New Mercies Lamentations 3:1-24 December 28th, 2025

(3:1-20)

When God seems to be your ______

2.		to mind His new morning mercies (3:21-24)	
3.	Applyii	ying the Word	
	a.	You can experience God'sbecause Christ experienced God's	
	b.	You cannot God's loving compassion for you.	

Questions for Discussion/Reflection on Lamentations 3:1-14

- 1. Can you think of situations in which someone might feel like God is their enemy?
- 2. List and describe the different poetic metaphors that Jeremiah uses for God in 3:1-18.
- 3. Has there ever been a time where you felt like you had "forgotten happiness" in your suffering? Why is it helpful for us to see language in the Bible that reflects even our deepest suffering?
- 4. Read Psalm 103 (all or a portion). What similarities do you see with Lamentations 3? Why do we need to be reminded of these truths about God so often?
- 5. If God's mercies are inexhaustible, why is it still helpful to think of them as fresh and new every morning?
- 6. People hope in many different things, but the things of this world never fully satisfy. What is the true source of the believer's hope (compare v. 24 with Psalm 16:5; 73:26)?

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Big idea: When God seems to be your enemy, recall to mind His new morning mercies.

Intro

Another year is almost past. This week between Christmas and New Years can feel like a blur, a rest, a letdown.

This can be a time when we look back -

Best of the year lists - best books, best movies

Spotify wrap – what music did you listen to the most last year

Time we look ahead -

What goals should we set? Lose weight, gain muscle, read more books, listen to better music, set a budget You might look back on last year with thankfulness, joy, happiness.

Or you might see a year with lots of regret, pain, hardship, and suffering. You might be entering into this New Year wondering where God is. You might wonder if He cares. He might wonder if He IS.

That probably affects how you look at the year ahead also

Excited, light hearted, hopeful, fearful, heavy, sad, hopeless

It's often our circumstances that weigh heavy on those emotions.

This morning I want to follow the same path that Jeremiah walked through in Lamentations 3 to give us hope for the New Year whatever the past year may have looked like.

The structure is unique but not obvious in English.

The chapter is an acrostic using the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Each set of three verses start with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Each verse in 1-3 starts with aleph, 4-6 starts with beth, 7-9 with gimmel, etc. So that's why it is 66 verses – 3 x 22.

Why?

Aides memorization, provides for poetic beauty, communicates completeness of thought.

"The prophet aims to provide a comprehensive theology of suffering—an A–Z, if you like, of what it means to suffer for one's sin under divine providence."

It starts with an extensive, detailed, poetic description of suffering, pivots to God's mercy, describes more suffering. God's mercy is the high point, the crescendo, the focal point for the chapter. This morning we will cover the first half of the chapter – when God seems to be your enemy, recall to mind His new morning mercies.

- 1. When God seems to be your **enemy** (3:1-20)
 - a. "I am the man who has seen affliction"
 - i. The prophet Jeremiah wrote Lamentations about the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.
 - ii. Here he writes from the perspective of an individual, not that he has experienced each of these directly but he is personifying what the nation has experienced.
 - iii. He piles up the poetic language to describe God in different ways. What they all have in common is that God seems distant and opposed, like an enemy.

- iv. Each of the verbs is in a tense that shows continual, present action. He isn't looking back at some distant past but is describing the present.
- b. A cruel shepherd (1-6)
 - i. Rather than the rod and staff comforting him like the shepherd of psalm 23, he and the people have experienced the rod of His wrath.
 - ii. Shepherd language rod, driven, made me walk, turned His hand
- c. A jailer (7-9)
 - i. He has walled him in, chained him, blocked his ways
 - ii. But even his prayers seem shut out
- d. A wild animal (10-11)
 - i. God has been like a wild bear or a lion, waiting to attack
- e. A warrior (12-13)
 - i. He has been like a warrior with his bow bent, ready to make the fatal strike
- f. The people mock (v 14)
- g. He has been filled with bitterness (v. 15)
 - i. Wormwood is a poisonous plant that is often paralleled with bitterness as if God has "satisfied" him with poison
- h. His suffering is physical and internal (16-18)
 - i. His soul has been rejected from peace
 - ii. He has forgotten happiness
 - iii. Jonathan Gibson, "He experiences a kind of anxious amnesia as he is robbed of peace, happiness, and endurance."
- i. Remember his affliction (19-20)
 - i. Could be asking God to remember or it could be an statement that as he remembers his suffering it is bitterness.
 - ii. That is the idea in v 20 as his soul remembers it is bowed down within.
- j. What is this great suffering? And why did they experience it?
 - i. The Babylonians destroyed the city.
 - 1. **Lamentations 1:1** How lonely sits the city That was full of people! She has become like a widow Who was *once* great among the nations! She who was a princess among the provinces Has become a forced laborer!
 - ii. The destruction was a result of their persistent, unrepentant rebellion against God
 - 1. **Lamentations 1:8a** Jerusalem sinned greatly, Therefore she has become an unclean thing.
 - iii. The Mosaic covenant tied their enjoyment of the land with their obedience to God.
 - 1. **Joshua 23:15-16** "It shall come about that just as all the good words which the LORD your God spoke to you have come upon you, so the LORD will bring upon you all the threats, until He has destroyed you from off this good land which the LORD

your God has given you. ¹⁶ "When you transgress the covenant of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them, then the anger of the LORD will burn against you, and you will perish quickly from off the good land which He has given you."

