



## New Beginnings

Hello everyone. Welcome to “Notes from the Presence.” Today I would like to talk about new beginnings.

In my bible reading this past week, I came across a triad of scripture passages that inspired me.

Isaiah 42:8-10 *“I am the Lord, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, nor My praise to graven images. “Behold, the former things have come to pass, now I declare new things; before they spring forth I proclaim them to you.” Sing to the Lord a new song, sing His praise from the end of the earth!*”

Isaiah 43:18-19 *“Do not call to mind the former things, or ponder things of the past. “Behold, I will do something new, now it will spring forth; will you not be aware of it? I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, rivers in the desert.”*

Isaiah 48:6-7 *“I proclaim to you new things from this time, even hidden things which you have not known. “They are created now and not long ago; and before today you have not heard them, so that you will not say, ‘Behold, I knew them.’”*

Then, there is also a similar verse written by Solomon:

Ecclesiastics 7:10 *Do not say, “Why is it that the former days were better than these?” For it is not from wisdom that you ask about this.*

Being that I have spent decades of my life working in church settings, I have come across a lot of people who long for the former days. For the most part, I believe this yearning has its roots in two valiant places.

First, we come across a glorious place in our lives. It could be a revival atmosphere, a refreshing move of the Spirit in our past, or a cherished era where we grew in the Lord or were inspired to worship. Then, eventually this era fades away and we forever long for those days again. We try, sometimes for years, to figure out what went wrong, how we lost the glorious atmosphere. Eventually, we come to the conclusion that it was the logistics of the situation that were special - the songs, the style in which they were sung, the way the programs were set up, or the theology of the moment. We then attach piety to these logistics and demand a return to them in order to try to regain the glorious atmosphere.

The second scenario is what I would like to call a "defender of tradition." We, as humans are strange sentimental creatures, craving comfort above all things. For this reason, we often resist change. In our spiritual walk, we easily become steeped in tradition that becomes very dear to our heart and to our community. This can include theologies, musical styles, traditions of gathering, orders of service, notions of what to wear or not wear, make-up, to dance or not, and the list goes on - endlessly. For the most part, these morph into things that just seem "proper" to us. Once again, we attach piety to them and treat them as if God cares as deeply about them as we do. We then go to great lengths to defend our positions, caring not for the feelings of those who might not share our opinion on the subject.

Friends, today I would like to say that God wants to do something new. Jesus is all about fresh new beginnings. He will not build on the stylings, look, or feel of the past. Aesthetics and tradition are irrelevant to Him. He once said that the traditions of men make the power of God of no effect.

There is a "now" word from Jesus to His church. In my experience, it is updated every few months, even weeks. We, as worshippers, are not part of an isolated community of people, striving to defend our traditions and denominational stances. We are, instead, part of a glorious worldwide church that Jesus is constantly speaking to. He doesn't stop in one place for very long. It does us no good to try to return to positions that were held dozens or even hundreds of years ago. Even if we could time travel back to our favourite place, Jesus wouldn't be there. He is here, right here and now, forever urging us to let go of the past and step with Him together into the future. Jesus is all about new beginnings.

The reason I am writing on this subject today, is that I must admit to being a bit stuck right now. I have been a part of some glorious moves of God in the past. Even in the last few months, I have walked down some extremely life giving paths - to places that a few years ago, I didn't even know existed in God. However, my heart is telling me that even with all of the glory of the near past, God is up to something new again. I am not sure

what it is, but my ear is to the ground. I am listening for the whisper, watching for the movement of the trees in order to see the direction of the wind.

I have a dear friend and mentor, Steve Schroeder. Every time I am together with him, he reminds me, "Dean, listen for the sound." At first, I wasn't quite sure what he was referring to. Now, I realize there is a sound from heaven that is constant, and also constantly changing. It is what God is doing and saying "now." It is encapsulated in the phrase "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Friends, new beginnings come in two forms. They either come as new and exciting events, shaking us out of places we have occupied for way too long - or - we can be so in tune with heaven that our lives constantly personify the phrase "new beginnings." I am starting to realize that God's best for me is to embrace new beginnings as a lifestyle - taking courage to places it has never gone before.

Father God, I pray You will move me towards a lifestyle of new beginnings. Let me be so in tune with Your "sound" that I move from new beginning to new beginning effortlessly, like an eagle constantly finding new air currents, letting go of each breath to find the next. Don't let me be out of sync for even one moment with the "sound of heaven." Open my ears to hear and my eyes to see. Amen.

Thanks for reading. Jesus is real and He is making all things new.