

Sermon Text: Isaiah 43:18-25 ¹⁸ "Do not remember the former things, Nor consider the things of old. ¹⁹ Behold, I will do a new thing, Now it shall spring forth; Shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness And rivers in the desert. ²⁰ The beast of the field will honor Me, The jackals and the ostriches, Because I give waters in the wilderness And rivers in the desert, To give drink to My people, My chosen. ²¹ This people I have formed for Myself; They shall declare My praise. ²² " But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob; And you have been weary of Me, O Israel. ²³ You have not brought Me the sheep for your burnt offerings, Nor have you honored Me with your sacrifices. I have not caused you to serve with grain offerings, Nor wearied you with incense. ²⁴ You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, Nor have you satisfied Me with the fat of your sacrifices; But you have burdened Me with your sins, You have wearied Me with your iniquities. ²⁵ " I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins.

Sermon Theme: God Remembers our Sins no More

1. Consider how we have wearied the LORD with our sinfulness.

2. Behold the new deliverance and gracious redemption.

3. Speak the praises of His saving grace.

In the name of our Savior Jesus, who has completely absolved us of all our sins, dear fellow redeemed;

Have you ever had certain dark misdeeds from your past crop up in your minds to torment and trouble you? Even though we resolved those sins with the Lord in a God pleasing way, our sin scarred minds have a way of reminding us of grievous offenses we were guilty of years ago. When they come to mind, our consciences may cause us to once again feel guilty. We may even experience fears and doubts as to whether or not God really forgave us of those past misdeeds.

When such dreadful thoughts and feelings occur, we could well join the psalmist David in saying to the LORD, "Do not remember the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions; according to Your mercy remember me, for Your goodness' sake, O LORD." (Ps. 25:7)

Whenever we are weighed down and troubled by our transgressions, we look to Holy Scripture and are reminded of those sweet and consoling words our Savior pronounced upon the penitent sinner, "Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you." It was words like these that Jesus spoke to the paralytic in today's gospel lesson. This man was not only blessed with the physical healing of his body, but also more importantly with the spiritual healing of his soul. And as for us, it is words like these that were spoken to us earlier in our worship service in the words of absolution after the public confession of our sins.

Not only have we received these comforting and reassuring words from our Savior God, but He also reveals to us in today's sermon text the truly amazing declaration, saying to us, "I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins." What a truly astounding and wonderful way of our forgiving God. That which He has forgiven us by His grace and mercy, He remembers it no more, that is, He doesn't call it to mind anymore and doesn't hold us accountable for it. What an amazing thing this is! Even though we may remember our past sins, the Lord our God doesn't remember them.

This very comforting and reassuring divine revelation was originally written for the children of Israel who were held captive in the foreign land of Babylon. This people as a nation had long been guilty of rebelling against and forsaking the Lord God, resulting in God visiting them with this righteous judgment of captivity.

In verses 22-24 of our text, the Lord speaks of how Israel had wearied Him with sinfulness in their worship life and in their daily living, saying of them, “But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob; And you have been weary of Me, O Israel. You have not brought Me the sheep for your burnt offerings, Nor have you honored Me with your sacrifices. I have not caused you to serve with grain offerings, Nor wearied you with incense. You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, Nor have you satisfied Me with the fat of your sacrifices; But you have burdened Me with your sins, You have wearied Me with your iniquities.”

The great privilege of prayer and worship encounters with the Lord have been intended to serve for our spiritual blessing and for the glory of God’s holy name. In the name of our Savior we can bring all our many prayers and petitions to the throne of God concerning whatever wants, needs or concerns we may have. In our worship encounters our merciful Lord would help us with our sin problem so that we repent of it, are comforted and cheered in the knowledge of His redeeming love, and are moved to live our lives unto Him in holiness of living. And in thankful response to all of His rich and bountiful blessings songs of praise are offered up to the Lord.

All this is truly a blessed thing, and yet, how often are these not neglected, misused, or abused? Whenever this occurs, instead of it being a pleasing thing to our Lord, it wearies and burdens His heart.

In the case of the children of Israel, we hear the Lord sighing over their past neglectful and empty worship, and their hypocritical sacrifices. In regard to prayer and sacrificial offerings there were some who failed to do them altogether, and others who devoted their prayers and sacrifices to false gods. When Israel’s devotion life suffered, it then also followed that their live of service to God greatly suffered.

It would be easy for us to sit on the sidelines here and criticize the children of Israel for what had taken place with them. But then, we would be missing out on the Spirit’s intent to help us be conscious of our own shortcomings in this area of life and to guard against falling prey to these pitfalls. How often haven’t we needlessly worried and been anxious about difficulties in our lives because we didn’t remember to cast all our cares and burdens on the Lord in prayer? Or when we did pray, were there not times when we said prayers without much thought or meaning? Have there not been occasions when we were reading or hearing the Word of God and we did not give a great deal of thought or attention to it, or failed to apply it to our lives? Also, in our use of the worship liturgy and in our hymn singing haven’t we at times fallen into the rut of simply going through the motions? And like the children of Israel when our worship life suffers, our life of devotion and service to God also greatly suffers. Oh how this wearies and burdens the heart of our Lord and God!

