



## New Growth — Again Devotion

“April showers bring May flowers” — so the old saying goes. Flowers, not to mention many other plants, are all around us! It’s spring!! A time of new growth in the world around us. A time for new life! A time for old life beginning anew.

In agriculture, each fall after the harvest, farmers already look forward to spring. Winter’s harshness is a must-get-through, not unlike the pains of labor and delivery preceding the birth. Sweet spring provides a new start for the sower of seeds. The growing season, as it is called, is the time of new opportunity for farmers, who admit to being eternal optimists. The newly plowed field is like a clean slate, presenting a multitude of possibilities. No matter what the harvest results — whether a bin-busting bumper crop (Yea!), a so-so average ingathering, or a discouraging crop failure resulting from any number of factors (Ugh!) — farmers look forward to spring each and every year. “Maybe I finally have it figured out.” Or “next year will be better.” Whatever his thoughts, the farmer wants another chance to pit his skill and expertise against nature.

Faith is just that way, isn’t it? No matter the quality of our labors as God’s work force of believers, through forgiveness we have a newly plowed field to start anew. Our past failures and disappointments are history and we can again plant the seeds of our Christian witness. We can be encouraged by the harvest of our witness — be it a new worshipper at our church who responded to our invitation, a child who spontaneously professes “that’s Baby Jesus” in our Sunday School class, or our teen who makes the right choice about church attendance. We, of course, have only planted and perhaps done a little watering of the seed, but it is God who created the seed in the first place, and it is He who makes it grow. His real water of Baptism assures us of a crop that is bountiful both now and for all eternity.

God’s forgiveness brings renewal. *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me* (Psalm 51:10). In fact, in Christ, Paul calls us ... *a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come* (2 Corinthians 5:17). Our new life in Christ makes us true eternal optimists, as we toil on earth with heaven as our goal.

Just as seeds need good soil to grow and a healthy root system to produce a good yield, so we need to be connected to God’s Word to bear the fruit of faith. Paul’s encouragement to the early Christians is valid for us: *Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith ...* (Colossians 2:6–7a).

By His grace and love, new growth happens again and again in life and in our faith. His forgiveness brings another chance for our love to ever bloom and grow in Christ.

**Closing Prayer:** Forgiving and renewing Lord, in Baptism You planted the seed of faith. Through the Holy Spirit’s power, it is nourished in Word and Sacrament and so grows. In forgiveness, we are recreated and renewed and begin again as Your children and witnesses of Your love. May we continue to grow and produce fruit for You until You gather us in. In Christ. Amen.

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