

Time to Move Forward with God

Isaiah 43:16-21

Pastor Guy Gray

God Calls us to Move Forward

God creates. He makes things new and does new things. God marches forward. He moves in our world and our lives. He sees the sin, brokenness and hurt and refuses to settle for the status quo. He works His plan day by day, every day. He calls us to move with him. "Join me" he says, "and together we will move forward into something incredible." God is going to change the world. Would you like to be a part of that miracle? Start here: step forward in faith and answer the call to move forward with God.

Let Go of the Past

It is hard to move forward with God if you are stuck in the past. This is the central issue in our passage today. God was moving forward, but God's people were stuck. Israel was captive in Babylon. Israel was overwhelmed, beaten down, exhausted, confused and paralyzed by fear. Having no vision or faith for the future, they turned their thoughts to the past.

God speaks the remedy to their hearts. **"Forget the former things," He commands them, "do not dwell on the past."** (Isaiah 43:18). Does the past have so much power? Can the past infect our hearts with sickness that stops us dead in our tracks and keep us from the future God intends for us? What is it from the past that binds us so? Is it something good? Is it some glorious thing that keeps us focused on the past instead of the future? Or maybe something hurtful—some negative experience that fills us with fear and insecurity. Something that forever makes us prefer the relative safety of the status quo rather than taking a risk on moving forward into an unknown future with God. God says let go. Let go of the past—all of it—so you can move into a better future with God.

Live by Faith in the Victory of God

The preface to God's command to forget the past comes in verses 16-17. Here God takes them back to a powerful memory in their history in order to build their faith. These verses are a reminder of the victory of God at the Red Sea in the Book of Exodus. It's a picture of God defeating the armies of Pharaoh through his almighty power.

At first, this seems odd. In verse 18, God is telling them not to dwell on the past, but in the two verses before that He is telling them to remember something. God advocates selective memory! If you are going to remember something from the past, then remember the mind boggling, miraculous victory of God in our world! God points to this victory as a catalyst for their faith. It reveals who God is and what He can do. The memory isn't just for nostalgia—it is to build faith in God for the future.

What the parting of the Red Sea was for the Old Testament, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is for the New Testament. If you want to move forward into the future with God, there is one event from the past that you must fix your heart on...the power and victory of God through Christ our risen Lord (See Ephesians 1:17-23). Do this and you will move forward with God!

Build a New Community that Reflects God's Glory

God lets us in on His purpose and plan. He is doing something amazing and He tells us what it is (Isaiah 43:21). God is building a new community. It's a community of the redeemed who proclaim His praise. God Himself is forming this community. It is His work, His creation, the new thing that He is doing. The community exists for a purpose that goes beyond itself. It exists for the glory of God—for the praise of God—as a witness to the reality of God (see also Isaiah 43:10-12). This means more than vibrant

worship services. It means a community that moves forward with God through the chaos and confusion of this broken sinful world. It means letting go of the past and reaching forward to see God do new dynamic works of redemption in our lives, our church, our community and our world. It means living by faith in the victory of God at all times. It means treasuring and proclaiming the wonder of the Gospel of Christ and looking for new experiences of His redemptive power every day. It means always pointing past ourselves and on to the glory of Christ. This is what it means for us to move forward with God. Isaiah 43:16-21 is our theme verse at River West Church and we intend on living it out with all our heart, mind and strength. Join us. Pray with us, trusting God for incredible things that will resound into eternity for the glory and praise of God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Going Deeper

This week, read Isaiah 43:16-21 every day. As you study and pray over this passage, ask the Lord to show you an area in your life that needs to change because of the truth of His word.

River West Happenings

Friday, July 11th •

Jr. High School Kids Meeting

6pm @ the Community Center

If you are a Jr. High student (6th – 8th grade) you are invited to join us for a planning meeting! Last week your parents met, this week it's your turn! The goal of this meeting is for you to plan activities just for Jr Highers! For more information, contact Pastor Josh at 699.2226 or josh@riverwest.org

July 14th-18th •

Vacation Bible School K-5th

Register now...it's almost full! Forms are in the lobby & at the church office. For more information contact Lindsay at 699.2226 or lindsay@riverwest.org

Wednesday, July 16th • Youth Ministry Bowling! 7-9pm @ Players

Jr. High & High School youth group is going bowling this week! Meet at Players in Lake Oswego. \$7.00 per person. Contact Pastor Josh 699.2226 or josh@riverwest.org

Saturday July 19th

Saturday Morning Prayer

RW Fellowship Hall • 8-9am

All are invited to take a more active role in the heart of our church through prayer. For more information contact Jeff Nopper @ 245.1841 or Ryan Lee @ 235.9388

Thursday July 24th • Pie Night! at River West Church @ 6:30

We're showing the movie, *Lord, Save us from your followers*, followed by pie & a discussion with the writer/director of the movie! Childcare is not provided. Contact Mary for more information 699.2226 or mary@riverwest.org

Saturday July 26th •

Men's Pancake Breakfast in the Fellowship Hall • 7-9am

For information, contact the church office at 699.2226