

New Beginnings Lamentations 3:22-24; Revelations 21:5-7

To say that is the beginning of a new year can be a bit confusing. Yes, it is the start of a new school year having just come off summer vacation time, and we think of September as the beginning of a new church year. In the Southern hemisphere, February is considered the beginning of a new year with the re-starting of the school year. Financially speaking, various companies choose a various months as the beginning of their fiscal year.

Sometimes people change their routine in September....they join new groups, take on new activities.....partly because of the change in season, but also because there are new opportunities and a shift in priorities.

What I am wondering today is, how can this season be an opportunity for you to begin anew in your spiritual life, your walk with God? Can this be a time of new beginnings for you, in any way, big or small?

Each one of us began the journey somewhere. Perhaps it was the nurturing of parents, or a friend, or a particular event in your life. Somehow, each of us had a beginning. But that journey for each one of us, that spiritual adventure, is never a straight line in an upward direction. There are upturns, downturns, and plateaus. For some there is a departure from the journey.....for some that departure seems to be permanent, for others temporary and there is a return to a spiritual quest.

I invite you to consider, wherever you might be on your spiritual path, to consider how you might have a new beginning, to add to your current spirituality.

Let's start by going to our rock, our foundation, God's word to His people. The Book of Jeremiah is found in the Old Testament, immediately following the Book of Isaiah, and right before Lamentations. Jeremiah and Isaiah were both prophets – God's spokesmen. Jeremiah wrote the Book of Jeremiah and the Book of Lamentations.

Jeremiah was known as the weeping prophet. He saw what was going on all around him and he wept.

The Book of Jeremiah is about the prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem. The Book of Lamentations looks back on that destruction. It is considered to be a dirge, a funeral song, written for the fallen city.

Jeremiah loved God. He also loved God's people and God's nation. He was a man of great depth and not afraid to express his emotions. His tears were for the selfish and sinful people who would bring upon themselves much suffering and ultimately exile. In chapter 2 verse 11 in regard to the destruction of Jerusalem, Jeremiah writes, "My eyes are spent with weeping; my stomach churns; my bile is poured out on the ground because of the destruction of my people, because infants and babes faint in the streets of the city". Jeremiah's heart was broken with those things that break God's heart.

In chapter 3 he says, "He has made my teeth grind on gravel, and made me cower in ashes; my soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten what happiness is: so I say, "Gone is my glory, and all that I had hoped for from the Lord. The thoughts of my affliction and my homelessness is wormwood and gall. My soul continually thinks of it and is bowed down within me." Jeremiah is overcome with sadness. Perhaps in your life you have felt something akin to that. Abandonment. Fear. Great sadness or discouragement. Bereft of love. But then we see that even in his pain and despair, a light still burns within Jeremiah. He goes on, "But this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: **The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases – his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, therefore I will hope in him.**" New beginnings....even in the face of despair and destruction. Knowing, even in his despair and desolation, that the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases – never losing hope in the Lord when everything around him said otherwise. A time for new beginnings for Jeremiah....the mercies of the Lord never come to an end, they are new every morning....even if that new beginning was tentative....even if that new beginning meant just hanging on to hope.

As we begin this new year together, how are you feeling? Are you hopeful, or are you downcast? Remember these words - God's love – never ceases. His mercies are new every

morning! Wake up giving thanks for that? A God who's love knows no limits! The light still burns.

Revelations 21 is the final scene in the Bible. John, the writer of this book, refers to Isaiah's words, a new heaven and a new earth. God will create these after this present heaven and earth pass away. In Corinthians, trying to explain to the people of Corinth what happens when a person dies, Paul talks about a transformation....like a seed to a flower, from the mortal to the immortal, from the perishable to the imperishable, from the physical to the spiritual. In the Chronicles of Narnia, C.S. Lewis talks about the door being closed on the old Narnia as the new Narnia opens up.

“And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” Scholars suggest that the new Jerusalem is not a picture of our future home. It is a picture of our future selves. It is the church.

“See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God, they will be his people and God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.....See I am making all things new....I am the Alpha and the Omega. I will be their God and they will be my people.” New beginnings! God present with his people, at all times, through all circumstances.

You know when you are learning something and the teacher says this is important, you might want to write this down, John says, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

We are all prone to doubt and get frightened at various times during our lifetime. It would serve us well to write these words down, and keep them close to our hearts, “....I am making all things new, I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, I am your God and you are my children....write these words down for they are trustworthy and true.”

Think about what God is telling us here....He is with us always. He is the beginning and then end. We are his children. We can trust him.

In the final half of verse 6 John writes, "To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life." We have heard this promise of eternal life in Isaiah chapter 55, "Come everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and the one who has no money, come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Perhaps you are reminded also of Jesus and the woman at the well and his gift to her of Living Water....thirsty no more!

So how can God offer something as valuable as the water of life without payment....because he is the God who covers it all....he has covered the cost by covering us with the blood of the lamb....the blood which John refers to frequently throughout the book of Revelation. God so loved us that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

Notice how the passage ends. The God who creates, the God who comes, the God who comforts, the God who completes and covers us, is still, the God who calls us. God tries in so many ways to get our attention...to begin anew with Him, every day of our lives.,

His mercies are new every morning. His word is trustworthy and true. Whatever new beginnings you might be willing to consider, be assured that you are not alone....never alone....God goes with you. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. Amen

