

Beginning Again

AN OLD SONG FOR A NEW DAY

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There is a wonderful hymn included in several recently published hymnals entitled "This Is a Day of New Beginnings." The first stanza states,

**"This is a day of new beginnings,
Time to remember, and move on,
Time to believe what love is bringing,
Laying to rest the pain that's gone."**

The music minister in me feels the need to make parallels between such a hymn and the great "restart" we are all experiencing as we come out of this season of pandemic. However, when Katie asked me to write about new beginnings, I must admit that another (not so churchy) song popped into my mind.

I was fortunate enough to be influenced by parents and grandparents who loved classic movies. One of my favorites as a child was "The Bells of St. Mary's." Near the end of the movie Bing Crosby sings a song entitled "In the Land of Beginning Again." He offers it as a bit of "pastoral counseling" to a couple who have been estranged for many years. The song is light-hearted and sentimental, but its use marks a turning point toward forgiveness and healing in the relationship of the star-crossed couple. (If you don't know the song or the movie, I encourage you to spend some time on YouTube. You won't be disappointed!)

The song "In the Land of Beginning Again" was written by George Meyer and Grant Clarke and was first published in 1908.

It was inspired by a poem of the same name, and it accurately reflects the romantic attitudes of the Progressive Era. However, when it was later used in "The Bells of St. Mary's," the song took on a deeper, more poignant meaning.



Original sheet music cover for "In the Land of Beginning Again"

"The Bells of St. Mary's" was released in December of 1945, which meant that the film helped to usher in the first Christmas season of post-WWII America. Grief over the loss of dear friends and loved ones hung heavy in the air. But the season, as the song in the movie encouraged, was also filled with an immense sense of hope for the days ahead.

**"There's a land of beginning again,
Where skies are always blue.
Though we've made mistakes, that's true,
Let's forget the past and start life anew.
Though we've wandered by a river of tears,
Where sunshine won't come through;
Let's find that paradise where sorrow can't live,
And learn the teachings of forget and forgive,
In the land of beginning again,
Where broken dreams come true."**

Like the moviegoers of 1945, we are also coming out of a war-like period...one marked by sickness, anger, violence, politics, sacrifice, and death.

We desperately need a song of hope to help us heal and move forward. Fortunately, the story of our God does just that...singing forth promises of recreation, rebirth, resurrection, forgiveness, and new beginnings. The last two stanzas of the hymn I mentioned before sum up those assurances in the following way:

**"Then let us, with the Spirit's daring,
Step from the past, and leave behind
Our disappointment, guilt and grieving,
Seeking new paths, and sure to find.**

**Christ is alive, and goes before us
To show and share what love can do.
This is a day of new beginnings;
Our God is making all things new."**

I pray that God is showing you pathways to new beginnings, and that you are finding a song of hope to keep in your heart.



*Bing Crosby and Ingrid Bergman
in "The Bells of St. Mary's"
RKO Radio Pictures, 1945.*