

Wednesday 6th April Psalm 126

How can you best summarise this psalm? Well, it's perfect for every day Christian life. This Psalm is a story about us. It's a view into our life: joy and sorrow. We have both. No one has only joy, and no one has only sorrow. We all have both. I'm sure you like me at times long for the need to be restored and refreshed as life tosses you around..

Psalm 126 helps us with that feeling. Tim Keller says it, "is a perfect emotional map for a person who believes in God. It's a picture, an overview, of the emotional life that the life of faith brings."

So let's start with the good news. If you're a Christian, you *are* a miracle. Your conversion was a restoration of fortunes, a miraculous release from captivity, and a joyful homecoming. But over time, life gets boring and stale, and less than we hoped. We want the good times back. More than that, we want a future of greater glory.

Israel felt the same thing. Their once-great city was a shadow of its former self, and they anticipated the hopeful restoration of Zion. But they didn't just hope for a prosperous city—they looked forward to a reigning king, the promised Messiah. They looked forward to the time when, after the anticipation and the hope, after the promises and the prophecies, Jesus would come. The saviour who, we know now, would do more than restore a broken city but would live and die and rises again to save his people from their sins. So the context of this psalm is people longing and hoping for a better day to come.

So, let's explore this Psalm and see how it can help us.

Longing for Better Days (vv. 1-3)

We don't know the context here. We don't know what those great things were, but whatever it was, it was like a dream. You know what that's like, don't you? Some deliverance that seems too good to be true? For these people, that day was the happy day from which all others orbited, evoking laughter and joy, like Job after his suffering ([Job 42:10](#)). And the psalmist wanted another hopeful and joyous restoration just like it. The Lord had done great things for them, and they were glad. But that gladness faded, as it tends to do. We need the hope of great things to come. Our past, as great as it was, is the past. Who doesn't want a brighter future?

An initial reading of this psalm can leave us with the impression that nostalgia weighed the psalmist down—remembering "the good ole days" that are now long gone. But the problem with nostalgia is it takes us back to the place of our former blessing, but it can't take us to future hope. Like the glory days of old, only God can take us to that future blessing. Only God can gather us together with lasting joy, like Israel bringing in plenty during the harvest ([Ps. 126:5-6](#)).

Learning to Live Here (v. 4)

Verse 4 is kind of the hinge point like the door that opens from the past to the present and on to the future.

“Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like streams in the Negeb!”

This is a psalm of ascent, a hopeful song about God’s future deliverance. The people as they journeyed would lift their eyes up with that sense of better times. Today may not be like yesterday, but God doesn’t intend to take us back to what was. He intends to bring us forward to what will one day be. Of course, we’re not in either place yet, are we? We’re stuck in the middle. Hoping for more but experiencing that same old thing. Not as good as it once was, and not good enough yet.

But that’s the story of the Bible. Even the Garden of Eden, as perfect as it was, wasn’t the home God prepared for his people in the future. The Garden of Eden was a pointer to—not the culmination of—the glory to come.

So this psalm is not a great and longing sigh; it’s a new and hopeful song. Yes, there is a plea for restoration, as verse 4 makes clear, but it’s not a cry of desperation. It’s a cry of expectation. It’s a cry for God to do it again, grounded in faith that he will. If the first three verses are a wonderful memory, beginning in verse 4 is the start of a prayer. The memory is turned into prayer. And it’s no small prayer.

Notice the phrase in the second line, “like streams in the Negeb.” What does that mean? The Negeb is a desert. Streams do not flow in the desert. In fact, the name Negeb means dry or parched. The Psalmist is asking for the kind of restoration that feels like a watering of the driest desert. One day, the glory of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the seas. Our lives may be more like a desert right now, but God can bring the rain.

The lesson is that learning to live here is more than coping with a happy memory, it’s rejoicing in a coming glory. That doesn’t mean homesickness is easier to bear. It means, given to Christ, nostalgia points us homeward to glory rather than backward to the Garden. Jesus reverses nostalgia’s direction. With him, as good as our past was, the best is yet to come, which takes us to our third and final point.

Looking Ahead to the Harvest (vv. 5-6)

As glorious as the future is, that future glory doesn’t make the present difficulties disappear. Life is full of disappointments. So God gave us the Psalms—as Tim Keller says—to pray our tears. You see that in verses 5 and 6.

“Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy! He who goes out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.” Weeping in the Christian life is not a problem. Lament isn’t a problem. Crying out to God for something more isn’t a problem. It’s thoroughly biblical. Throughout the Old Testament, other than sin, it’s about all God’s people do. They cry out. They lament. They ask God to do what only God can do. Psalm 126 shows that our tears are an investment—those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy! *Only* those who sow in tears can reap with shouts of joy. *Only* he who weeps brings sheaves home.

God is not asking us to live on our great memories of the past. He’s not asking us to go back to the revivals of history and let those be enough to sustain us. He’s not asking us to let our

own personal times of refreshing nourish us into the future. No single event of past blessing is enough to fill us forever. We forget. We weaken. We falter. We fall. We cry and we weep and we lament.

The question is, where do we put those tears? Do we invest them?

The truth is, we need a hope bigger than we can even imagine. How many of us are looking for a restoration of the old normal? We'd be happy with that right? But God is always preparing us for a greater hope. In fact, the Bible says God prunes the fruitful branches in our lives so he can do something new and better, bringing even more fruit than before. The entire Bible and our entire lives are preparing us for a resurrection hope. That's why God sent his Sower to sow gospel seeds into our lives ([Mark 4:1-20](#)). But that seed doesn't grow instantly. Cultivating takes time we don't want to spend. It takes watering when we don't want to. It takes, in a word, maturing, and no one matures easily. There are tears involved. But we can invest those tears wisely, hopefully, God-wardly.

Learning to pray our tears is the maturing process by which we prepare for a greater harvest. As we weep toward God, he takes our tears and plants them in his garden of grace. They take root and grow. But the harvest comes later—as late as the resurrection.

Jesus is the proof that buried hope grows into glorious reality. The tears of the cross bore the fruit of the resurrection. He went out weeping, bearing his life for sowing; he came home with sheaves ([Ps. 126:6](#)), bringing many sons to glory ([Heb. 2:10](#)).

Israel's story was a good one, but a better one was yet to come. And there's a better one coming for us, as well. One day, the Lord will restore our fortunes. We will be with him, without the sin that ruined us and created this problem in the first place. The first earth will pass away, and the holy city, the New Jerusalem, will come down out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

We will receive our glorified bodies on the new heaven and new earth, and God will say to all his people, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man" ([Rev. 21:1-4](#)). He will wipe every tear from our eyes, and death shall be no more!

No more mourning. No more crying. No more pain.

The former things will have passed away.

We'll finally be home.

Conclusion

God can turn dry places into rivers. He can turn sorrow into joy. He can bring flowers from tears. He will restore our fortunes. We will reap with shouts of joy. God will make it so. Maybe not today. Maybe not even tomorrow. But certainly in eternity where every day will be better than the last. Every moment will be brighter than the one before it. Everything your heart most longs for—that miracle of perfect peace and love and hope and joy and everything else—is yours forever in Christ. All you have to do is receive it and wait for it.

Maybe you're weeping today. That's ok. Plant those tears in God's promises. You will reap with shouts of joy.