

I am about to do a new thing. Can you perceive it?

And indeed God was about to do a new thing for the people of Isaiah's day, a people stolen from their land, separated from their families, a people living in captivity,

And Isaiah preached that word - that God is doing a new thing

A new thing in the land, a new thing in peoples' hearts, and this is our prayer today as well. Will you join me in prayer: "Lord, dear Lord above, God almighty, God of love, break into our lives and do a new thing. Help us to lean on you as we take bold and brave steps into the future you prepare.

God is always and everywhere doing a new thing and we give thanks for that. Though change is often unsettling it is in fact life-giving. We know that our bodies are constantly changing: blood oxygenating, synapses firing. And the earth on which we rely is continuously in motion and flux. If our bodies, if our lives didn't change, there would be no growth, there would be no learning, our spiritual selves would be anemic - but indeed God is doing a new thing in our lives continually and indeed in this very moment in time.

I am about to do a new thing

Can you perceive it

That's right we are on the cusp of the season of Lent, on what we hope is the ebbing tide of a novel pandemic, on the verge of a monumental Pastoral Transition. The world is changing. Our lives are changing. And it is unsettling to be experiencing so much transition. You may be feeling one or more of a smorgasborg of emotions right now. And that's why this is the very moment when we offer gratitude for the amazing gift of Jazz Music. Because, as Charles Mingus teaches us, Jazz music is a language of the emotions.

And as such, Jazz music, like life, is all about change. Its foundations are Improvisation, and communication, creativity and bravery! In the words of Miles Davis: "Bebop [as he called it] was about change, about evolution. It wasn't about standing still and becoming safe. If anybody wants to keep creating they have to be about change." Jazz music is defined by its ability to 1) tap into the range of human emotions and convey them, and 2) be always about doing a new thing. Jazz was born out of the Black American experience, with all of its joy and all of its pain, and cries out for the transformation of the world.

Let us sing with gratitude that God is about to do a new thing. Because things are in no way perfect now. People tearing each other down, parents teaching their children to hate, a consumer culture that grinds up and spits out people and all of God's good creation, People still live in slavery, people still die needlessly from diseases and warfare and lack of clean water. And some days Justice seems like a distant dream. But don't let anyone tell you "that's the way it always has been and always will be". No! LIFE = CHANGE! And this is one of the reasons I'm a Christian. Because I strive to be a disciple of Jesus Christ: God turned human, carpenter turned leader, religious scholar turned social activist. Jesus flipped the money changers tables and revolutionized how we understand our obligation to the Law and to each other. Jesus saw that life is change and sought to move that change in a positive direction. And if life is change, then stasis (the status quo) is death. In this way Jesus does lead us from death to eternal life, if we'll only follow him.

Yes, change is life-giving and change is exciting. Old South Church we're at the beginning of a season of transition and while that may feel a bit scary, it's also incredibly exciting. It's a time for reflecting and discerning and dreaming. A time to think about who we are, who we've been and who God is calling us to become. The Spirit is moving! We'll be called upon to play these next few bars with honesty and creativity and bravery, and a deep reverence for the transformative power of the Spirit that leads us. In the words of Duke Ellington: "Tomorrow is in the wings waiting for you to sound her entrance fanfare."