



## 2 | LAMENTATIONS 3

### NEW MERCIES FOR A NEW YEAR

*God's love and grace empower the Christian for every new endeavor*

#### Outline

With new mercies we enjoy...

1. **A RENEWED PERSPECTIVE OF CHRIST** (3:1-21)  
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*The Situation (3:1-21)*  
*Examples of Ahaz and Manasseh*  
Whatever Life Brings will Enhance our Focus on Christ (3:21)  
Whatever Life Brings will Exhibit God's Work in You (3:22a)
2. **RENEWED POWER WITH GOD** (3:22-23)  
Whatever Life Brings will Turn Us to Fresh Empowerment (3:22b-23)  
Whatever Life Brings will Equip us to Testify of God's Faithfulness (3:23b)
3. **A RENEWED PASSION FOR CHRIST** (3:24)  
Whatever Life Brings will Elevate Your Longing for Christ

**Call to Worship**, Lamentations 3:20

His mercies are new.

#### Songs

Behold Our God  
Yet Not I But Through Christ In Me  
I Will Call Upon the Lord  
When Christ Our Life Appears  
Jesus Thank You  
Great is Thy Faithfulness

## Announcements

1. **Welcome Visitors**
2. **ANNUAL PLANNING MEETING:** All ministry leaders, elders, and deacons mark your calendars for our Annual Planning Meeting on Saturday, January 11 from 9am-noon (lunch will be provided).

### *Introduction*

Our message today is from Lamentations 3 on page 688 of your pew Bible. The title of our message today is “New Mercies for a New Year”.

God’s mercies are new this year. In fact, God says they are new “every morning.” No matter how bad yesterday was, God’s love and mercy is renewed to you every new morning. There will be many troubles and trials this year, just like last year. But has God forsaken us? No, in fact, God uses suffering to conform us to the image of Christ. We are going to see today, that no matter what 2020 brings us, from the most glorious blessings, to the deepest sorrow, God’s mercies are all we need. His mercies are new for this new year!

With new mercies, we enjoy and remember... identity

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## 1. A RENEWED PERSPECTIVE OF CHRIST (3:1-21)

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Sometimes life is so disorienting, we forget who we are in Christ. Our position in Christ can never change. Remember Jesus’ words:

I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup> My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. <sup>30</sup> I and the Father are one” (Jn 10:28-30).

### **WHATEVER LIFE BRINGS WILL EXPOSE WHO YOU REALLY ARE (3:1-21)**

One of the mercies of God is that when troubles come, is that what’s inside of us comes out. Troubles and trials reveal what is inside us. Like the tea bag in hot water, whatever is on the inside comes out in trials and difficulties.

### *The Situation (3:1-21)*

The first 20 verses of this poem describe the intensity of the prophet Jeremiah’s pain. His grief is so great that he is physically ill and has physical pain. “**He has made my flesh and my skin waste away; he has broken my bones**” (3:4). Now his flesh was not falling off of him nor were his bones literally broken but he is using imagery to describe the physical

anguish he feels for the pain he is in. Broken bones picture a loss of hope in the future. In the Old Testament the bones of the righteous are not broken which means they have hope in the future of what God will do (cf Psa 34:20, Isa 38:13).

Further, Jeremiah (the likely author) is swallowed up in bitterness (3:5). He feels walled in, chained down, and blocked off (3:7-8). God has shot arrows through his body, even into his bowels, crushing his emotions (3:10-13). His pain is so great that he says,

3:17 | I have forgotten what happiness is...

Have you been there? Have you felt like you've forgotten what happiness is? Maybe your 2019 year was like that. The most painful statement for this section is in verse 18.

3:18 | So I say, "My endurance has perished; so has my hope from the Lord."

Has life made you feel this way? If you have been alive long enough, I think you are able to admit that you have felt this way. We have been through such turmoil that our grief and sorrow have destroyed us from within. We have forgotten what happiness is. We are so surrounded by the darkness that there seems no hope for the future. Therefore, our strength and endurance have perished, and with that strength waning away, so has our hope.

We see that Jeremiah turns to God in one of the most encouraging passages of Scripture in the Bible. He's going through a trial that he did not bring upon himself. It was the nation. He feels it. But **he doesn't stay there**. He says, no matter what he sees or feels, he turns his hope and trust to God.