But thanks be to God for His patience with us, His infinite mercy, His powerful deliverance, and His gracious ways with us so that He remembers our sins no more. The Lord draws our attention to this when at the beginning of verse 19 He says to us, ‘Behold,’ that is, ‘stop what you are doing, look and pay close attention to a new and wonderful thing that I am doing for you as your Lord and Savior.’

In contrast to this new thing the Lord said in the previous verse, “Do not remember the former things, nor consider the things of old.” Those things of old were His mighty and merciful acts of delivering the children of Israel from their captivity in Egypt. Each year the children of Israel celebrated the anniversary of this deliverance, as it served to put them in remembrance of those early days when God made them His covenant people and set them free from their bondage. When the Lord said for Israel not to remember these old things, He did not mean for them to completely and totally put this out of their minds. Rather, His intent was that they give greater attention to His new and far more glorious deliverance.

This new deliverance was none other than the spiritual and eternal redemption of sinful man in the salvation of our souls. There is certainly no other deliverance in all history that can begin to compare with the most extraordinary deliverance our Savior accomplished on the cross of Calvary.

May the Lord help us never lose sight of or cease to appreciate how great a salvation our Lord and God has provided us through Jesus Christ. For if we ever fall into this way, our sinful flesh would be quick to rush in and fill the vacuum so as to overcome us with sin, impenitence, and unbelief.

The Lord revealed in our text that this new and greatest deliverance would begin to spring forth when in the days to come He would set Israel free from their captivity in Babylon and make a road for them through the wilderness and give them to drink from the rivers in the desert so that they could make their way safely back to their homeland in Palestine. This was the start of a new era in Israel’s history that would reach its climax with the redemptive work of Jesus which sets us free from the captivity of sin. In fact, this is the climax of all human history and even eternity, because the eternal fate of all the world depends upon this one rescue mission.

When we hear the Lord speaking of making a road through the barren and lifeless wilderness so that Israel could make its way to the promised land, this could well prompt us to think of our own barren and lifeless condition we have by nature. For when we were dead in trespasses and sins, there was nothing in us that merited God’s love, forgiveness, or salvation. In and of ourselves we are in a helpless and hopeless condition.

Thank God that He sent His Son Jesus to be our road to life eternal. For as Jesus testified of Himself, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (Jn. 14:6)

Along the road of life the Lord gives us to drink of His gracious water of life in the gospel which refreshes our souls, uplifts our spirits, and sustains us in the knowledge of God’s saving grace. Jesus once said of this spiritual water that flows from His Word, “whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.” (Jn. 4:14)

I would like to read for you once again that beautiful declaration by the Lord which is the focal point of the whole sermon text, even the very focal point of our life and salvation. The Lord our God declared concerning Himself, “I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins.” There is no greater message in all the world for us to hear and be reminded of over and over again than this wonderful truth about the forgiving way of our Savior God.

For His own sake, that is, on the basis of His own unmerited love the Lord has

completely and totally blotted out all our transgressions and remembers them no more. He has completely wiped clean from the book of our life all our many sins so that on judgment day when we stand before the throne of God not a single sin will be found in our record book so as to shut us out of heaven. All that He will see there is the record of our works and deeds which give evidence of our faith and love for our Savior God.

When the Lord blotted out our sins, we know that He didn't do this because He overlooked them or didn't think them to be so serious. No, we have come to know by faith they were blotted out because Jesus God's own Son cleansed us of all our sins through the shedding of His blood on Calvary. Because of Jesus' redemptive work the prophet Isaiah could say to us without any doubt or hesitation, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (1:18)

Concerning the response to this new deliverance, the Lord declares in our text, "The beast of the field will honor Me, The jackals and the ostriches, Because I give waters in the wilderness And rivers in the desert, To give drink to My people, My chosen. This people I have formed for Myself; They shall declare My praise." Ordinarily we don't think of animals being among the created beings of God praising Him. And yet, we find the Lord speaking of the wild beasts of the field honoring Him in their own special way for His mighty and merciful deliverance of His people.

What is more familiar to us is the Lord's reference to His people declaring His praises. Having been washed clean of all our sins so that God remembers them no more, how can we not but speak and sing the praises of our God. No matter what the worship form, liturgy or hymn may be when it faithfully expresses how our Lord has wonderfully blessed us, we are prompted to join in with our fellow Christians in expressing our joy, our thankfulness and our praise to God in word and song.

And our words of praise to Him are not limited to our worship of Him at church and in our homes. Like the apostle Peter we are prompted by the Spirit of God to have the resolve that we cannot but speak to others concerning the wonderful things we have come to learn and believe in concerning our gracious Lord and God.

Earlier I spoke of us being troubled by our past and current misdeeds. By the grace of God we have been comforted time and again by the gospel of Christ. We are among the comparative few sinners in the world who possess this peace with God. Many are the sinners in this world who are still lacking this wonderful knowledge and faith, and therefore are hurting and are in spiritual death throes because of it. How can we not but try to help those around us when we have opportunity to speak to them of the gracious deliverance that Jesus also worked out for them.

For the comfort of our sin-troubled souls may God help us to remember that when He forgives us, He remembers our sins no more. And for the comfort of others may God help us to share this good news with them so that together we can sing and speak the praises of our Savior God. Amen.