Last week, I talked about a *reset* for our lives as the ability to embrace and move into the new things that God has for us by not allowing the hurts of the past to hold us back. We can’t change the facts of the past, but we can change how we feel about them and how we allow them to affect us today. It’s possible to reframe our past experiences into a story of redemption by looking at them and talking about them through the lens of Jesus’ love and grace.

The outcome is that, as we experience redemption, we are able to move into the new life God has for us; we stop keeping our future hostage to our past. We free our future by allowing God to redeem our past and reframe our whole lives around a new story of hope, redemption, and new life.

Today, I want to talk about our future. When I use the word “relaunch,” I mean the action, the opportunity, or the decision to live out the hope of tomorrow today.

Our text comes from Isaiah 43:18, 19:

Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.

The context of Isaiah’s writing to the people of Israel takes place at a bleak period in Israel’s history. They were in captivity, conquered by the Assyrians, who had become the region’s dominating military and political power. They had lost everything they thought they would keep forever, and they were homesick for the land and the blessing God had promised them.

This happened because they were suffering the consequences of wrong choices against each other and God. Israel had abandoned everything they once represented as God’s people; they had become selfish and unjust. They had missed the mark of their mission and calling as people of God. They had forgotten time and time again that the blessing given to their father Abraham and their mother Sarah was meant to be stretched out to all the families of the earth and that this was the reason for their existence, their purpose and goal as people of God. They failed because they forgot who they were meant to be. Instead of pursuing their purpose, they settled with ephemeral comforts and tried to become like everyone else.

No doubt Israel was discouraged because they thought this was the end of them. They were stuck – emotionally, mentally, and spiritually – in their past, unable to see the new life and opportunities that God was opening up. God was speaking hope and encouragement to them in the midst of their darkest times so they would be redeemed.

But here is the good news in midst of such a dark backdrop, God wanted them to know that they were not forsaken, even though they were suffering. God wanted Israel’s people to understand that the hardship they were experiencing would not be the end of them nor define them. God wanted to give them a fresh start, a new beginning in their life, a *relaunch*, so to speak. By telling them, “forget the former things,” God was saying, “it is time to move on.”

Maybe that is where we are! We may feel we are stuck, that we have failed people we love – including God – so many times that we are just getting what we deserve. But if that was true, if God dealt with us based on what we deserve, we wouldn’t be here. No, God deals with us with grace, to bring out the best of us and make us whole again.

I believe that God is not in the business of annihilation, but of redemption. Our God does not dwell in the past, for he is always doing a new thing, creating a future for all of us.

So, don’t ever believe that God doesn’t want anything to do with you. If you think that you have no future, I have good news for you. As God told Israel, God is saying to us too, “it’s not over, I have plans for your life. I am about to do something new for you,” because God is always on the move, and God is always calling us forward. So, our lives are meant to be lived forward, as in going after our future.

The question for us is: How can we embrace this new thing that God wants to do in our lives? We begin by realizing that our God is forward-thinking, meaning God is always working a future for us.

And this where God and we struggle with each other. Our idea for “relaunching” often is about going back to the same ways of living, keeping things unchanged because we are afraid, or we doubt ourselves, or have simply given up our worth and we are done.

No, “relaunching” is not about repeating the “former things,” but embracing new life in new ways. We can’t find a new life by going back to what is gone. Audrey Thompson shared this with me: “old ways won’t open new doors.” How on-point is that?

I think God keeps opening new doors to all of us but many times we just want our old ways instead. We settle too soon on the little we know and focus our energy into safely conforming to what has been, rather than moving forward and building up new.

But I understand why we seek the comfort rather than the new. It is hard to risk when you don’t know what comes next. I know that to try something new is to risk failure, but risks must be taken, because the greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing.

How do we know what to act on? Let me try to answer this question with this.

One of my favorite movies of all time is *Back to the Future*. In this movie, when Marty goes back to the past, he stands out. He knows things and has seen things and acts differently because he is from the future. In the first film, there are some scenes where he is thought of as weird for making peculiar decisions because his peers don’t understand where he is coming from. For example, when he was playing rock music on his electric guitar people were looking at him as a “crazy” since they did not know that kind of music yet, but he told them “one day your kids will love it.” And he was right because he knew the future.

In the same way, we can view all of us, Jesus’ followers, as people of the future. We know things about the future, right? Let me explain.

If you jump back 2,000 years to when Jesus was walking the earth, a majority of the Jewish people believed in the resurrection of the dead. They believed that when God set the world right at the end of time, the righteous would be resurrected and vindicated. The twist is that Jesus accomplished that in the middle of the story, not at the end. God did for Jesus in the present what Jewish people thought he would do for all at the end. So, in the resurrection, it’s like Jesus became a person of the future.

In the same way, everything else Jesus has done for us – how he brought a new world, a new way of living – is about bringing the promises of the future into the present. With this, God calls us to live as our future selves right here in the present, to step into what God says is true about us, and to stand out.

So, the point here is that we don’t try new things just because they are new or different. It is not about change for the sake of change; it is about personal growth, transformation as we embrace what God says about us and live the hope of the future today.

Now, what this tells me is that our best life happens when we act today the hope of tomorrow. In the same way that God does not make us wait to give us grace or forgiveness, we also don’t need to wait to be the husband or wife we want to be, the father, mother, son, friend we want to be. We don’t have to wait for our best life to happen someday; we don’t have to keep playing replay and live the same year 75 times and call it a life.

There is a saying, “If you are not moving forward, you are moving backward.” I don’t want that for me; I don’t want that for you. And most importantly, God does not want that for any of us.

Where are you going backward right now? Where are you struggling? Is it your job, family, friendship? What is your heart telling you today? What are the thoughts, the dreams, the desires of your heart that have been lost or forgotten over time?

There is not an easy answer to all of our questions. I know we all can agree that this life doesn’t always go our way. Things fall apart, and we lose track. But what matters is how we choose to keep moving forward to the future—just like God invites us to do so. What matters is that we keep going for the people who love us and need us most. That’s the promise we are given every day we get, that there is always a better tomorrow. And this is the promise we need to make to ourselves, that despite all the hardship, we never give up because we are going to make it to tomorrow. If God doesn’t give up any of us, we are not going to either.

My friends, your best future awaits, but you need to bring God into your life and decisions. That was the issue of the people of God, according to Isaiah. They tried new ways but without inviting God. They didn’t understand their future because they thought they already knew everything or enough, they were not open to new understandings. They also allowed bad choices and hardship to disrupt their lives and purpose. They lost their way because they forgot who and whose they were. Nothing worked for them. Let’s not make the same mistakes. Let’s not act on our understanding, but act on God’s wisdom, and our future will be bright.

I finish with this. To relaunch is not to keep things the way they are but to endeavor into new things. To relaunch is not about replaying the same old song but learning a new one.

We have a life ahead of us, and whatever the former things were, they have no claim over us anymore.

Can you hear God’s voice in your heart? What is God saying? How is God encouraging you right now? What dreams have been placed in your heart?

When it comes to trusting God your future, there is no reason for you to worry because God always makes everything better.

I invite you to look for the courage to act on the dreams God has placed in your heart already, on what you are meant to be.

Now, pay attention, may your choices reflect your hopes for the future and not the fears of your past. Live tomorrow today. Amen.