

(Carrie Rimes)

When I had decided to study this Psalm it hadn't occurred to me that it was going to be included in the church daily devotions, so Nigel touched on it briefly last week – hopefully this talk will compliment that.

Lockdown seems to have had a theme running through it for me of 'growing, plants, gardens' – partly time of year, partly because in the garden more & taking more interest in it, partly because of Trinity topic of 'Green' – so it seemed natural to focus my devotion on something to do with sowing or growth.

Read Psalm 126 – it can be divided into 3 sections: v1-3 can be termed 'remembering'; v4 is 'requesting' and v5-6 is 'reaping'.

V1-3 - the people of God **remembering** what he has done for them in the past and his faithfulness. They are remembering a time when they were released from captivity – probably the return from Babylon. They were so over-joyed to be released and free after a time of being captive – v1 says they even felt like they were in a dream, it was so wonderful and almost unbelievable to be free after years of being captives.

v4 – **Requesting** – the people are praying to the Lord asking him to restore them to the great nation they once were. 'The streams in the Negev' refers to parched streams that in times of rain would flood and overflow. The people had been parched, dry and oppressed, they are longing for God to restore them not just a little but abundantly and over-flowing like a fast, flowing, flooded river.

v5-6 – **Reaping** – the people have sown in tears – they have been taken from their homes and all they've known. They've lost their freedom and been taken to place that is foreign to them, they have been led where they don't want to go. You can imagine how many tears must have been shed – not just a little weep but great anguish and distress, wailing. However these tears have not been in vain – they have sown something and not just a little something! They reap great joy – they sing songs of joy – you can imagine after so many years in captivity (think of our 11 weeks of 'captivity') their joy must have been something else! Not only do they sing songs of joy but in v6 it tells us that they come back carrying sheaves with them – they have reaped a harvest of joy that they carry back with them.

So, how can we apply this to our lives in this time of lockdown or as we go back to a sort of semi-lockdown?

3 points:

1. We need to remember God's faithfulness to us in the past. For some of us we have been through a really difficult time in recent weeks. Weddings postponed, family members dying and having to watch funerals online, jobs lost with no notice, family members suffering from CV-19 or other illnesses, mental health problems getting worse & worse, juggling working from home with home schooling children with toddlers in tow – the list goes on. However we need to make a deliberate choice to remember God's faithfulness in times past – to dwell on what he has done for us & how he has helped us in the past and remember that it is his character to be faithful – he can't be unfaithful!

2. We need to turn to God in prayer and cast all our cares on him. We need to make prayer our first port of call in the difficulties we face, not the last! It's ok to be perplexed by the times we are living in but we shouldn't be driven to despair – we should be driven more & more into the arms of God.
3. We should think about what we are sowing – yes, we sow with tears but the situation we are in and the particular circumstances we face are ordained by God and he has good works prepared for us to do in each of our situations – be it picking up the home school mess day after day, be it phoning that lonely person who drains us of our energy, staying calm & patient with that family member who rubs us up the wrong way normally let alone when we are with them 24/7. Matthew Henry says 'weeping must not hinder sowing' – yes, we are sorrowful at times but we can sow through our tears. We need to ask the Holy Spirit to help us sow the good fruit of the Spirit even amidst our tears.

We just heard that we will reap with great & abundant joy – that may not be now, or next week, or next month or when lockdown ends but if we are faithfully (maybe tearfully!) sowing for God then we know we will reap joy – ultimately the joy of eternal life in Heaven where there is no more weeping & sorrow!

We need to hold on to the promise of rejoicing to come whilst living in the 'in between' times in a tension of emotions.

Questions:

Remembering:

1. How have/can past experiences of God's faithfulness help you in this time?
2. It's important to 'talk to ourselves' as Christians and counsel our hearts – how can we practically do this day to day?

Requesting:

3. Have you been coming to God in prayer and requesting His help and grace for each day/hour/minute?!
4. Why is it that so often, praying is our last resort instead of our immediate action?

Reaping:

5. How have you been sowing in this season, albeit maybe with many tears?
6. How can we keep the perspective that we will reap with joy even if some of that reaping is not until eternity?
7. Can you think of any practical steps you can take to keep your eyes fixed on Jesus as you sow in these unusual times?

Reflection:

Let's seek the Lord's help and ask Him for insight into how we can sow good in the lives of others and in service to Him that we may reap with much joy and with our arms full of the 'sheaves' of the harvest in due time.