3:21-22 | But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: <sup>22</sup>The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end;

### *Examples of Ahaz and Manasseh*

Two Israelite kings demonstrated this striking contrast when they both faced the threat of military annihilation. In 2 Chronicles 28:22 we read,

In his time of trouble King Ahaz became even more unfaithful to the LORD (2 Chron 28:22).

Yet in 2 Chronicles 33:12 we read a different response from King Manasseh:

In his distress he sought the favor of the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his ancestors (2 Chron 33:12).

For Ahaz, his hardship became an occasion for greater ungodliness; he turned away from God. For Manasseh, his similar trial became an occasion for repentance; he turned to God.

You can see God's love at work in your life when, instead of turning away from God in trouble, you turn toward him for help.

## IDENTITY

Difficulties don't doom us; they invite us to come to our Lord and remember who we are. **You are a child of the King!** Discover for yourself the truth of John Newton's words,

Though I am not what I ought to be; and I am not what I wish to be; and I am not what I one day will be, I can truly say, I am not what I once was. And I can heartily join with the apostle, and acknowledge, "By the grace of God I am what I am." - John Newton

Jeremiah says, in spite of the trial or anything life brings, I know I am a child of God's mercy. I know who I am. His faithfulness is great. His mercies never cease.

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light (1 Pet 2:9).

Don't let the devil tell you who you are. Be like Jeremiah. He says: **I've forgotten what happiness is, but I haven't forgotten who God is!** And I haven't forgotten who I am because of my merciful God.

### WHATEVER LIFE BRINGS WILL ENHANCE YOUR FOCUS ON CHRIST (3:21)

Jeremiah places his focus on God, and that's his secret to hope. He doesn't let his heart lead him, but he lets the Word of God lead him.

3:21 | But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:

While times of trial can certainly tempt us to turn away from God, the Lord's invitation to come near to him can also become more precious and appealing. We often become more God-conscious in the face of trouble, and we frequently seek his face with greater fervency. Perhaps you have already noticed this at work in your life. **Before trouble showed up, maybe you were coasting a bit in your Christian life, but now you see your need for God and you are turning to him every day for help, for faith, for comfort, for strength.** But perhaps you have seen the opposite dynamic at work as well. You have responded to trouble with discouragement and unbelief. Our troubles can either push us away from God or push us toward him.

The Christian focuses on God's Word day and night.

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; 2 but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night (Psa 1:1-2).

We don't trust our lying hearts, but only the God who tells the truth.

Psalm 119:11, "I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

### **WHATEVER LIFE BRINGS WILL EXHIBIT GOD'S WORK IN YOU (3:22A)**

How can trouble work for my good? It's wrapped up in the promise of Lamentations 3:22.

**3:22a** | The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases...

The steadfast love of God is upon you because of Jesus Christ. This is the Hebrew word *hesed*. It's God's covenant to never give up on you. He's for you.

"If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom 8:31).

No matter what, because you are in Christ, God is for you. Jesus Christ made it possible.

The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, And He delights in his way. 24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the Lord upholds him with His hand. (Psa 37:23-24).

He's got you. I've never been bungee jumping, but people have courage in a bungee jump because the cord is strong. How strong is our God?

God's working on you. Michael Angelo used a chisel when he created his masterpieces of marble. God uses trials and difficulties to work on you.

We know that for those who love God all things work together for good,[h] for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son (Rom 8:28-29).

God's new mercies mean we enjoy...

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## **2. A RENEWED POWER WITH GOD (3:22-23)**

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### **WHATEVER LIFE BRINGS WILL TURN US TO FRESH EMPOWERMENT (3:22B-23)**

Every joy or trial comes from above. When we feel weak, God is there for us, ready to give us fresh empowerment. Aren't you glad that...

**3:22b-23a** | his mercies never come to an end; <sup>23</sup> they are new every morning...

In Christ, the steadfast love of God for you will never cease. Never. His mercies will never come to an end. Never. They will be new every morning, and he will be faithful to bring them to you. If God is your greatest treasure, if God is the thing you love most, your portion, then you can hope in him with these unbreakable (almost unbelievable) promises.

Yesterday's power is not sufficient for this hour.

You have no power in yourself. You can't find it by psyching yourself out. You can't do it with human power. Well then where do we get this power? Where do we get these fresh mercies?

They who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint (Isa 40:31).