- k. This language of suffering gives words to our suffering, even in the very worst:
 - i. Do you ever feel like you're walking in darkness? (v 2)
 - ii. Does your body hurt and ache? (v 4)
 - iii. Do you feel trapped? (v 7, 9)
 - iv. Do your prayers feel like they hit the ceiling? (v. 8)
 - v. Do you feel targeting by God for suffering when others seem to have it easy? (v. 12)
 - vi. Do you feel like you have forgotten what it has even been like to be happy? (v 17)
- 2. **Recall** to mind His new morning mercies (3:21-24)
 - a. Hope comes when we recall truth about God to mind (v. 21)
 - i. Recall shub bring back, recall, call to mind, turn back, return
 - ii. When we deal with depression, despair, discouragement we bring back, call to mind what is true, specifically what is true about God.
 - iii. It's like lowering a bucket deep down into a well and pulling out water that is clean, cold, refreshing, life-giving.
 - iv. The hope doesn't come from minimizing or denying the suffering or misery.
 - 1. It's not that bad! Others have it worse!
 - v. What was it that he recalled to mind that gave hope?
 - b. The Lord's lovingkindnesses never cease and his compassions never fail. (v. 22)
 - i. Never fail used of water in a waterskin that comes to an end or something that is consumed and wastes away same idea as "never cease"
 - ii. There isn't an end. They aren't going to dry out.
 - iii. When farmers turned to irrigation wells to access underground aquifers. It seemed like an endless supply of water, but we've learned they aren't endless.
 - 1. The Ogallala Aquifer underneath Nebraska and parts of 7 other states is massive. 27% of irrigated land in the US is over the aquifer. Intensive use is starting to draw it down and some estimates say that if it is depleted it will take 6,000 years to replenish it naturally through rainwater.
 - iv. God's supply, God's aquifer of faithful love and compassion never fails, never runs dry, it's never depleted, it's there for you to draw from again and again and again.
 - c. They are new every morning (v. 23a)
 - i. Smith: "Despair" means awakening in the dark and assuming it's reality. Dark, for a believer, is pre-reality. Reality is coming.
 - 1. Vv. 1-19 felt like reality. He was in the darkness, battered and bruised.
 - 2. But the reality is that God's mercies are ever new.

- ii. It isn't that we have run out of a supply of God's mercy by 7:00 pm and need to wait until the next day.
 - 1. It isn't like the water heater that has run out of hot water and you have to wait for it to heat up again.
 - 2. But it is very visual and in that sense very helpful.
 - 3. Just like the sun will rise every day, so there will be new mercy to meet you every day.
 - 4. Just like the Israelites in the desert had to gather fresh manna everyday, so we gather fresh mercy. Just like Jesus taught his disciples to pray for daily bread, so we need daily mercy.
- d. Great is YOUR faithfulness (v. 23b)
 - i. For the first time he addresses God directly
 - 1. After talking about God without using His name
 - 2. And then lamenting about God
 - 3. And then positively describing who God is
 - 4. He now speaks to God
 - 5. Theology leads to doxology, explanation leads to exultation
 - ii. This completes the trilogy of connected terms steadfast love, mercy, faithfulness
- e. The Lord is my portion (v. 24a)
 - i. The term was used for the share of property or land that belonged to a person or tribe.
 - ii. **Psalm 73:26** My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.
 - iii. **Psalm 16:5** The LORD is the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You support my lot.
 - iv. You may have had little in terms of what this world offers and what others seem to have. So did Jeremiah, so have many other faithful followers of the Lord. But if you have the Lord, you have all that you need.
- f. Therefore, I have hope in Him (v. 24b)
 - i. It's been a quick journey from v. 18 my strength has perished, and so has my hope from the Lord
 - ii. To v 21 "this I recall to mind, therefore I have hope" and v. 24 "the Lord is my portion, therefore I have hope in Him."
 - iii. Hopefulness for the new day and the New Year is found in the deep reserves of God's unceasing, unfailing love and compassion toward you.
- g. Psalm 103 includes a similar pattern of recalling God's compassion
 - i. Psalm 103:2 ² Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget none of His benefits;
 - 1. Lam 3 demonstrates the need to recall, Ps 103 the need not to forget
 - 2. God pardons (v 3), redeems from the pit (v. 4), crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion (v. 4 our same words from Lam 3), satisfies you, renews you (v. 5)
 - 3. He won't strive with us forever (v. 9)

- a. You can experience God's mercy because Christ experienced God's judgment.
 - i. I don't think this is a Messianic, prophetic passage.
 - 1. It is a passage about great suffering that came from God's hand of judgment.
 - 2. But that is what Jesus took for us God's judgment.
 - ii. Jesus experienced affliction under the rod of God's wrath on the cross (v 1)
 - iii. He was driven through the darkness at Gethsemane as He sweat drops of blood in anticipation of His death (v. 2)
 - iv. God abandoned Him to cruel men (v. 3)
 - v. God enveloped him with tribulation in His passion and death (v 5)
 - vi. He dwelt in the tomb of death for three days (v. 6)
 - vii. God shut out his cries from the cross
 - viii. God's arrows were fatal (v 13)
 - ix. His people mocked and scorned him (v 14)
 - x. They gave Him wine mixed with bitter gall to drink (v. 15)
 - xi. **Isaiah 53:5** But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.
- b. You cannot **exhaust** God's loving compassion for you.



1. When God seems to be your *enemy* (3:1-20)

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She has become like a widow Who was once great among the nations!
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Joshua 23:15-16 "It shall come about that just as all the good words which the LORD your God spoke to you have come upon you, so the LORD will bring upon you all the threats, until He has destroyed you from off this good land which the LORD your God has given you.

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2. <u>Recall</u> to mind His new morning mercies (3:21-24)

Psalm 73:26 My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Psalm 16:5 The LORD is the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You support my lot.

Psalm 103

3. Applying the Word

a. You can experience God's *mercy* because Christ experienced God's *judgment*. b. You cannot <u>exhaust</u> God's loving compassion for you.

