

Wm. Blake Spencer

God's Doing a New Thing

Isaiah 43: 15-21

There's an old Jewish legend **telling** of ordinary people who go through life unrecognized....all the while choosing to perpetuate goodness, even in the midst of nightmares. The legend concludes it is for the sake of these ordinary "good doing" people that all of humanity is spared.

**One such man is Janusz Korczak. He is one of 36 individuals remembered for putting his life on the line....for the purpose of helping and comforting those people chosen by the Nazi regime to be exterminated.**

**According to Jewish legend, it is people like Korczak, who through their good hearts and good deeds, keep the world from being destroyed.**

Dianne Ackerman, in her book, The Zoo Keeper's Wife, tells Korczak's story.....**his last story**. Between July and September 1942 the Nazi's shipped 265,000 Jews from Warsaw to Treblinka. That is the equivalent of the combined populations of Brentwood, Hendersonville, Murfreesboro and Goodlettsville. Imagine 265,000 of our neighbors disappearing in a three month period. What would our response be?

**History tells the evil of Treblinka. Around 750,000 people were murdered there.**

**By September only 55,000 people were left in the Ghetto of Warsaw. Of those were boys and girls in an orphanage between the ages of seven and fourteen. At the time they were living at 92 Krochmalna Street where a doctor by the name of Janusz Korczak lived.**

**When the Nazi's offered Korczak freedom he chose to stay with the children. Writing of his decision he explains: "You do not leave a sick child in the night, and you do not leave children at a time like this."**

In the end, Korczak marched with the children onto the red boxcars of what became known as the Nazi death trains. He huddled with the children in a space not much larger than the rug underneath our communion table.

An eyewitness account of this day describes the scene: "A miracle occurred, two hundred pure souls, condemned to death, did not weep. Not one of them ran away.

None of them tried to hide. Like stricken swallows they clung to their teacher and mentor, to their father and brother, Janusz Korczak."

**Indeed these are the kinds of stories that stir up questions....deep and disturbing questions. Why does evil exist? How could God stand by and allow the slaughter and abuse of innocent, pure souls?**

**But we are also left to ask: Where does the courage and the compassion of one like Janusz Korczak come from? In the midst of such evil....how do people continue to have compassion and gratitude?**

**What is the source of this kind of love?**

Just prior to the selected passage in Isaiah a judicial trial is depicted. At issue is the question: Is God really the true God?

**We discover in this exchange.... the same questions were being asked then as they are today. If God is all powerful and loving then why do bad things happen?**

We love to ask this question. And it seems in every generation there seems to be another reason to ask. Yet, before us remain the scriptures meeting this question generation after generation.

**In these stories and words of prophets and ordinary people we encounter the same "God reality" again and again. Different words, different stories....revealing the same conclusion.**

God is present right in the middle of our lives, in those moments we cherish and in those instances we cannot fathom.

**When faced with such atrocities as Nazi Germany it is hard to imagine how or why God would be present in such darkness.**

But darkness does not stand in the way of God's desire to love. Again and again. God sets up house with us...even when we are hell-bent on destroying each other. God sets up house with us.

**Isaiah depicts God's compassion as living with us in the midst of the worst we humans can concoct and experience..... all the while God is present....breathing out new life.**

Silently, patiently, lovingly God breathes new life into our existence.....changing darkness into light. This is what God does one breath at a time.

**One whisper in the midst of so many words....God is present. God is present chipping away the meanness, the brokenness, the darkness. God is present.**

**Isaiah, using very simple words says it this way....God is doing a new thing.**

God is doing a new thing even when we do not sense it. God is busy doing a new thing.....and it is in those moments when you and I get caught up in the rhythm of God's breathing that our lives begin to change....our eyes begin to see new ways, our ears hear new words, our mouths sing new songs and God's breathing and living comes alive in our breathing and living and we become the vessels of God's "doing of a new thing".

**Holocaust survivor, Elie Wiesel wrote: Once you bring life into the world, you must protect it. We must protect it by changing the world.**

**How we change the world has everything to do with how we live in the world. Janusz Korczak changed the world. He did not abandon the 200 children who had come to depend on him.**

In the rubble and destruction of war he filled those children with hope and dignity...he taught them how to live in an environment that was not designed for survival.

He taught them how to see past the temporary and to embrace the eternal. Though their lives were not spared from the unspeakable, Korczak remained faithful to God's calling and presence.

**When everything he had known had disappeared, Korczak held on. He had to have sensed God's breathing and by holding on to the abandoned children Korczak breathed in what God breathed out.**

This is what Isaiah is conveying.....God is in your midst breathing living.... speaking....

**I not only created you, God whispers....I learned to live with you.**

**I know how easily you are filled with fear.** I know your doubt is often more compelling in your mind and heart than the hope I set before you.

**I know you are more prone to complain when things don't seem right than you are to praise when things are going well.**

I know that you have a really difficult time seeing past the struggle of today.

**I created you....and I live among you....and just as I did a new thing then and I am doing a new thing now.**

You thought being exiled in a foreign land was all the evidence you needed to prove that I was a God who was aloof and did not care.

But then I did a new thing. I brought you back home.

**You thought the evil of Nazism was all the world needed to turn against me. From the other side of barbed wire fence German guards made their case against me....mocking their prisoners.**

**"Where is your God now? Who will save you now?" Their taunting, nor their killing was enough to drown out my compassion....my love endured then and it will endure now.**

You thought the Pharisees would win the war of words. They worked to tangle my love with theological power plays. But, I did a new thing....and spoke a new love and lived a new way.

**You think the current issues in your life....in this world are more than you can handle....finances, politics, wars over oil and land, environmental issues.....broken relationships...**

**I did a new thing then....and I am doing a new thing now!**

**I am with you living and breathing.....I am with you doing a new thing now.**