

MORNING MERCIES

"They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness." Lamentations 3:23.

This text is the song of a skylark above a battlefield; a very bright thought lying across this dark book like an April ray upon a retiring cloud; a ray of light shot into the dungeon of despair. It is not surprising that few people read the Lamentations of Jeremiah. They are shot thru with the note of pessimism. Nowhere else in literature will you find a more despondent dirge. The book begins with a moan, and it ends with a sigh, while rivers of tears run through its chapters. And yet, right in the midst of these wailings we hear the prophet exclaim: "His compassions fail not; they are new every morning, great is thy faithfulness." It is almost startling to find this tender and inspiring utterance embedded in the very heart of a book of lamentations. It is not what we would expect.

In his wonderful vision of the new Jerusalem, John discovered that the city had twelve gates, that each gate was a pearl, and that every gate led to the throne of God. Blessed indeed are those who can find the merciful Father through the gate of pain and disappointment; who can sing the lark's song above the field where sin and hate hold high carnival. It is easy enough to believe in a merciful God when Jerusalem sits as a queen among the cities of the earth; when her citizens are as princes among the people, and the fire of devotion burns upon her altar. But it is another thing, and a greater thing, to believe in a merciful Father when Jerusalem is trodden down by strangers, her altar desecrated, and her sons carried into captivity. Our experiences differ, but in all of them we ought to be able to say, "His mercies are new every morning."

I. The Reality Of His Mercies.

Among all the attributes of Deity there is none more beautiful than mercy. Mercy is love in action. It is love binding up a wound, drying a tear-stained face, welcoming home a wanderer. Mercy is love forgiving the one who has crowned her with thorns, and praying for those who nail her to a cross. Of this mercy, Jeremiah says: "It is new every morning."

Man's whole life, physical, mental, and spiritual, is sustained by the mercy of the Lord. It is of His mercy that we are not consumed: --

1. Physically.

Consider the waste constantly going on. Set against this the powers of digestion and assimilation and the constant supply of food.

2. Mentally.

Consider the wear and tear of the brain, the continual development of thought, and the daily anxiety of mind.

3. Spiritually.

Consider our sins, our daily provocations, our constant obduracy of heart. Why does He withhold the stroke of righteous vengeance? It is because of His mercy.

The source of His mercies is in His compassions. His mercies are the streams of which His compassions are the source. His compassions are in the essential goodness of our God, prompting Him to manifest His mercies in a way consistent with His glorious perfections. Because of His compassion for guilty sinners, He sent His Son to take man's nature, to become man's substitute, to be his surety, to suffer -- the Just for the unjust --, that He might bring us to God.

Various qualities characterize His mercies: --

1. Promptness.

It is not something that comes late, after we have been tortured with regrets and haunted with fears. It meets us on the threshold of life, and greets us at the dawn of each day. We may drift away from many things as we go through life, but we will never get away from the mercy of God.

2. Variety.

"New every morning" suggests that they are as varied as our days. We are changing beings living in a changing world, and, therefore, each new day needs its new forms of mercies. What I needed as a boy differs from what I need as a man; what I need when I am sick differs from what I need when I am well; what the man of wealth needs as he faces the day will differ from the needs of the toiler as he struggles for bread; the need of the mother as she bends over the casket in which is laid the body of her babe, will differ from the needs of the mother as she holds her babe to her bosom. This is what God meant when He said, "As thy day, so shall thy strength be."

Of all the millions of men and women and children who will awake tomorrow morning, no two will have exactly the same needs, and not one will fail to find the mercy that is necessary for the day. Just for a moment, think of the countless billions of fishes in the sea, beasts in the field, worms in the soil, and birds in the air, and yet this day our Father is providing needed things for each of them. And the same mind that thinks of them is the mind that is thinking of you and me. We are continually fretting ourselves with such questions as, What will I do if this or that should happen? Of course we do not know, but our Father does, and when that new and dreaded experience arrives, if it ever does arrive, He will be there with a new and adequate mercy to meet it.

