

# Psalm 126

## 1. Introduction

### **Tim and I - couple of days canoeing the Wye**

First morning – joyful

Afternoon – hot, still water, hard work – 5pm still only 2/3 way there.

I was all for giving up – Bodies aching, Alternative campsite not bad.

Tim took the lead – set himself to paddle through the pain

Got there! 1/3 of journey done.

Lesson: perseverance gets results

### **An important lesson of life – the message of Psalm 126**

#### **The Songs of Ascents so far**

Songs to be sung on pilgrimage

Songs for Christians who are pilgrims – heading for our eternal dwelling

#### *☞ Psalms 120-122 – starting off*

120- do we love the world too much?

121 – do we fear the world too much? – safety

122 – do we long for Jerusalem/eternity enough?

#### *☞ Psalms 123-125 – difficulties*

123 – being despised – last week

124 – being opposed – but the Lord saves

125 – our security – v1

#### *☞ Psalm 126-128 – will we achieve anything?*

127 – unless the Lord builds - no!

128 – but the Lord does give fruit

### **Psalm 126 – at the beginning of the “will we achieve anything” triplet**

Explores three dimensions of the Christian life – joy, frustration, perseverance.

## 2. Joy – vv1-3

### *☞ Joy*

#### **Context**

Return from exile?

Exiled – 586 BC – Babylon

Returned – over a period a lifetime later - rebuilt city, rebuilt temple

### **The joy of the return**

Beyond our wildest dreams – v1b

Couldn't stop laughing – v2a

Couldn't stop singing – v2b

The watching world was amazed – v2cd

### **This joy is ongoing**

V3

### **Applies to Christians – the joy of becoming a Christian amazing**

We have a purpose in life – cf aimlessness and trivial pleasures of the world

We have a community cf fragmenting society

We have guidelines for life which work – cf so many people damaging themselves.

We the possibility of real change through God's empowering – cf psychiatrist early retirement "I have had enough of psychiatry it is just rearranging people's problems"

We can live with confidence – protection of God Psalm 121 – cf fear of society

We have God's forgiveness – cross – cf a world of ruthless consequences, and bitter regrets

We have God's everlasting loving presence – the Holy Spirit now – face to face then – cf dark loneliness of a world without God.

We the sure promise of a new heaven and new earth –

resurrection hope – Jesus

canoe down the Wye – see beauty I think "all this and more!"

We have the promise of being with God eternally

Imagine the best friendship – perfected

Imagine the most exciting leader – Obama? – to the nth power

Imagine the most brilliant artist, looking over shoulder

- Christians have every reason to be joyful
  - C.S. Lewis "the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England" – "surprised by joy"
  - If there is never any joy in your walk – at best seriously underestimated the wonder of what God has done – at worst not yet converted.

### 3. Frustration – v4

☞ *Frustration*

## **The return from the exile was a disappointment**

Rejoicing and weeping in equal measure – Ezra 3

## **Christians are still living in this partial exile**

“strangers in the world” – 1 Peter 1

Home but not home

## **The frustrations**

Evil still exists

We still fail

People still oppose God

God’s people do not rule the earth!

- Anyone who does not experience frustration has not really grasped Christianity
  - Cf much of the world which is resigned to evil – Christians rage against it.

## 4. Perseverance – vv5-6

### ☞ *Perseverance*

### ☞ *The commitment – sow with tears*

- Assumption: there will be tears
  - Many reasons for a crisis of faith:
    - Intellectual: “I don’t trust God because he doesn’t make sense”
    - Common today mainly emotional “I don’t trust God because bad things have happened to me”
- Tears caused by
  - Difficult relationships – singleness, difficult marriages, extended families, friendships
  - Personal failure – sins, folly
  - Infirmary – our bodies fail

NT uses image of sowing for evangelism – perhaps here broader

- Wake up – feel miserable –
  - Stay in bed?
  - Get up and do what you know you should?

Winston Churchill, 10 months after the end of the war, to Harrow School.

Never give in. Never give in. Never, never, never, never--in nothing... never give in....  
Never yield to force. Never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy.

- Not sure our culture has this?
  - MR on the leading edge of our culture – NOT ALL GOOD
  - Emotional vulnerability a great disrupter of faithful service
  - Underlying assumption: if my emotions are not right I cannot do anything – WRONG.
  - Avoid other extreme – emotions don’t matter – dull dutifulness not good.
  - BUT sometimes serve through tears.
  - Great question: will we serve God through the tears?

☞ *The promise – harvest*

A joyful harvest “with songs of joy”

An abundant harvest “carrying sheaves”

I have done both:

Broadcasting with a fiddle – hard, can be hot, technically quite demanding

Picking up sheaves

You go out with the seed because you know there will be a harvest

- This is your promise – you will reap abundantly and joyfully
  - Some harvest in this life
  - Full harvest in eternity
  - Wilberforce:
    - Ill health
    - Constant setbacks in fight against slavery

Certain Miss Sullivan writing about him:

By the tones of his voice and expression of his countenance he showed that joy was the prevailing feature of his own mind, joy springing from entireness of trust in the Savior’s merits and from love to God and man. . . . His joy was quite penetrating.”

- Will you sow with tears?
- Will you find the deeper joy of trusting in an abundantly generous God?
- Canoeing down the Wye – if we yielded to pain we would still be there now!