

Advent Devotional December 19, 2019

Scripture

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.*

Devotional

The Rev. Dr. David R. Hosick '76

The psalmist declares, "When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter and our tongue with shouts of joy." He refers to the restoration of a "faithful remnant" of Israelites to their homeland from exile in Babylon, around 528 B.C. When first freed and enabled to return home, they were in shock, in a dream world, as is the common human experience when something wonderful or terrible happens to us. When the reality of their freedom sank in, their exuberant joy could not be contained.

For Christians it is interesting to note the phrase used by the psalmist, "restored the fortunes." It means "general restitution or liberation, a passing from the shadow of death into a full and happy life." On numerous occasions Jesus indicated this kind of restoration was a purpose of his ministry. "I have come that you may have life and have it abundantly." "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live." We Christians understand and believe that Jesus made it possible for us to pass from the power of sin and death into a full and happy life, beginning now and continuing for eternity.

Psalm 126 reflects the message of the Bible from front to back. The psalmist remembers God's grace in the past, ponders God's help in the present, and relies on God's blessing in the future, all resulting in joy. For us the ultimate embodiment of these certainties is Jesus Christ, the celebration of whose birth we anticipate in Advent. Like the psalmist's, therefore, our lives are bordered on one side by the memory of God's faithful acts in the past and on the other side by the assurance of God's promises for the future. So in the present, let our mouths be filled with laughter and our tongues with shouts of joy!

Prayer

God of hope and joy, the day draws near when the glory of your Son will brighten the night of the waiting world. Let no sorrow hinder the joy of those who seek him. Let no sin obscure the vision of wisdom by those who find him. We pray through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(from the *Book of Common Worship, Daily Prayer*, p. 104, WJK)