

Lamentations 3:22-33
July 1 2018 – 6th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Every Morning Mercies New

- ✦ My portion ~ God's faithfulness (vv.22-24)
- ✦ Wait for the LORD (vv.25-33)

In the Name of Jesus our merciful Savior, dearly redeemed children of the heavenly Father:

Today we're one month away from the eleventh anniversary of one of the worst disasters in Minnesota history. If you were driving on I-35W during rush hour on August 1, 2007, you were in mortal danger. The third busiest bridge in Minnesota, daily carrying 140,000 vehicles over the Mississippi River into Minneapolis, was loaded with heavy equipment and gravel for road repairs. Unfortunately, the thin gusset plates were about to give way.¹ Now imagine you see several cars ahead of you disappear over the edge. How quickly do you slam on the brakes? Wouldn't you thank the Lord if you were late, stopping just in time? ***"My times are in your hands."*** (Psalm 31:15) Thirteen people died; 145 injured. But in the spiritual realm, countless thousands miss the one bridge that leads from death to life. Reading the Bible is like seeing where traffic is headed. God's Word helps us stop in time to avoid a deadly accident. God calms us down with peace to our soul not once or twice, but **Every Morning Mercies New**. Look at this!

✦ My portion ~ God's faithfulness (vv.22-24)

In a way the book of Lamentations is like an engineer's report on the Mississippi River bridge collapse. Tragically, Jeremiah the prophet has seen thousands of people die. Corpses are still decaying in the rubble of the once proud city of Jerusalem. He had been like someone standing on the shoulder of 35W that day, waving and shouting at cars to stop – only they all kept going! God had told Jeremiah to warn the people, but they would not listen. Just as promised, God's temple was destroyed, the city ruined, the people with their king in captivity. Jeremiah could not gloat, "I told you so." He wept. He lamented.

Maybe you remember reading in *Meditations* this past week about a boy who wrote a letter to his pastor. "I feel terrible, icky feelings...extremely morbid thoughts, as if the devil's voice is in my head saying, 'Commit suicide to see what really happens when you die.'" The young man was terribly troubled because his mother was dying of a dreadful disease. He was being bullied at school. He was crying out for help.² The Fifth Commandment warns, "You shall not murder." But how can you feel better?

Over lunch his pastor could share Bible stories like these to see what really happens when people disobey God. If God could punish His own people of Israel for rebelling against Him, what about America? God warns us to stop before we go over the edge and suffer God's wrath. But God always lifts us up right in the middle of our saddest stories. It's like Job crying out from the depths of despair, ***"I know that my Redeemer lives!"*** (Job 19:25-27) Now every Easter we sing loudly, "I Know That My Redeemer Lives." Likewise Jeremiah in his saddest Lamentation speaks encouraging words: ***"By the mercies of the LORD we are not consumed, for his compassions do not fail. ²³They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness. ²⁴My soul says, 'The LORD is my portion. Therefore, I will hope in him. ²⁵The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him."*** (EHV³)

God always keeps His promises. That includes His promise to never leave you and always help you in time of need. **God's faithfulness** is a great blessing all by itself. It is **My portion** from God when

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I-35W_Mississippi_River_bridge

² "A Message from the Hand of God," My Life in His Hands. *Meditations*, Wednesday, June 27, 2018. (NPH 800-662-6022)

³ EHV ~ *Evangelical Heritage Version*, the Wartburg Project. Northwestern Pub. House, © 2017. Order: 800-662-6022.

He adopted me into His family by Baptism. Now through Baptism every blessing of God belongs to you, even this spectacular one you could not imagine. Ask yourself, “Why would Jesus leave the happiness and bliss of heaven to come and suffer for me?” Here’s a clue from Isaiah: “***After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.***” (53:11 NIV84) We remember Christ’s suffering, but maybe forget about His deep satisfaction in victory for us sinners. Rejoice that by Jesus’ death and resurrection, we became His *portion* (53:12), His *inheritance* (Psalm 82:8; 106:5) promised by God to Jesus as the Servant of the LORD, our Savior. Because of **God’s faithfulness** you are Jesus’ inheritance, bought by His own shed blood. It’s like one of our hymns: “Since I am his and he is mine, what can I want beside?”

Hopefully, you believe all this, but maybe you’re going through a really rough patch right now. Or you have a loved one you’re worried about. That brings us to a tough assignment – key for success:

✦ **Wait for the LORD (vv.25-33)**

Is it a dream or a movie where a car plunges into a river and starts to sink? All seems “slo-mo” as you cry, “No-o-o-o!” Your legs feel stuck in cement. Wake up and your heart is pounding. It’s a good time to thank God again, “That never happened.” Thank God for teaching you to **Wait for the LORD**.

You can wait patiently even if you’re Jeremiah walking around the ruins of your shattered city. The Holy Spirit shines the light of God’s Word into the darkest days: “***The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him.*** ²⁶***It is good to hope quietly for the salvation of the LORD.*** ^[L¹27] ***It is good for a man that he bears a yoke early in his life.***” This may sound strange, but it’s a great blessing to go through trials when you’re still young. ^[SEP] You get to see early in life how the LORD always comes through and turns tragedy into blessing. Remember teenager Joseph, sold into slavery by his brothers? He suffered captivity and prison for about twenty years. But then God made him prime minister of Egypt to save the people of the promise so Jesus could be born our Savior. Joseph forgave his brothers and reassured them: “***You intended to harm me, but God meant it for good to work out what is today, the saving of many lives.***” (Genesis 50:20 TPA) When you “***hope quietly for the salvation of the LORD,***” you finally get to see how “***God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called in accordance with his purpose.***” ⁴ You can see God’s goodness best in the darkest of times.

When you learn to **Wait for the LORD**, you confess how we are all beggars before God. *Silence* replaces complaints. *Disgrace* for the Lord’s reputation becomes bearable, even a joy. Face down in the dust you still have hope. “***For men are not cast off by the Lord forever. Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love. For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men.***” (3:31–33 NIV84) This too shall pass. And when it does, God’s sun will shine again.

This I find most comforting: God “***does not willingly bring affliction or grief***” to us. Yet God also knows that “***we must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.***” (Acts 14:22 NIV84) We are not meant to stay in this vale of tears. We are just passing *through*, following Jesus from grace to glory at home with God. Jesus our Redeemer still *bears* our griefs and *carries* our sorrows as one would *lift up* a dying child and carry him close to his heart. “First responders” and heroic soldiers scoop up little ones in their arms, risking life and limb to hold them safely – and this for strangers. Jesus is doubly determined to save God’s family from heartache and trouble here, and eternal torment on the other side. Since Jesus won the victory by His death and resurrection, He will not set us down until He has *born* us safely home to heaven. God keeps working in this time of grace to bring us to God’s glory.

God’s Word comforted the teenage boy. “I will miss my mom when she passes away,” he said to his pastor. “But I know she will be much happier in heaven.” Now he could see it – the warning and the

⁴ Stern, D. H. (1998). *Complete Jewish Bible* (1st ed., Ro 8:28). Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications.
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comfort. For you too! **Every Morning Mercies New.** Amen.