

“New Every Morning”  
Lamentations 3:19-26;  
Acts 2:4-8, 14-21; Luke 5:33-39

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November 15, 2009

Sometimes it feels to me like today we live in troubled times, with all the worries about what's going on around us, not least of which are the economy and employment numbers. Sometimes I feel troubled, wondering how bad it really is. It feels to me like when I watch the news, the newscasters take the first line from the hymn and instead of ending with it being a marvelous world, they say it's a scary world. Everything seems to be a catastrophe. Of course, the next day we have the next catastrophe. In that, I begin to wonder, “How bad is it?” And yet, as I have that angst, that worry about the world around us, it's always clear that I have my own particular worries as well.

As I look at this reading from Acts, I think about this group of people, these disciples. Now here's a group of people who went through something that was really troubling. They had just gotten done experiencing Jesus being killed, crucified, the loss of the one who was their leader. Their whole world must have fallen apart for awhile. It was in the very depths of their troubles that God acted, that God again brought the resurrection to light. Brought that new life Jesus brings. And in this passages, energizes them for a new day. The pouring out of the Spirit upon them.

It seems to me that they are experiencing the very thing that verse from Lamentations talks about: the faithfulness of God, the mercies that are new every morning. They are experiencing that new day in which God is at work again, and they are dreaming dreams and seeing visions. The Spirit is at work among them. As they are the witnesses to the good news in Jesus Christ, the Spirit works in their lives, changes them, begins to move them.

I think it's true of all of us. As we are witnesses to the good news in Jesus Christ, as we turn to God in our troubles, in all of that, God is willing to pour his Spirit in and upon us again.

You notice our Stewardship Committee picked the verse “to dream dreams and see new visions,” that idea that the Spirit pours itself out again today, yet today. And as it does that, we are stewards of what the Spirit is calling us to, as well. It's easy and important to remember where we've been and what we've done. Jesus will talk a little bit about that in his passage as well. But we're also called to see anew. There are three ways I think this looking forward is shown in the passages today. This first one, we can almost pass by. As the disciples begin experiencing the work of the Spirit, they speak new languages. So often in my

life, as I want to live out the good news, I often want people to come and learn my language. But it seems that God gives us the ability to learn new languages so that we can speak in new ways. The disciples spoke, not in ways that meant everybody had to come and learn their language, but right to those who were astounded that they were hearing it in their own language.

If you're like me, that's a little hard sometimes. I'm a little bit too much like this guy in a story that my friend used to tell. There was this pretty good guy, but he didn't really think he needed God at all. He thought he was getting by just fine. Others were beginning to wonder, but he was going along and one day he fell into a well. He prayed, "God, get me out of this well and I'll serve you the rest of my life." He was rescued, and he does it. He serves God the rest of his life, and everybody thinks he's a pretty good guy except for one thing. He keeps pushing people into wells. He wants them to speak his same language.

It's so easy. Oftentimes, I want to give people my experiences. If only I can just help them to have the same experience I did, at least the good ones (I wouldn't wish the bad ones on anybody). But you know that's not the way it is, is it? We each have our own set of experiences. God doesn't always encounter us in exactly the same ways.

Another story that reminded me of this is from the *Chronicles of Narnia*. It's the book called *The Horse and His Boy*. The main character is talking with Aslan, the Christ figure in these books, and he wants to know about this fellow who saved his life when he was a baby. Aslan says, no, that was *his* story. Basically, he tells him, now you have *your* story to live.

That's how it is, isn't it? We are each given a story to live, a calling. The interesting thing is, as you read on in that book, the story of the main character and all the other characters weave together into a wonderful story. C. S. Lewis is good at weaving those stories together. But in so many ways, isn't that who we are as well? We each come with our own story and through our life together we are woven into another story, in some ways a bigger story—the story of this church, the story of a family of faith, the story of a people of Christ. As we do that, we can look at that story and how wonderful it is.

Which reminds me of what Jesus does in his parables. In many ways, when we're creating that story together, it's like making wine. In the creating of it, we have to put it in new wine skins. You have to have some ability for it to breathe and to develop. Isn't that what happens when we join together, and we live together and we find our way? There's a way in which the beginnings are kind of rough. We tend to be able to work it out together over time, mellowing a little bit, or at least taking the rough edges off our memories. It feels like we have that old

wine that we can savor. But how are we going to have that old wine unless we keep making new? Isn't that what Jesus is encouraging? He says the old wine is great and we can savor it, but at the same time there is the new coming.

As we think about who we are as stewards of Christ, we're not only stewards of the resources we've been given, the wonderful church history we have, the number of things we've done together, but we're stewards of the calling Christ gives us, stewards of those dreams and visions we will have, the way the Spirit is pouring itself out on us. We, too, are creating the new wine in the new wine skins. And like with that process, sometimes we've got some rough edges, but that's the way it is. We're called to new things. We get to do both. In fact, isn't that the way Jesus ends this particular passage? He says as long as we have old wine, who would want new wine? But it's because we want old wine that we need new wine. It's the way that the old, and how it is a wonderful set of memories in our lives, encourages us to try again and to think again and to see again how God works and envisions new ways and new things in our lives, pours out God's Spirit on us that we see that new day. We know that God's mercies and God's steadfast love are new every morning.

With that clothing example—trying to put the new patch on the old clothing—it just doesn't always work. There are times when we need to let Christ re-clothe us. In some ways, that's what baptism is all about. It's being re-clothed in the clothing Christ calls us into.

So as we come to this stewardship season, it felt to me that not only are we stewards of all the resources we have, and we are able to be thankful for all we have been given and the wonder of the life of this church over the years, but we are stewards of the calling God has on our lives, the visions and dreams God gives us. It's kind of a double-edged stewardship. A stewardship of all we have and all that God calls us to. Amen.