

"A Sure Beginning"

Isaiah 43:18-25; 2 Corinthians 1:18-22; Mark 2:1-12

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True to their word. I've always thought of that kind of compliment as one of the better ones. They're true to their word. I don't know about you but I always hope that I might be true to my word. I recognize there are times where I've thought that I could do something and turns out I can't. Not always as true to my word as I want to be. Paul, I think, was in somewhat of the same situation. He'd been telling the Corinthians he was coming for a visit and then found that he couldn't right then. And so he wrote this letter. He must have heard they were saying something about him not coming, like "Does he ever keep his word?" And he said, "No, I want to be true to my word. I want to be as true to my word as God is." And in doing that he not only let us see how he wanted to be true to his word but pointed us to the One who is always true to his word. And so if we think about God as the one who is always true to his word, we think about how if we let God touch us, we will be changed. God will change us. Change us so that we know the stamp of Jesus, the "yes" of Jesus. That was kind of an interesting phrase to me when I read it this week, "stamped by the yes of Jesus." I thought how the contrast of how often times I feel stamped by the "no of the world." How often times I feel like I'm told that I'm a "no" - a nobody - because I don't have the right car, or a big enough house or enough education or enough money or enough power or enough fame. I'm just not on the top of the heap. I must be a nobody.

It's interesting how that sets up for us - at least I know that feeling - of wanting to be somebody. But somebody else is always better. Even if I'm good at something, there's always somebody that's - usually they're better at what I'm good at - let alone all the other things that I'm not good at. So many people are better. Even that Nike commercial that says "just do it" seems to have an assumption that I haven't don't it all yet. I'm just not there. I know the "no" - the sense of being nobody.

So as I hear Paul we can be stamped with the "yes of Jesus" I think about what Jesus does with the paralytic. Now he doesn't tell us why this person is paralyzed. The story just says he's paralyzed. Now we can be paralyzed for a lot of reasons. We can be paralyzed because we've got a physical ailment. But most of us would know - I certainly do - the way that fear paralyzes. The way that guilt paralyzes. The way that feeling like a nobody paralyzes. And in fact, what is it that Jesus says to him? He says, "Your sins are forgiven." He's letting him free from the guilt. He's forgiven him. It's God's "yes." Yes, to us, to who we are as his children. You don't have to be on the top of the heap. Let Jesus be there. Let Jesus be God. Let God be God. And instead allow him to start that sure beginning in us, for we are each somebody, because we're loved by God. What could be more special than that? We're loved by God - each of us, as the unique wonderful people we are. We're special because we're God's. We don't have to be just like somebody else because we're unique. We're the person that God made us to be. And as we allow God to touch us, to help us recognize that we are freed, freed of the guilt, free of the need to be better than everyone else, free to be the child of God that God has made us.

God starts that sure beginning in us by saying "yes". Who can we trust in this world today? We can trust God. And what does God want? God wants us to know the "yes." Can we be loved and forgiven in God through Christ? Yes. Can we begin to know the new life that Christ would offer us? Yes. Can we know the sure beginning that is destined for completion in Christ? Yes. How do we know God's yes? I think it's pretty simple. All God asks is we say yes to him. Yes to the loving grace he would give us.

This is the opposite of that campaign that says "just say no". This is God saying yes to us, asking us to "just say yes". Amen.