Paul tells us that God's new mercies often come when we feel the weakest and most crushed.

So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. 9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong (2 Cor 12:7-10).

### **WHATEVER LIFE BRINGS WILL EQUIP US TO TESTIFY OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS (3:23B)**

If you are going through a deep trial, who would you want to go to? Isn't it encouraging when you can find someone who has gone through a similar trial? You would want to find someone who was seasoned in God's Word and knows how to apply it. Someone who like Jeremiah can say:

**3:23b** | ... great is your faithfulness.

Every time trouble comes for the Christian, we can shout, "Great is your faithfulness!" His mercies never end. His faithfulness is great. Every trial equips us in knowing God more and growing closer to him.

When you suffer, you are able to testify that God is faithful. He never changes. His love never stops. He's there for you. You are getting equipped during the trial. Trials bring us on the job training to help others.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God (2 Cor 1:3-4).

It's one thing to know theology, but trials insist that we know God personally. We can testify that his Word is true. He says, "I will never leave you or forsake you."

Trials and troubles equip us to help others. You may be going through a time where you have a prodigal son or daughter. Your child is astray. You've raised them in the faith, but they've chosen a different way. Who are you going to go to for counsel? You're going to find so many who have seen their prodigal come home! They've waited and prayed and

they can stand with you today and say, “God’s faithfulness is great and his mercies never end.”

There are married people in this room who at one time were thinking about divorce. But you can say, “God saved our marriage.” If you are struggling with your marriage, you must never try to do it alone. You have to go find another couple who’s been through it. Get some help. There have been many in our congregation today that have been through the fiery furnace and can say that there is an additional man in there with you, and his name is Jesus.

Trials equip us for ministry. Now if you’ve gone through some really difficult times, or are going through some difficult times, you need to let someone minister to you, and then you need to get busy helping and encouraging others.

God’s new mercies mean we enjoy...

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### 3. A RENEWED **PASSION** FOR CHRIST (3:24)

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#### WHATEVER LIFE BRINGS WILL **ELEVATE** YOUR LONGING FOR CHRIST

Living in a fallen world need not lead us to despair. It can stir us instead to long for something better.

You might at times think you need a spouse if your single. You may think you need a perfect marriage, if you are married. You may think you need the right job, or more perfect children. But the truth is you are complete in Christ.

**3:24** | “The Lord is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him.”

In Christ you have all you need. Remember the Shepherd’s Psalm – Psalm 23?

“The **LORD** is my shepherd; I shall not want” (Psa 23).

The idea is “I have need of nothing. I am completely satisfied.” Ephesians tells us that in Christ you have “every spiritual blessing” (Eph 1:3).

The Lord is not just a portion generically, but the author of Lamentations recognizes that the Lord is his portion. On the other side of the cross, we know better than anyone in history that the gospel purchases this portion for us: eternity with full joy in the presence of God (Psa 16:11).

The more failings you have, you will see your need for Christ. We know that. That’s obvious. But you know what? The more successes, you will see your need for Christ. The highest successes are letdowns once you know Christ.

Solomon said, “I’ve tasted it all, done it all, experienced it all, and compared to the knowing the Lord, it’s all vanity.”

Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; all is vanity (Eccl 12:8).

It’s all vanity unless you understand your duty and purpose is to fear God (have faith in God) and follow him in faithful obedience (Eccl 12:13).

Paul said, “I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” (Phil 3:8).

He says, I count everything as dung, rubbish, garbage and loss compared to knowing Christ.

In other words, the more you taste of life, its successes and let downs, the more you will long for Christ.

### ***Conclusion***

Dear saint, your friends will let you down. Your family will sometimes not be there for you. Even the best Christians will stumble and fall. But God has a perfect reputation. His steadfast love never ceases. His mercies never come to an end. Truly we can say: **Great is Thy faithfulness.** We have infinite new mercies for an incredible new year. Whatever happens this year for you, know that God has promised in his mercy to use all things in life to conform you into the image of Christ.

### **WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT YEAR?**

How many of you remember the Y2K bug? A lot of people thought the world was going to end when we turned from 1999 to 2000. But you know what? Nothing happened.

Now I don't know what's going to happen next year, but I do know this. God's mercies will never cease. His unrelenting love for you will never come to an end.

His mercies are new every morning.

Let's shout it out together saints: “Great is Thy Faithfulness!”