

COSTLY DEVOTION

Isaiah 43:16-25

[PART 2]

This morning we looked at the way in which Mary expressed her devotion to Jesus for something profound that had happened in her life and her submission to Jesus as a disciple – something she had already committed herself to. We also saw how Jesus took that act and showed it to be prophetic of what would be happening to Him in a short time. It was an act that celebrated the past, recognised the present and pointed to the future.

As we come to the Lord's table this evening we do much the same – we celebrate the past, recognised the present and points towards the future. But what of our motive to come to this table. Why are we here. Because of tradition? Because of habit? Because of fear? Because of obedience? Or have we come out of devotion – as Mary came to Jesus with her jar of expensive perfume?

The passage we read in Isaiah 43 is a prophecy that starts in verses 16 and 17 in reminding the people how great God had been in rescuing the people from the Egyptians by taking them through the Red Sea and destroying their enemies. They became a people due to God's grace. As we come around this table the first things we see are the bread and wine that remind us how we got here – by the grace of God and the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

But looking back also brought the people a memory of a dark past for them. Verse 22 says: *The LORD says, "But you were tired of me, Israel; you did not worship me. 23 You did not bring me your burnt offerings of sheep; you did not honour me with your sacrifices. I did not burden you by demanding offerings or wear you out by asking for incense. 24 You didn't buy incense for me or satisfy me with the fat of your animals. Instead you burdened me with your sins; you wore me out with the wrongs you have committed.* Isaiah was writing to a people who were suffering for the sins of the past, yet this passage is an affirmation that whatever had happened, they were the people of God and He was going to redeem them – verse 25 - *yet, I am the God who forgives your sins, and I do this because of who I am. I will not hold your sins against you.* How wonderful the grace of God is. The nation sinned grievously, and suffered destruction for it – yet God still let His forgiveness shine through that. Part of our act tonight is one of confession. God has shown us grace in rescuing us – the benefit of which we have come into through faith. Like Israel, we have also burdened God with our sins even though He has hardly burdened us. We recognise not just our past forgiveness, but our present need for forgiveness.

Because God was not going to abandon His people, He was going to lead them to streams of living water – the only problem was that they were going to walk through the wilderness to get to it. As we come around the table this evening we see a promise of eternal life – eternal streams of water – but we have to walk through the wilderness of this life first with all it's challenges and problems. But the end of it is an eternity in God's presence! But as we walk, we experience the streams of water refreshing us and giving us life.

We often don't think of the Lord's Table in that way. We think of the past – the broken body and shed blood of Jesus – what was done at Calvary. We remember the grace of God who has made us a people when we were not a people, who in Christ has eternally dealt with our sin and brought us into a relationship with Him.

The Lord's Table is about the present because the body and blood of Christ remind us that we can enter into the most holy place by the blood of Jesus. We are in the presence of our Saviour now – He is here by His Spirit.

However, let's not forget that we are also here because of the future – God's promises are eternal ones and the body and blood of Christ remind us that we have a hope now and a hope for eternity in Christ. Here's the promise that our passage in Isaiah gives to us: *19 Watch for the new thing I am going to do. It is happening already--you can see it now! I will make a road through the wilderness and give you streams of water there. 20 Even the wild animals will honour me; jackals and ostriches will praise me when I make rivers flow in the desert to give water to my chosen people. 21 They are the people I made for myself, and they will sing my praises!"*

As a people who are blessed of God in Christ, we come before Him, not out of duty, not because it's the Baptist thing to do, but because we love Him because He has given us forgiveness, we are in His presence now and we will be with Him throughout eternity. What a promise – what a profound meal God has given us. His actions in the past puts us into relationship with Him in the presence and gives us an exciting future hope!

21 They are the people I made for myself, and they will sing my praises!" Therefore unlike the people of Israel who got tired of God, let's come before Him this evening desiring that our devotion to Him is refreshed and stays fresh as we seek to be His people.

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