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Baggage - Week 2 - A New Thing

I have found that some are unwilling to experience the new things God is trying to do in their lives because the baggage they carry keeps them longing for the past.

Truth is when we keep living in the, “what if” or “if only,” we rob ourselves of the new thing that the God within us longs to do with us and through us.

Isaiah 43:18–19 (NIV): 18 “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. 19 See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.

It appears to me that we have so many that want to relive the by gone days. You have that quarterback that in high school won the state championship and every Friday night you hear them referring back to their past accomplishments.

What is it about the past that keeps our attention - even as time keeps on slipping, slipping, slipping into the future?

And honestly, haven't we all talked at some point about wanting things to “go back to how they used to be?” Those good old days when things were simpler and life didn't seem so chaotic?

Maybe the past is attractive because it's safer than the present.

There aren't going to be any surprises as we look backwards. Even if your history was horrible, at least you know what happened.

But the problem with that thinking is that it's difficult to move forward while trying to continue living in the past.

So today, we're going to talk about leaving the past baggage behind us, for better or for worse, and moving confidently into the present reality of God's plan, and His provision for us.

The first step in doing that is. . .

We need to Leave the Past in the Past

The former things referred to in the Isaiah passage we read a few moments ago could very well be the Exodus from Egypt, or some other point in Israel's history.

Listen to the words of Pharaoh to the nation of Israel from Exodus 12:31:

Exodus 12:31 (NIV): During the night Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "Up! Leave my people, you and the Israelites! Go, worship the Lord as you have requested.

At this point in history the Israelites were being granted freedom from over 400 years of slavery to the Egyptians.

It's hard to imagine what the people were feeling as they packed up their homes, families, livestock, and whatever else they felt necessary for the trip and started walking off into the wilderness towards their promised land.

And what's even harder for me to imagine is that they would want to go back to the life in Egypt at all, but if you know the story that's exactly what they eventually wanted.

Numbers 14:1–4 (NIV): That night all the members of the community raised their voices and wept aloud. 2 All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, “If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this wilderness! 3 Why is the Lord bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?” 4 And they said to each other, “We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt.”

Let me pause here for a moment. These verses were right after the spies returned from viewing the land that God had given them. All they had to do was go and take it. It was already promised.

Listen church I'm sure wandering through the wilderness was hard. No doubt about it. It was different from what they were used to.

And because of that many of them simply wanted to return to the way things used to be. Even when God's promises were in front of them

Sound familiar?

Don't think for a moment that you and I are any different than those Israelites. In fact, listen to the encouragement Paul gives to the Galatian church;

Galatians 5:1 (NIV): It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Listen to it from the Passion Translation:

Galatians 5:1 (TPT): Let me be clear, the Anointed One has set us free—not partially, but completely and wonderfully free! We must always cherish this truth and stubbornly refuse to go back into the bondage of our past.

Philippians 3:13–14 (NIV): Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

In other words, Leave the past in the past and stand firm in your the freedom you have been given. Don't go back to the way things used to be.

What if God has something new for you going forward? What if the new thing springs up right in front of you but you're caught staring into the past?

Jesus addressed this beautifully in Luke 9:62 when He says,

Luke 9:62 (NIV): Jesus replied, “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”

Listen I truly believe and this is point number two that:

The Best is Yet to Come

I can remember when Kyle came over to tell us that we were going to be grand parents. He was trying so hard not to tell us over the phone, but we had an idea that that’s what he was going to tell us.

But the expectation of the next months of waiting to hear that Avery was born was just awesome. I’m going to be a grandpa I was saying that well before I became one. Why? I was looking forward in expectation.

As believers, we have an eternity that we will share with God.

I’m looking forward to seeing Jesus face to face.

That is why we “fix our eyes on Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of faith,” who set the example and went before us.

In the book of John, we are told Jesus has a room.

Oh let me read it, it’s awesome:

John 14:2 (NIV): My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?

He's preparing for us a place.

The same excitement you feel about that upcoming trip, that addition to the family, or what I'm now looking forward to, that retirement party, all of those should pale in comparison to the excitement you feel over an eternity in heaven's paradise.

