

## Lenten Devotional March 28, 2024

### Scriptures

#### Psalm 126

- 1 *When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,  
we were like those who dream.*
- 2 *Then our mouth was filled with laughter,  
and our tongue with shouts of joy;  
then it was said among the nations,  
"The LORD has done great things for them."*
- 3 *The LORD has done great things for us,  
and we rejoiced.*
  
- 4 *Restore our fortunes, O LORD,  
like the watercourses in the Negeb.*
- 5 *May those who sow in tears  
reap with shouts of joy.*
- 6 *Those who go out weeping,  
bearing the seed for sowing,  
shall come home with shouts of joy,  
carrying their sheaves.*

#### Psalm 102

- 1 *Hear my prayer, O LORD;  
let my cry come to you.*
- 2 *Do not hide your face from me  
in the day of my distress.  
Incline your ear to me;  
answer me speedily in the day when I call.*
  
- 3 *For my days pass away like smoke,  
and my bones burn like a furnace.*
- 4 *My heart is stricken and withered like grass;  
I am too wasted to eat my bread.*
- 5 *Because of my loud groaning  
my bones cling to my skin.*
- 6 *I am like an owl of the wilderness,  
like a little owl of the waste places.*
- 7 *I lie awake;  
I am like a lonely bird on the housetop.*
- 8 *All day long my enemies taunt me;  
those who deride me use my name for a curse.*
- 9 *For I eat ashes like bread,  
and mingle tears with my drink,*
- 10 *because of your indignation and anger;*

- for you have lifted me up and thrown me aside.*
- 11 *My days are like an evening shadow;  
I wither away like grass.*
- 12 *But you, O LORD, are enthroned forever;  
your name endures to all generations.*
- 13 *You will rise up and have compassion on Zion,  
for it is time to favor it;  
the appointed time has come.*
- 14 *For your servants hold its stones dear,  
and have pity on its dust.*
- 15 *The nations will fear the name of the LORD,  
and all the kings of the earth your glory.*
- 16 *For the LORD will build up Zion;  
he will appear in his glory.*
- 17 *He will regard the prayer of the destitute,  
and will not despise their prayer.*
- 18 *Let this be recorded for a generation to come,  
so that a people yet unborn may praise the LORD:*
- 19 *that he looked down from his holy height,  
from heaven the LORD looked at the earth,*
- 20 *to hear the groans of the prisoners,  
to set free those who were doomed to die;*
- 21 *so that the name of the LORD may be declared in Zion,  
and his praise in Jerusalem,*
- 22 *when peoples gather together,  
and kingdoms, to worship the LORD.*
- 23 *He has broken my strength in midcourse;  
he has shortened my days.*
- 24 *“O my God,” I say, “do not take me away  
at the mid-point of my life,  
you whose years endure  
throughout all generations.”*
- 25 *Long ago you laid the foundation of the earth,  
and the heavens are the work of your hands.*
- 26 *They will perish, but you endure;  
they will all wear out like a garment.  
You change them like clothing, and they pass away;*
- 27 *but you are the same, and your years have no end.*
- 28 *The children of your servants shall live secure;  
their offspring shall be established in your presence.*

## **Devotion**

### **Steffan Johnson '23**

Theologian Martin Luther once said, "God hides in suffering." Using this quote as a lens, it is safe to say that God is all around us today. With wars, rumors of wars, plagues, corrupt leaders, and oppression on the rise, God is in our midst. As we face large corporations in hopes to unveil their injustices, these battles become tiring and hopeless. When faced with suffering, it is easy to fall into despair, as the Psalmist says: "Like an owl of the wilderness, like a little owl of the waste places" (Ps 102:6).

Although the sight of suffering is overwhelming, overstimulating, and heavy on the heart, our understanding of suffering shows us God's grace. Realizing this grace sets us, as believers, apart from the constant affliction placed upon us by our oppressors. Whether these adversaries are lawmakers with pens, soldiers with weapons, political leaders with pride, or even neighbors with envy, all we are left to do is pray. With our backs against the wall, prayer will guide us.

Prayer is what we have to lean on in the face of suffering: "He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and will not despise their prayer" (Ps 102:17). To recognize prayer as a byproduct of suffering is where we strengthen our faith, remain humble, and sense God amongst the turmoil of the world.

Now, a question that I often ask myself is "How does this look? How will it look once I am delivered from this angst?" Psalm 126 has an answer: "A harvest of joy." In Psalm 126, the psalmist expounds on restorative justice with an agricultural take, a harvest: "May those who sow in tears, reap with shouts of joy" (Ps 126:8). Tears became joy and joy quickly turned into gratitude, shouts of joy.

## **Prayer**

Dear God, thank you for all that you have done in and around us. Thank you for giving us hope in the face of turmoil, and love in the midst of hate. As we see younger generations react to the same world that we have been neglecting, give them strength to do justice and compassion to accept diversity. In Jesus' name, Amen.