

An old Swedish hymn says: *He whose heart is kind beyond all measure, gives unto each day what he deems best—lovingly, its part of pain and pleasure, mingling toil with peace and rest.* Kind beyond all measure, the Lord gives pain and pleasure to each day as he deems best. Sounds a bit like the Potter shaping the clay—as it seems best to him. Don’t you think? Yet, we don’t always agree with what God deems best for us, do we? It’s also hard for us to feel that he is “kind beyond all measure” when he allows us pain. Pain is not generally equated with one showing kindness, especially if God’s measure for one day is greater than other days. But we will see more fully in a moment that God indeed gives each day his wise and loving measure of pain and pleasure.

The point is that there is fresh mercy from God for each day’s pain. Today’s mercies are not designed to carry tomorrow’s burdens. There will be mercies tomorrow for that. Today’s mercies are for today’s burdens. “What about tomorrow? What will become of our children?” we may ask. “What will become of our health? Who will take care of us? What if we outlive all our friends and family?”

We pray that God will spare us living in a time anything like Judah experiences in Lamentations 1: *“She weeps bitterly in the night, with tears on her cheeks.”* What else can we expect from a book titled “Lamentations?” Will we live in peace, or weep bitterly? Will we be there for our children and grandchildren? What will become of our church? Next Sunday, or twenty years from now? Will we be together? Will we have the strength to live tomorrow when it comes; and to live it well and wisely and joyfully, no matter what?

As I read Lamentations 3, I’m persuaded Jeremiah’s main point is that the strength to live tomorrow is given tomorrow—and not today. Our task today is not to forecast happiness or sorrow, or to somehow guarantee we will have the strength needed for tomorrow’s burdens. Our task today is to live by the mercies given to us today; and to believe that there will be new mercies for tomorrow. I can hardly impress on everyone how extremely important this is

for living the Christian life. It is so very important because our natural impulse is to want to feel sufficient in the present for all the challenges of tomorrow. We don't like it when our gauge reads "empty" at the end of the day, when we try to go to sleep—if we can—not feeling the power we might need for tomorrow's troubles. Isn't that often when the tears begin? Yet there is a principle for living the Christian life that I sincerely want each one of us to grasp. If we go on needing to feel the strength for tomorrow today, we will either cave in under the enormous pressure of our worries, or we will go searching for a different strategy to grow immense ego strength to convince us that we are sufficient for all of tomorrow's troubles.

Of course, neither one of those is God's way. God's way is found in two familiar passages of Scripture. One is Matthew 6:34, "*Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*" The words of Jesus. In Jesus' case, I don't think he meant we should not make preparations for tomorrow's needs. Life insurance salespersons and financial planners in our midst can breathe a sigh of relief. Or if you're a farmer, your empty silos should prompt you to plant your field with corn months before you will need the corn. Almost everything that is worth doing requires some forethought or planning or preparation. The point of Matthew 6:34 is not: "Don't make wise preparations." The point is: "Don't bring the troubles and uncertainties of carrying out those preparations for tomorrow into today." Listen to how Jesus tells us precisely why that is: "*Each day has enough trouble of its own.*"

What exactly does Jesus mean by *enough*? He means that our sovereign Lord, who is kind and wise beyond all measure, gives unto each day what he deems best, lovingly, its portion of pain and pleasure. Each day's troubles are "enough"—that is, sufficient—because God determines their limit. God decides what is enough and what is sufficient. We can know some of the pressures that are coming tomorrow. And part of our job may be to make some preparations for them. But those preparations are part of today's "enough" trouble. How those preparations will turn out tomorrow, and whether we feel

strong enough today to do our part tomorrow—is not something God wants us to carry with us today. Those are tomorrow’s burdens. To put it another way, God does not give us mercies today for bearing tomorrow’s burdens.

Where else in Scripture can we go for the confidence that God not only gives the trouble to each day that is sufficient for that day, but also the mercies which are tailor-made to carry that day’s trouble? The other Scripture is Lamentations 3:22–23. *“The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”* It’s the phrase *“they are new every morning”* that gives me complete confidence that each day’s mercies—each day’s kindnesses—are given specifically for that day. Let that sink in for a moment. *“His mercies...are new every morning.”* Why are they new *every morning*? Why does God do it that way? It’s not that yesterday’s mercies were insufficient. It’s because they were yesterday’s. Yesterday’s mercies were for yesterday’s burdens. Today’s mercies are for today’s burdens. They are like manna in the wilderness, like daily bread that we can’t keep overnight. There’s enough for today. We are meant to live on God “day by day,” or we’re not really living on God.

This is a belief that has the potential to change our lives if we grasp it and live by it. How many times in life do we come to the end of our resources and say: “There isn’t anything left in me?” I am depleted. One more straw and this camel’s back will break. And we despair that tomorrow will be a continuation of today’s depleted condition. At that moment we desperately need this promise: God will not expect us to carry even one more straw with today’s present mercies. When the next straw is added, new mercies will come!

So, we must NOT compound today’s load by fretting over tomorrow’s. We must NOT doubt God and say, “I have no more strength, so tomorrow will be impossible for me to live.” That’s simply not true. You are not going to be asked to live tomorrow on today’s strength. What you need today is NOT tomorrow’s power, but rather, today’s faith that tomorrow’s mercies will be new, and will be enough. There’s a difference between our faith in tomorrow’s power, and the actual experience of that power itself. Faith stands on the

promise of God and waits and hopes in weakness and trust. Part of today's mercy is the ability to trust that there will be sufficient mercy for tomorrow. In spite of all the peace that faith can bring us today, it is still not the mercy or the power we will need for tomorrow. There's an inner battle that goes on. We want a feeling of adequacy today for what we will have to go through tomorrow. But God says, "Trust me. I will give it when you need it."

In 1931 a missionary named John Vinson was working in North China. An army of bandits swooped down on his village looting, burning, and killing. They took 150 Chinese villagers and Vinson captive. When the government troops pursued them, the bandits offered Vinson his freedom if he would write a letter to the commanding officer of the government troops asking him to withdraw. Vinson said, "Will you let me *and* the Chinese prisoners go free?" "Certainly not," was the reply. "Then I refuse to go free," he said.

That night the villagers tried to escape, taking Vinson with them. Many were killed yet many captives escaped. Vinson could not run because of a recent surgery. A Chinese girl later reported that a bandit pointed a gun at Vinson's head and said, "I'm going to kill you. Aren't you afraid?" OK. At this point how do *you* feel? Are you projecting yourself into John Vinson's situation? If so, do you feel rising within you the power to respond with courage and serenity to die in peace? The point of what I have been saying is this: You don't have to feel that *now*. What God wants from us is not the strength to die that person's death. That is not today's trouble for us. Who knows? It may be in some far-off tomorrow. God is not calling us to answer as Vinson did, but to trust that if such a time ever comes, God will give us everything we need.

Vinson looked up and said, "No, I am not afraid. If you kill me, I will go straight to God." Which he did. (*The Elizabeth Elliot Newsletter*, March/April 1994) "*His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness,*" says Lamentations 3:22-23. Today's mercies are for today's troubles. Tomorrow's mercies are for tomorrow's troubles. Do not worry about tomorrow. Our troubles and our mercies are lived day by day. And God's mercies never come to an end! Amen. (Thanks to John Piper for sermon resources)