Over the plans God has for you in the here and now. The things God wants to do in you and through you.

And yet still - many of us seem trapped, bogged down even by the baggage of this life as we keep looking behind us to things in our past.

The past relationships you can't get over, those bad decisions you keep re-hashing.

The what if's or the if only's that have plagued you for years.

My encouragement today is much like last week. . .let it go, but let me add one more piece, move forward.

Life is an adventure full of twists and turns, and surprises to be sure. And yet at the same time, you have an assurance that Jesus has great and wonderful things in store for you while we are here.

And I don't know about you but I'm excited as well, that my name is written in the book of life.

Live today like a person who is excited for and anticipating the most amazingly epic travel adventure of their life.

Live like the best is yet to come - even when you cannot see it.

Because truth is, it is.

So, How do you do that?

You start by. . .

Walking by Faith Not by Sight

The truth is, it is way easier to believe God will do something new and good in your life if you can see the blueprint of what it will look like.

Not many people go blindly wandering out on an adventure without knowing where they are going. I mean shoot Joy and I wanted a map to go through the zoo with Avery. But truth is at some level, a life of faith can feel like theirs no blueprint sometimes.

Here's the good news, however. God has one and He's guiding you through the journey.

We simply cannot be in control in the journey all of the time.

In fact, we probably control far less than we think we do.

We cannot stop other people's choices from impacting our lives. And we cannot insulate ourselves from every potentially bad or damaging situation in life.

But we do get to choose whether or not to hold onto baggage. And we do get to choose everyday to move forward - even if the path is unknown.

The Apostle Paul said it like this in 2 Corinthians 5:

2 Corinthians 5:1–7 (NIV): For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. 2 Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, 3 because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. 4 For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. 5 Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. 6 Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. 7 For we live by faith, not by sight.

Once more from the Passion Translation. . .

2 Corinthians 5:2–7 (TPT): We are convinced that even if these bodies we live in are folded up at death like tents, we will still have a God-built home that no human hands have built, which will last

forever in the heavenly realm. 2 We inwardly sigh as we live in these physical “tents,” longing to put on a new body for our life in heaven, 3 in the belief that once we put on our new “clothing” we won’t find ourselves “naked.” 4 So, while living in this “tent,” we groan under its burden, not because we want to die but because we want these new bodies. We crave for all that is mortal to be swallowed up by eternal life. 5 And this is no empty hope, for God himself is the one who has prepared us for this wonderful destiny. And to confirm this promise, he has given us the Holy Spirit, like an engagement ring, as a guarantee. 6 That’s why we’re always full of courage. Even while we’re at home in the body, we’re homesick to be with the Master—7 for we live by faith, not by what we see with our eyes.

That’s a long passage and Paul is saying a lot in it. What I want to highlight is the idea that this is not our home and while we are here we long to be truly home with the Lord.

The Spirit was given as a guarantee and promise of the eternal life to come. That is the way God designed it.

So we trust Him.

We trust the best is yet to come.

We walk by faith, not by sight.

You’ve probably heard the story of “doubting Thomas” at some point in life.

He's the one who heard about Jesus' resurrection and said, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."

So then a week later Jesus appears and says to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

Talk about awkward. . .Jesus told him to do the very thing he said he had to do in order to believe. "Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." (John 20:24-29)

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.

Here's the challenge for all of us... Believe that Jesus has your best interest in mind.

In spite of our past. Our trauma, our pain, or disappointment.

In spite of the unknown adventure the future here on earth holds.

Philippians 1:6 (NIV): being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

God is doing new things in our lives. He has something for us here in the present and again in the future.

I started with this verse let me end with it as well. . .

Isaiah 43:18–19 (NIV): 18 “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. 19 See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.

So keep an eye out for Him this week. Choose to walk in the freedom you have through Christ. Let go of the past baggage and learn to travel light.

Matthew 11:28–30 (NIV): Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Let’s pray.

Join us next week as we learn to cast all our cares.