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New Days for the Old Encampment

A Prayer and a Hope for Our Summer Camp Meetings

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"Behold, I will do a new thing" Isaiah 43:19.

The long winter is past. Summer time is here again. It is the time that all America goes out-of-doors. Some go to the cabin at the seashore, others to the mountains. Some simply take to the highway. For Wesleyan Methodists, however, much of the summertime going is to and from the old campgrounds. Children's camps assemble there, the youth camps, the conference business sessions, and then the historic camp meeting for everybody. How perfectly the stage is set for God to meet His people in these encampments. And yet sometimes the season comes and goes and there are no "rivers in the desert" or "ways made in the wilderness." The heavens do not open. The feast closes and many people go home hungry.

Something new is needed—something from above. And such a God we have. The prophet Isaiah saw Him in the role of doing new things. What is needed is not new people, new grass and trees, new or different campground settings. The fact is God can do the new thing in the old setting. Listen to the promise, "Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert" (Isa. 43:19). So it's up to you whether you go for the "old" or the "new" at camp this year.

Let God do a new thing in your prayer life. Make a daily appointment with God. Then keep it. Many have found the early morning helpful. Four o'clock; five o'clock; six o'clock. Or another hour may work better for you. And let God do some of the talking—through the Word and by His Spirit. Build an altar wherever you keep your prayer appointment. Offer the sacrifice of praise. Faithfully bring your petitions to God in believing prayer. You will be amazed what this will do for you and for others. Let God do a new thing for you in prayer. You won't need to wait for camp meeting time for this.

Also a new thing from God awaits you out of His Word. Who could ever exhaust its storehouse of riches! Go to the Book for the new. It is there. There for you. If your life lacks Christian stability read and meditate upon the Book of Deuteronomy. For a guide to Godliness, try Psalm 1 or 15 or 32 or 66. Pick out the "I will's" of Psalm 101. Here is a code for clean living as up-to-date as antibiotics. Memorize these psalms. Why not? And when you grow older they will come flooding back with light and assurance as if from a subterranean supply. That must have been what the psalmist meant when he said, "Thy Word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee."

The times of the end are upon us. These times have been anticipated in God's Book. Have you read the Revelation recently? "He who reads the Revelation of St. John," said Bishop Karl Whitte of Hamburg, "acquires an ability to see the temporal against the background of

the eternal, to see horrors of time in the light of the victory which has already been won." Prophecies, you know, have a way of staying hidden until the time of their fulfillment. Some things in the Book will make sense to you today that were not clear even a decade ago. You are sure to find the new in God's Book. There is a certain clamoring to be spoon-fed by the silver-tongued evangelist which, incidentally, is a mark of spiritual babyhood. Be sure to profit from the camp meeting ministry. But remember your Bible reads the same as the evangelist's. Try the direct approach. It could easily be for you as it has been for countless others the "way in the wilderness" and "rivers in the desert."

Let me suggest one more new thing. I refer to the blessed inwrought assurance of personal salvation. How lately has this been renewed? Consider Isaiah 42:21, "This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise." Or consider verse 3 of chapter 44: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." And then verse 5: "One shall say, I am the Lord's." That one can be you. Feed no longer on ashes (verse 20) but go to verses 22-24: "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee. Sing O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it. Shout ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing ye mountains, O forest and every tree therein . . ."

Or go over into the New Testament to St. John's Gospel, chapter 14, verse 20: "At that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and ye in me, and I in you." Or go to Romans 8: 15, 16, "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." The Scriptures, in fact, abound in promises of assurance. It is a deceived heart that turns aside from them. It is only the enemy who tells you that you cannot deliver your soul.

Justice is reserved for that day, but mercy is offered today—abundant mercy whenever and wherever a life is brought openly to God. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him and he with me" (Rev. 3:20). Jesus Christ spoke this message to the church—maybe your church. "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17).

When God does a new thing who can ever know how far the blessing will extend? The unbelieving cast off their doubts. The backslidden heart comes in for repairs.

(Continued on Page 8)