3. Adequacy.

We do not know now what our needs may be by and by, but we are assured that they will be adequately met. We are surely in the path of discouragement, and on the highway to despair, if we are leaving the mercy of God out of our calculations. There is no limit to the newness of God's mercies. To the uttermost eternity our Father's blessings will break over us in new and unexpected waves of delight. Things from which we shrink today, and pray to be delivered, will by and by bring to us our fullest and sweetest joys.

4. Perpetuity.

"They are new every morning." No two mornings are just alike. We have our mornings of joy and our mornings of sorrow. There are mornings when we awake with a sense of fellowship and freedom with God. We can see His hand parting the curtains of darkness, and flooding the world with light and beauty. We hear His praise in the songs of the birds, and feel His Spirit dwelling in our hearts. We are in harmony with all about us, and want to sing as we take up the duties of the day. And then there are mornings when we awake with a sense of depression and discouragement. Things have gone wrong both without and within. We hear no music in the robin's song, and see no glory in the dewdrop on the rose. We are discontented with ourselves and with every one else. Physical weakness and mental depression make us wish that we could run away from our duties and hide from our associates. What we need to realize is that the same hand that sent the sunshine has sent the cloud, and that we need them both in the development of our lives.

One has to go deep in sin before he can obliterate the love of father and mother, but he can never go deep enough in sin to obliterate the love of God. With Him no names are blacklisted. Only those are outcasts who have chosen that condition for themselves.

God's mercies never cease, even though we do much to provoke the cessation of them. They often change their form and sometimes appear to cease, but they never do. "They are new every morning" -- unfailing as the morning dawn, bright and joyous as the morning sunshine, brilliant and sparkling as the morning dew, sweet and invigorating as the morning air. Every morning, that is, just as soon as, or even before, we begin to need them. The supply is ever ahead of our daily needs. We

receive our salvation, guidance and defence, not because of our merit or works, but of His free love. If it were of our own work, we would have to wait for the nightfall before we could receive any recompense. Wages are paid at sunset. But it is all His gift. So the mercy in which we rejoice comes to us with the dawn, before we have done a solitary stroke of work.

II. The Response To His Mercies.

1. The wrong response.

- (1) Ungratefully accepting them.
- (2) Complainingly ignoring them.
- (3) Sinfully abusing them.

2. The right response.

- (1) Receive them as mercies.

We generally find in our package the thing that we are seeking. If sickness or loss or disappointment comes to us, instead of asking, What evil have I done that I should thus be afflicted? We ought to say, What new mercy is wrapped up for me in this parcel? God often conceals His richest mercies in the things from which we recoil, such as sore trials and frequent disappointments.

- (2) Cultivate the spirit of thankfulness for whatever is sent.

"In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known unto God." Most of us are so occupied with murmuring that we have no time for thanksgiving. We protest when the rain disarranges our plans, when we should thank God for the showers that water the fields. We forget the beauty and the fragrance of the rose because a thorn has pricked our fingers. We are so mournful over the loss of material things that we forget the health and the friendships that are ours. A hymn calls upon us to count our mercies, but we are so busy in adding up our adversities that we have little time for anything else. If instead of wasting our time in grieving over the spots on the sun we would spend our time basking in its light and warmth, it would change much of our gloom into gladness.

- (3) Cultivate the grace of patience.

Time is a great factor in the working out of God's plans. Jesus uttered a great truth when He said to His disciples, "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy." That means that the thing over which you are now grieving is the thing that you will sing over in the days to come. On the first Good Friday, the Cross looked to the disciples as the supreme loss, but on Easter morning they discovered that it was infinite gain.

- (4) Add something to His mercies.

This will enable us to find their chief value. If God is to give us wheat, we must prepare the soil and scatter the seed. If God gives us the wheat, we must make it into flour and bread. It is when in the fullest sense we become laborers with God that we find His mercies new every morning. There is a rainbow in every cloud, but only those who are on the sunward side can see it. When our eyes are fixed on the Father of mercies, they will see His goodness every morning.