

5th Sunday of Lent, C
Isaiah 43:16-21
Psalm 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6
Philippians 3:8-14
John 8:1-11
March 13, 2016
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If we were to give a title to our scripture reflection for this Fifth Sunday of Lent, it might be Jimmy Durante's old catchphrase, "You ain't seen nothin yet!" Consider our First Reading. Isaiah begins by recounting the foundational moment in the history of God's relationship with the Chosen People: the awe-inspiring occasion when God parted the sea to allow the people to pass safely through it, and then brought the waters crashing down to sweep away the Pharaoh's powerful army. Then, Isaiah surprises his hearers with a startling new instruction from their God: "Remember *not* the events of the past, the things of long ago consider not; see, I am doing something new! Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" Essentially the people are being told that the staggering actions of God in the past pale in comparison to what God is doing now. They "ain't seen nothin yet."

What is this new epoch-making action of God in the world? God is preparing a way through the wilderness for the people to travel out of Babylonian captivity, to re-establish the city of Jerusalem. Christian readers associate Isaiah's words with the coming of Jesus Christ. John the Baptist is identified as the one who figuratively filled in the valleys and leveled the high places to create a road through the wilderness for Our Lord to travel as he came into Jerusalem. By extension, the coming of

our Savior is the utterly unprecedented new thing that God is announcing through Isaiah.

Paul makes a similar point to the Philippians in our Second Reading: “Brothers and sisters: I consider everything as a loss because of the supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have accepted the loss of all things and I consider them so much rubbish, that I may gain Christ...*forgetting* what lies behind but straining *forward* to what lies ahead...the prize of God’s upward calling in Jesus Christ.” Paul’s past, then, is nothing in comparison to what God has in store for him in Christ. Paul, and we, “ain’t seen nothin yet.”

Our Gospel gives us John’s account of Jesus’ encounter with the woman caught in adultery. Durante’s catchphrase applies here as well, if in a different sense. We are told that his enemies bring the woman to Jesus “so that they could have some charge to bring against him.” They know enough about Jesus to suspect that he will forbid them to stone her to death. If he does so, they will accuse him of directly violating the Law of Moses. Then his own life will be forfeit. They will be rid of him. Jesus deftly eludes the trap and saves the woman. In this passage, the Christ presaged by Isaiah and announced by Paul has arrived on the scene. The astounding new reality being loosed by God in the world is present among the people. Yet, those to whom he has been sent fail to recognize him for who he is. If the question voiced by Isaiah were asked in reference to them, the answer would be clear. “I am doing something new...do you not perceive it?” No, they do not. The Son of the Living God walks among them, and “they ain’t seen nothing - yet.”

And, of course, our readings invite us to ask the same question of ourselves. Do we have any conception of the magnitude of what God has

done for us in Christ? Do we have any notion of what we are preparing to celebrate at Easter? Are we prepared, like Paul, to embrace Jesus Christ as the primary reality in our lives beside which all else is dross? We have these waning days of Lent to prepare our answers to these questions. Let's strain forward toward what lies ahead. We "ain't seen nothin yet."