Tears to Shouts of Joy

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[0:00] Psalm 126 So we're in the songs of Ascent right after Psalm 119.

And this psalm is particularly helpful and appropriate in the time that we live. And we are described in Scripture as people who are living in the last days, people who are living in the already but not yet reality of the kingdom of God, the in-between times, and between the first coming of Christ to save us and then the second coming of Christ to judge us.
And so Jesus has already, with His life, death, and resurrection, kind of defeated decisively the spiritual forces of evil and sin and death.
But that victory hasn't yet been consummated, right? So Jesus' reign has been inaugurated but has not yet been consummated. And so as people who are living in those times, we can also relate to this psalm which was written in an in-between time.
So if you look at verse 1, the psalmist recalls a time when the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion. But that time is in the past. And now in verse 4, he prays, again, restore our fortunes, O Lord.
[1:57] So verses 1 to 3 is a commemoration of God's restoration, what God, the restoring work that God did in the past. And then verses 4 to 6 is an anticipation of God's future restoration.

And the main point of this psalm is that we should commemorate God's restoring work in the past so that we might anticipate His restoring work in the future. So let's look at how the psalmist commemorates the time of God's restoration.
Verse 1, When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream. The phrase restore fortunes occurs in the Bible both before and after their exile.
So we can't really peg a definitive time period saying this is after their initial exile and then return after with Nehemiah and rebuilding the temple.
It's hard to peg. But it is referring to recalling a time when God restored their fortunes from a previous misfortune. So they had probably sinned and because of God's judgment had encountered misfortune.
[3:03] But God eventually restored their fortunes. And so they're remembering how God had done that. And when that happened, they say they were like those who dream. It's really an emotional expression, right?

It's like it was surreal for them. It was dreamlike for them when God restored their fortunes. They had to pinch themselves to see if it was real. They felt like their dreams had come true. And then the psalmist continues in verse 2, So notice the complementary structure of verse 2.
The first two lines. It says, So God's restoring work among us, it filled us with joyful exultation. And it filled them, the nations, with awe and marvel as they witnessed the work that God did among us. And similarly, as God's people now, like God restores, when God restores, heals, and saves us through Jesus, people see this great transformation and reversal of fortunes in our own lives.
And that fills us with joyful exultation. It also fills them, unbelievers in our lives, with wonder. And we become a living testimony.
[4:28] And as the psalmist is remembering how God restored them in the past, he's now filled with gladness again. And remarks in verse 3, The Lord has done great things for us. We are glad.

But things are not so great right now. And so having remembered the past of God's restoring work, the psalmist now prays with faith and anticipates God's restoration.
And he says in verse 4, Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like streams in the Negev. Negev is the dry, kind of arid southern region of Judah.
And during the summer, when they would have drought, the land is filled with these ravines and gullies that are just totally dry.

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There's nothing there. But during the winter rainy season, just rain pours down and floods, and it fills all these ravines. And it overflows the banks so that literally overnight, lush greenery appears.
[5:36] So it's a really powerful picture of God's restoring work, the picture of renewal and revival. And that's the image that the psalmist is invoking in his prayer.

Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like streams in the Negev. And then in verses 5 to 6, he uses another illustration to express his faith-filled anticipation of God's restoration.
It says, 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.
In the ancient world, sowing seeds was often associated with death, because it's like the seed, which is the symbol of life, has to be buried, right?
It's like dying. So that's why Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, verse 36, What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.
[6:36] So that's how they understood sowing, the idea of sowing. And the psalmist is using the imagery in the same way. We sow in tears. You sow mourning the loss or the death of the seeds.

But then soon you reap with shouts of joy, bringing sheaves with us, celebrating new life. And Jesus himself used this metaphor to describe his own life in ministry. In John chapter 12, verses 23-24, It says, So Jesus was the grain that fell and died.
He died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins, so that we might be forgiven and restored to God, so we might be restored like the streams in the Negev. If he experienced death for us, then he was raised from the dead, so that by his resurrection power, we might have eternal life.
And so in a sense, he experienced the greatest misfortune, so that he might restore our fortunes, as this psalm is talking about, so that he might bear fruit for us on eternal life.
And Christian discipleship, for those who follow Jesus, it follows the same pattern of death and renewal. Jesus says in Matthew chapter 16, verses 24-26, If anyone will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.
[8:07] For whoever will save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?

Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? It's when we die to our own pride and vainglory, when we die to our selfishness, when we die to our desire to be affirmed and made much of.
It's when we die to the desire to be served and instead serve others. It's when we die to ourselves, right, in order to live for Christ, live to Christ, live through Christ.
That's when we find that we are truly alive and the eternal life in us flows. And as those who live in the in-between times, in this already-but-not-yet reality, it's our duty to do what the psalmist is doing here, to commemorate God's restoring work in the past in Christ so that we might anticipate God's ultimate restoring work through Christ in the future.
And to remember that we will soon be filled with shouts of joy, as it says here. Note the threefold repetition of that phrase, shouts of joy, in verses 2, 5, and 6.
[9:15] It's a great expression that conveys this unexpressed, like squealing joy, right? It's like this shouts of joy. It's just uninhibited happiness.

And that's what Jesus promised us in John 16, verse 22. So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.
In this world, and it's very evident now with what's going on with the pandemic, in this world we have misfortune, right? In this world we have disease, in this world we have death, in this world we have sin, in this world we have suffering, in this world we have persecution.
But by remembering God's restoring work in Jesus Christ, we can pray with faith-filled confidence, like the psalmist does, in anticipation of the consummation of God's restoring work, and when there will be no more tears, and instead there will be shouts of joy, like this psalmist saying.
Yes, yes, yes. You can pray with freedom. You can pray with faith-filled mindsaction, like this psalmist themselves, be the vigil, I don't see it problema, but I came with me a ■■■ today. So that's the secret refuge of God. You can pray with me, I think you took me zbouting.
[10:33] You have no believers into letters, and there will be s Back by by saying, which I did not believe today, and I said God will pray for you, and I said God will pray for you. You have no takeaway, Illov coemu. I can do it right now, and I said God can do it. So then I said God will situat Weight.

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