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 Isaiah 43:16-21 & Luke 24:50-53  
 Confirmation Hudson  
 5-20-07

Isaiah - *Thus says the Lord, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, who brings out chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick: Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and 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.*

Luke - *Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God.*

#### SERMON:

Did you ever realize there's a lot we don't know. Think of it . . .

Did you know . . .

- The interstate system of highways created during the Eisenhower administration requires that one mile in every five must be straight. These straight sections are usable as airstrips in times of war and other emergencies.
- Emus can't walk backwards.
- There are only thirteen blimps in the world. Nine of them are in the U.S. (5 based in Akron)
- Camel's milk doesn't curdle.
- An iguana can hold it's breath for 28 minutes.
- Nutmeg is poisonous if injected intravenously
- Lincoln Logs were invented by Frank Lloyd Wright's son.
- The first toilet seat seen on TV was on "Leave it to Beaver."
- The name Wendy was made up for the book "Peter Pan."

Clearly there's a lot we don't know. And some of it's not trivia. We may think we know everything we need to. But we don't. Or like Robert Fulghum we may think we learned everything we need to know in Kindergarten. And then we get knocked up side the head with something new. Something earthshaking. Something that makes us see everything in a new way.

That's what Isaiah has God saying:

*Look out. I'm about to do a new thing.*

It doesn't matter if you're fourteen or fifteen and getting confirmed today or if your 67 or 102 . . . something new *is* happening. That's what God says. There is still much to learn. Much to experience. Don't go and think you've got it all figured out.

Have you ever noticed that in lots – I guess really most churches, after the scripture of the day has been read the reader finishes by saying: *Thus endeth the Gospel . . . or Here ends the word?*

I suppose it's a way to tell everyone we're all done reading . . . but it sends the wrong message.

Scripture, the gospel doesn't end. Because, in fact, scripture is really just the beginning. The passage we just read from the end of Luke is the closest any of the gospel writers come to a conclusion. And even here (at the end of Luke), we sense a new beginning . . . we see that gospel writers aren't stuck and done, but that Jesus' followers have only just begun. (Christian Century, 5-1-07, p. 21)

Scripture doesn't provide once and forever answers. It launches us into a new world and way of being. *Look out, says God. I'm about to do a new thing.*

Last week I was in Suffield at an Eastern Ohio Association meeting of about 100 churches. There were almost two hundred of us there . . . more clergy than lay people and almost everyone deeply church-ed, invested in our traditions and ways of being. At that meeting we discussed and debated a proposal put together by two other ministers and me. Our proposal asks the association to support a restructuring of the governing body of our denomination – General Synod. The proposal asks for broader representation from local churches in the hope that it would more closely link each of our churches to the decision making of the denomination. All with the hope that each of us would be a more significant part of the process of *being* church. I was saddened by the apparent fear of some of those who spoke out against the proposal because it was going to change the way things have been done for a long time. And I was even more saddened by the apparent fear of putting the decision making back in the pews of the church. As if people like us wouldn't be able to make the right decisions. I was saddened, but I wasn't surprised. We fear change. We fear what's new. Happily, though, many of us long entrenched in the church saw the promise of change . . . and when it came time to vote, the proposal ended up being overwhelmingly supported. God is doing something new – even in the church.

This morning we baptized two children and confirmed 32 youth. For some, baptism is an end. Once the child's been "done," he's safe and protected. Not so. Baptism is just a beginning of a life long journey. In baptism we say we will embrace this child in God's love. And we say we will share the spirit of God with this child so that she will know God . . . and live a life of faith.

Even more people see confirmation as a graduation, as an ending. Not so. Confirmation is the beginning of a real relationship, a two-sided covenant to be a part of faith community. Confirmation is a statement that we believe God is doing a new thing. In our confirmation program, each confirmand develops a personal statement of faith. I reread each of them last week. The statements always amaze me in their honesty and their ability to cut through garbled language to really get to the heart of the matter. What I like most about them, though . . . is their recognition that this is just the start. That they still have so much to learn. And that God is still active and alive and doing a new thing.

Isaiah reminds us this morning that God is doing a new thing each and every day. He calls on Israel and us to move from memory to hope, from the past to the future, from what was to what is and what will be. Because . . . says Isaiah. God is making a path in the wilderness. What a great image. If you've ever tried to hike through untouched wilderness, you know just what this means. You get stuck in the bramble. No longer, says Isaiah – God's doing a new thing. God is clearing a path through life for the faithful. And then he says God is bringing rivers into the desert. Raging, flowing water into the desolate land. Giving drink to the thirsty. Isaiah doesn't say God *WILL* bring water. He says God *IS* bringing water to the parched lands. God's justice is coming *now*. Expect a new thing today. Live in the newness that is your life.

Finally, I want to share one of our confirmand's statements of faith . . . really more a poem than anything else, which is the way faith is often best expressed:

*God, my one and only God  
 He gave me life and all the people in it  
 He gives me a past and all its good memories  
 He gives me a future I can dream for  
 He gives me forgiveness when I disobey him  
 He gives me praise when I follow his word  
 He gives me hope in my darkest days  
 He gives me strength when I am frail  
 He gave me his only son's life for my salvation  
 I give him my love for all he's done  
 I give him faith for being my savior  
 God, my one and only God (Nick Pinkerton)*

Expect a new thing.