

Fifth Sunday in Lent  
Sermon text: Philippians 3:8-14.  
Related text: Luke 20:9-20  
Date preached: March 17, 2013

Before we could move forward, a foundation needed to be laid upon which to walk. Without such a foundation, we step into peril. These perils wound us. It is like a free fall that leaves us broken upon hitting bottom.

The thing is that there are different types of foundations. Some are more secure than others. We are very capable of choosing to walk upon or build upon the wrong foundation.

“The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.” That cornerstone of our faith is Jesus. He is the one that does not fit into our image of what a savior should look like. Of course, the problem then is not with Jesus, but with us.

Yet this same cornerstone, Jesus, is the one who equips us to walk. He makes us to walk as described by the prophet Isaiah. “Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing;”

The new thing is so new that it is frequently unseen in the world. The new thing Jesus does is to forgive

sin. Now, we might be saying to ourselves that this isn't so much a new thing anymore. The command and grace of forgiveness echo's back over the past 2,000 years or so of human history.

Yet, it is new day after day. God is in the business of forgiving sin. As Christians, we daily heed the call to repent of our sin that we may receive the forgiveness God lavishly places upon us. That is so clearly demonstrated in the parable that Jesus tells. From the 20<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Gospel according to Luke, three individuals are sent to reap the harvest of the vineyard for the owner. The workers of the vineyard beat each of the three individuals and send them is beaten back to the owner.

Now the owner ups the stakes. This time he sends the son. But like the messengers sent ahead of him, the Son is poorly treated. So poorly treated is he, that they put him to death. Surely, as those who originally heard the parable, you'd think that the vineyard workers would be put to death. Therein comes the new thing that God is doing.

This parable is about God sending His only begotten Son into the world, so save it. "For God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son, so that

whoever believes in Him may not perish, but have eternal life.”

Jesus came into the world to save. It was us, the world by way of our sin that put this Son to death. To say that the owner will put those miserable workers to death is to speak our own condemnation.

By God’s grace, the condemnation we are due is taken by Jesus. He dies that we might live. He is the one upon whom we rely for salvation. He is the one who transforms us through the cross.

Having died for our sins, having forgiven us of our sin, we are set on the path God desires. That means that in moving forward, we let go of the previously committed sins of our repentant neighbor as well as our own for which we repented.

Such moving forward is precisely what the apostle Paul speaks about. Not only do we move forward from that which once held us in bondage, we regard all the things we considered good as trash.

Rubbish is the prizes and accolades we have won or accomplished. Such things are rubbish in comparison to the glory of God’s home. The prize of heaven is one that is not tarnished by hate, pollution,

sickness, grudges, lies and empty promises. The prize of heaven is that new life of ours transformed by Christ.

Philippians 3:8ff, “For Christ’s sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith...” Our former life is put to death that we may live in the freedom of Christ and his promised resurrection.

Such living entails praising God for all He has done. It is to pray in thanksgiving, to sing with joy, to be eager in sharing the good news of Christ in both word and in our actions.

We are moving ever closer to the cross. Do not turn back now. Let us press on, knowing that it is our Lord who brings us through death, to the glory of His eternal home.      AMEN.