

New **Every** **Morning**

“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,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him.”

—Lamentations 3:22–24 (NRSV)

When I lived in Puerto Rico, I had no notion about seasonal changes that were not associated with rain: It rained more or less, depending on the time of year. Nevertheless, there was something that always caught my eye. In all the greenery that surrounded us, weeds or grass always grew in the most unexpected places. The one place that always jumped out the most to me was the crevices of the sidewalks. There was no fertile soil there, just a little bit of dirt. That did not stop the seeds from taking hold and growing. Nature has a knack for fighting and for growing anew in places where life can seem difficult. This has always amazed me.

When I moved to the United States, I experienced my first fall, my first winter, and my first spring. Winter was (and is) too long. Everything seems to die. All goes gray,

and trees and flowers look sad, as if they are never going to be able to rise up again. To someone that is used to seeing green all year long, winter is a death-like experience. When is this going to end? How are the trees and flowers going to survive the film of ice that sometimes covers them? The wait is agonizing. Some flowers die, even if you try to protect them, and some trees dry up. Then spring suddenly arrives and the battle for life and newness begins.

I noticed during my first spring in the United States that the flowers appear before the leaves; I had always thought that the leaves would come out first. But the flower, the most delicate part of the plant, blossoms and fights with freezing rain and low temperatures to make sure that the plant is going to survive. It grows with a strength, an urgency and a fierceness that amazes me. Grass grows quickly and demands to be trimmed regularly. Everything grows with an intensity that celebrates life and newness with every breath. I know that people here in the States are probably used to it, but to me it's a literal and constant reminder of how the Creator's love and mercy are new each morning.

Lamentations 3:22–24 states: The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, God's mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. “The LORD is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him.” I often remember this verse, but I did not remember where it was in the Bible. I was surprised to find it in Lamentations. Isn't this book supposed to be a collection of laments of a prophet who mourns over the desolation of his city? The original title of the book in Hebrew may be translated as “O how”¹—as in





hope springs to life, even in shallow sidewalk crevices and even after the cruelest of winters. God's love and mercy are everlasting!

Even when nature is wounded, it keeps fighting back. I have lived through two hurricanes and I have seen the destruction of trees and houses. Somehow the trees and the houses always come back. God's faithfulness toward nature and toward us allows us to stand up and to grow with new hope and new strength. Take time this spring to look around you, to see the resurrection stories that nature gives us.

Here are some ideas for celebrating spring:

- Invite members of your congregation to go outside, look closely at the trees, the plants, and the grass, and measure how they are growing by taking pictures and displaying them in the church building as a reminder of how God's care is everlasting.
- Fill the sanctuary with potted plants to remind people that a new season has begun—a season of new beginnings.
- Explore seasons in different states and different countries. Church members can share what they like about spring in the part of the U.S.A. or in the countries where they grew up. Share those stories through your church bulletins or as testimonials about growth, newness, and resurrection during Sunday morning worship.
- Identify projects with Presbyterian Disaster Assistance or other mission agencies that work with people affected by natural disasters, and work with them to bring hope.
- Plant a communal flower or vegetable garden on your church grounds so that you can share the goodness and newness of God's creation with others.
- Be intentional in looking at God's nature, sing a song of alleluia, and be reminded how, through all lamentation and sorrow, God's love and mercy are new each day.

Note

1. The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1982), p. 61.

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"How lonely sits the city that once was full of people!" (Lamentations 1:1). This word often precedes our own lamentations: "How is this possible? How could have this happened? How could you do this?" But somehow, hope always finds a way through, and the prophet has to acknowledge that God's love and mercy break through the sadness, the tears, and the death-like state of an empty city. They are new every morning. They fight intentionally through the darkness and the fear because God's faithfulness is great. The Lord is our portion and our strength, even in the worst of circumstances. Therefore,