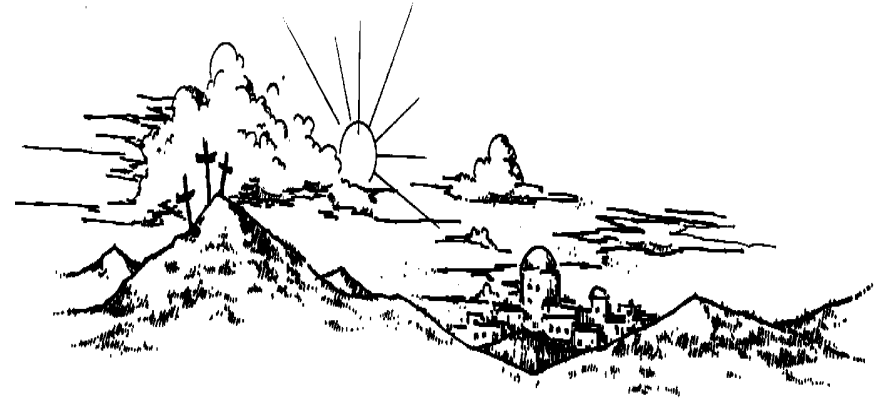


God and Man at Table Sat Down

Old Orchard Church

June 10, 2012 — 10:15 to 11:50 a.m.



The Lord's lovingkindnesses
indeed never cease,
For His compassions never fail.
They are new every morning;
Great is Thy faithfulness.

—Lamentations 3:22-23—

Celebrating Jesus Christ, God of New Beginnings

Every day has a new beginning,
And it is from Jesus Christ,
The Agent by whom God made the world!
So we sing,

Morning by morning new mercies I see.
The week runs its course and begins again.

Every month has a new beginning,
Every year, every century.
Every birth is a new beginning—
For a child and for a family.

Every milestone passed,
Every season of life finished, every crisis overcome,
Opens into something new for us.
Bless Christ for the new beginnings he builds into our life!

Bless him, too, for new beginnings in Redemption:
For a New Covenant, a new mediator, new sacrifices;
For new promises, commissions, sacraments;
For the New Creation already begun,
And for the promise of what is to come—
The new heavens and the new earth.

For new forgiveness, granted each time we seek it;
New opportunities, given by a Sovereign Will;
New strength, gained when we admit our weakness.

Praise Jesus Christ the Lord of New Beginnings,
He who announces,
“Behold, I am making all things new!”



Scripture Readings

Old Testament Lesson: Jeremiah 31:31-34

Epistle Lesson: 2 Corinthians 5:16-19

Sermon

“Who’s Winning?” (Part 2)
Ephesians 1:1-14

Ron Lutjens, pastor, preaching

When God Does Something New

The doctors at Beijing Children's Hospital were taken aback—caring, but incredulous—as they surveyed Levi’s ravaged, nearly lifeless form. “Why are you bothering with this baby? Wouldn't it be more merciful just to let him die? What kind of life do you think he’s going to have . . . *if* he survives? Do you really think anyone would want to adopt such a child?”

Found abandoned in an open field—wrapped in a blanket stuffed with a Chinese bill worth little more than a U.S. dollar—this priceless life had been nearly burned to death. The doctors indicated there was a strong likelihood all of Levi’s limbs would have to be amputated.

Are some people, things, and situations *too* broken to get involved with? Being woven into Levi's story has encouraged and convicted me that we *must not* give up so easily on messy situations and difficult people. Though all brokenness will be eliminated when Jesus returns, He is in the business of restoring broken things. And He is mightily at work today, accomplishing great things beyond our asking and imagining. Some of the very “messes” we concede as hopeless are the exact places God’s mercies prove to be matchless.

Though the first few months of Levi’s life were written with the ink of horrific pain, Jesus had more chapters to write with indelible grace. Two thousand years earlier, He told a parable comparing the kingdom of God to finding “**treasure hidden in a field**” (Matthew 13:44). Who could have imagined that finding Levi was meant as a powerful announcement that Jesus’ redeeming kingdom has come to Langfang, Beijing, Boston, Franklin, and a whole lot of other places?

“Whatever it takes . . . do *whatever* it takes to help him. *This one matters.*” My friend, Tim Baker, *pled* with the doctors who gave Levi only a 20 percent chance of survival. He promised that he and his wife, Pam, would adopt Levi if the lead physician at Beijing Children’s Hospital would try to save his life. “I would be *proud* to have him as a son, and it will be a joy to see him graduate from high school and walk down the aisle on his wedding day.” Tim’s words were saturated with an alien love, and the skilled surgeon agreed to do her best to care for Levi.

The night before Levi’s first surgery, Lisa Bentley, one of the Baker’s colleagues, spent the evening beside Levi’s incubator reading the Scriptures to him and soothing his little spirit through prayer and the cooing sounds emanating from her maternal instincts. As Levi gazed into her eyes, Lisa’s heart nearly broke as she watched him try his best to suck his little burned thumb.

The morning came, and with it, new mercies. It was as though God had mobilized a multitude of angels, as the hospital staff in Beijing rallied around Levi with extraordinary interest and investment, both during surgery and afterward in his recovery. Their around-the-clock attention resulted in tremendous success. Levi not only survived, but when he was strong enough for the trip, he was flown to Boston, where the skilled staff at the Shriners Hospital performed additional surgeries—for free!

—Steven Curtis Chapman in *Restoring Broken Things* (2005)