



St. Luke's East Hampton

Sermon Preached by the Rev. Benjamin Shambaugh

November 16, 2025;

Proper 28C: Isaiah 65:17-25, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13, Luke 21:5-19

For the past several months, the lectionary has taken us through the time surrounding the exile of the people of Israel in Babylon. Today's first reading was written just after the exile had over and the people of Israel had come home... home to a place where everything they cherished had been destroyed. In the midst of the ruins and rubble of the old Jerusalem, Isaiah gave them a vision of a heavenly one. In that place where the old ways no longer worked, God was doing something new. Isaiah was not just talking about the restoration of the kingdom of Israel. Israel was also talking about the coming of the Kingdom of God, a peaceable kingdom where blue and red relatives share thanksgiving meals together and the lion eats straw like an ox. It is a kingdom where God wipes away the tear from every eye and guides all people to the springs of the water of life. (Rev. 21:4, 22:7) This kingdom is coming. Unfortunately, our gospel tells us that things will get worse before they get better. Nation will rise up against nation; there will be great earthquakes and in various places famines and plagues and people will be brought before kings and governors to testify about doing what they believed was right. Yet again, the ancient texts of the lectionary seem amazingly relevant to today. We are in a world where we may well be asked to testify to God's work, proclaim God's vision, and explain the faith that guides our lives and inspires our actions. If that happens, God will give us words to say. Our task is to stand up and stand up and stand out as a people of healing and hope and citizens of a kingdom founded on the love and justice of God. This is not an easy task. We are living through a time when our message, and our mission, and our ministries of compassion and reconciliation are needed more than ever before. I'm not just talking about the church helping people in need. I'm talking about the church being a catalyst for change in their lives and in their word so they won't be needy again. I am talking about a church that is itself a community, a place of spiritual nurture and comfort where people care for one another and care for their souls -- where they are fed so they can feed others. It is in times like these that people need the beauty of music, the mystery of worship, the solace of silence, and the safety of a place to wrestle with questions, have honest conversations, dig deeper, and grow in their faith. It is in times like these that people need communion and connection with one another and with God. It is in times like these when people need a place like St. Luke's.

To a people who could see only the ruins of a once great nation in front of them, God speaks through the prophet Isaiah and says, "I am about to create a new heavens and a new earth..."

That Kingdom is coming. Glimmers of that kingdom are already here.

On Monday morning I attended a Veterans Day celebration with veterans and the kids and teachers of Springs school. The students sang, gave cards, and thanked the veterans who were there. It was led by Joan Branche - a teacher who has done this for 28 years in a row - who told her own story and filled the room with enthusiasm and joy. On Monday afternoon I received an urgent request for help from OLA. I sent out texts to members of our outreach team. Within just a few minutes heard from two parishioners willing to help. The OLA people were amazed at the speed of the response. It didn't surprise me. In the past two weeks, we were looking for leaders to take on the organization of both the angel tree and coffee hour. Before I turned around people

stepped up there as well. Thursday of this week, I learned that a St. Luke's parishioner had worked with a foundation to deliver 15000 meals made by the former Chef from the Waldorf Astoria to Rural and Migrant Ministries - whose executive director preached two weeks ago. I first saw the notice on social media and the number was so high I thought it was fake. It wasn't. I saw Richard Witt at Diocesan Convention this weekend who confirmed the whole thing, said the food had already been distributed and was blown away by the whole thing. You might think of

diocesan conventions as rather boring adult sort of things. More than 50 kids attended this weekend's diocesan convention. They didn't just sit there. During a Friday service, the youth led healing teams where people who wanted could go for prayer. I went up and had an 11 year old girl with a mouth full of braces hold my hand and pray for my step mother who is going through a difficult time, using her name and mine. (The priest with her let her do the whole thing.) I came back in tears. On Saturday next morning I joined a gospel choir, where after a rehearsal, the director told us to put down our music, feel the spirit and sing. We vamped. Soloists soared over the top. Bass guitar, drums and a Hammond organ took off and the whole place was filled with joy. At convention, we welcomed new congregations at Sunnyside and Saltaire, heard about new beginnings in Riverhead. saw amazing videos of churches doing amazing kinds of outreach, youth having fun at diocesan summer camp and more. In all this, you were represented

by Brian Craig, Georgiana Mellgard, Caroline Dean, Dan Mason, and clergy and friends from nearby deanery congregations. God is at work at St Luke's. God is at work across Long Island as well. We can do amazing things if we work together.

This is the theme of our reading from Thessalonians. For Paul participation is paramount. As he wrote the Thessalonian Church, "Anyone unwilling to work should not eat." Paul isn't talking about social programs; he's talking about the mission of the church. He's talking about what it means to be in community and be part of the body of Christ. We can do great things but we need

everyone's help to make that happen. God has already given us all we need to succeed. We just need to move it from our wallets to the offering plate, from our portfolios to our pledge cards. If you are part of the 101 people who have responded, let me say thank you. If you are part of the almost 200 who received a mailing but have not yet turned your cards in, I encourage you to do so soon. I know that we live in uncertain times. If you are struggling and can only pledge a little, that's fine. We understand. If you are doing well and can pledge more to make up for those who can't, that's appreciated too. Different people can do different things at different times in their lives. If everyone who gave last year gives again this year, we will get close to our goal. If we have a few new members added in, we will reach it. If everyone who calls St Luke's home sends in a pledge, anything and everything is possible. It's the middle of November and we have reached about half of our stewardship goal. Here's a challenge. Let's wrap it up before December is done, I know that there are summer people we won't hear from until the Spring. Two quick points about that: First, the rest of us do not need to wait for them to respond ourselves. Second, there is this thing called the internet. You can not only watch our services from anywhere. On-line folks can pledge from anywhere! Participation is paramount. It is part what it means to be a member. It is part of owning your faith and making it real. Besides all that, think what a Christmas present it would be to have the 2026 stewardship campaign over before the beginning of the year it is meant to support!

To a people who felt like the world was falling apart around them, Isaiah proclaimed that God was doing a new thing. My friends, God is doing a new thing both in St Luke's and the Diocese of Long Island. God also wants to do a new thing in you.