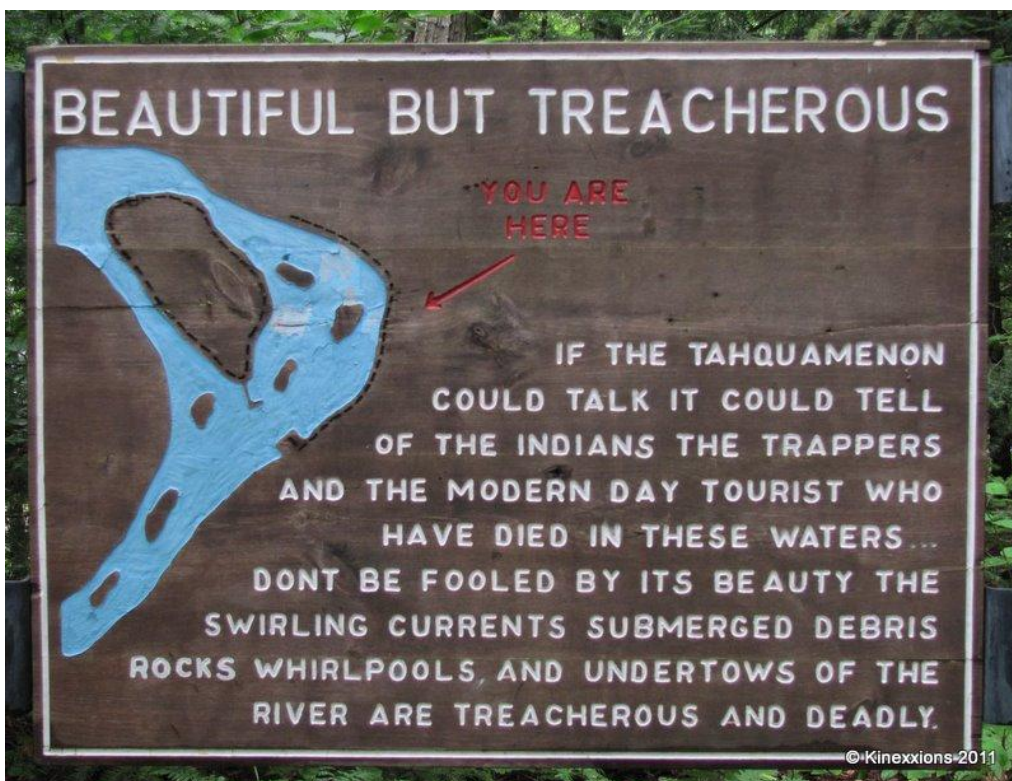
**Isaiah 43:19**

<sup>19</sup> *See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.*

3. Look for what is new in your life.

As we go into the new year, can we just believe that God is going to do new, fresh things in your life? He is going to take some of the dry areas of your life, the areas where the battles have you tired out, where you don't yet feel the Lord's victory, and he is going to cause new life to spring up there!

You've heard Kathleen's story maybe of how when our kids were young we used to go up to the UP for a week or two and we'd always go to Tahquamenon falls. And we'd go out on the island where there is a sign that says



So of course we used to bring our water shoes and walk up the falls! (Now they sell them in the gift shop but back then we were like the only ones in the water).

Anyway, you know, when you are walking upstream it is a lot of work, and every step feels like you could get pushed over, and sometimes you slip and get pushed downstream a ways and have to make up for lost time and it wears you out.

Well that is what the Christian walk can be like sometimes. We try to do the right thing but it is hard. Our flesh and the enemy and the pull of the world constantly pushing against us just tires us out spiritually. If you never feel that way, you might not be pushing against the current of the world – just something to think about - though the Lord gives us plenty of grace.

So as you strive to please the Lord and follow him and do the things he did, you can really get tired out, and here is what the Lord says: **I will make streams in your desert places.**

So as we close I just want to encourage you – you may be spiritually dry and spiritually tired, but let's just believe God together in 2012 for fresh water in the dry places, that he's going to make a new way for you this year. Walk in faith, and ask him for this, I'm sure we'll perceive it springing up together.

Would you pray with me please?

Lord, we really thank you for using us to serve you, for using us in our church and out of our church, we're amazed at all you've accomplished through us and in us this year.

And Lord, we ask, please help us to leave behind and forget about everything that you've thrown as far as east is from the west. But help us to remember and stand firm in the things we've added on this year that are pleasing to you.

And Lord, we pray, would you refresh us this year, bring us new life where we are spiritually tired, help us to walk upstream with new strength, use us more this year we pray, in Jesus name.