



Faithful Friends Kentucky Sunday school lesson: JOY

Today's HOPE (main point): JOY is coming again!

Last time, we talked about the difference between JOY and Happiness. And we talked about having JOY in our hearts even when we feel sad. We're going to talk about that some more today by looking at Psalm 126.

Let's open with prayer and then a song. (Pray)

Let's sing Abide With Me.

Psalm 126 is perfect for a day and time like ours. It's the story of a group of people remembering a time of great happiness and hoping for it again. But they're currently experiencing a time of weeping and sorrow. Their life isn't as great as it once was, and they're looking to God to do something that they cannot do for themselves. They're looking for a great turn-around, a great restoration. And we sort of feel like that right now, don't we? Our life is not what we thought it would be right now and we are hoping for a time of great joy again. Let's read the first three verses of Psalm 126:

- 1 When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dreamed.
- 2 Our mouths were filled with laughter,
our tongues with songs 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 are filled with joy.

We don't know the context here. Verse 1 alludes to something but no one is sure exactly what. "When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream." Some say that's referring to their return from exile in Babylon. Others say it's not. It doesn't matter.



Even without knowing the context, it's easy to see it speaks of an Israelite restoration so grand that even the surrounding nations remembered it. Look at verses 2 and 3. "Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then they said among the nations, 'The Lord has done great things for them.' The Lord has done great things for us; we are glad."

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.

Let's sing, To God Be the Glory.

Can you think about some happy days from your past? Times that were so very joyful? (let residents share)

But that gladness faded, as it tends to do. We need more than memories of great things done, don't we? 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? But sometimes we get stuck in thinking about the past. We remember our former happier days with fondness and nostalgia.

Sometimes it's good to know where words come from. This is one of those times. Nostalgia first appeared as a word in the 1770s, springing from the combination of the Greek words nostos, meaning "homecoming," and algos, meaning "pain." In the 1800s, encyclopedias of medicine listed nostalgia as a disease: "severe homesickness."

Isn't that what we all are, to some degree or another? Homesick.

Israel sure was, even at home. So are we. We're homesick for God, for what only he can provide. We're homesick for final freedom, forgiveness, refuge, victory, and peace.



Nostalgia is a common feeling. It's understandable. Looking back on the happier days isn't a bad thing to do. But the problem with nostalgia is it takes us half-way home; 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).

Let's read the rest of Psalm 126, starting in verse 4:

Restore our fortunes, Lord,
like streams in the Negev.
5 Those who sow with tears
will reap with songs of joy.
6 Those who go out weeping,
carrying seed to sow,
will return with songs of joy,
carrying sheaves with them.

Far from a disease bringing one down, the memory of Psalm 126 is actually a hopeful one. This is a psalm of ascent, a hopeful song about God's future deliverance. 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. God's gift of your future is better than the varied gifts of your past.

Let's sing Blessed Assurance.

Notice the phrase in the second line, “like streams in the Negev.” What does that mean? The Negev is a desert. Streams do not flow in the desert. In fact, the name Negev means dry or parched. The Psalmist is asking for the kind of restoration that feels like a watering of the driest desert. A sudden and satisfyingly refreshing outpouring of grace. It’s the kind of thing only God can do. We cannot bring it to pass, only God can. And the Bible tells us, one day, he will do something just like that. 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.

As glorious as the future is, that future glory doesn't make the present pain disappear. Life is full of disappointments. So God gave us the Psalms 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.

Verse 3 of Psalm 126 says that God has done great things for us. What's the greatest thing that God has done for all of us? (He sent Jesus to die for us!)

And that great thing had to come by way of pain and tears, by way of death. That's the Christian life: first the cross, then the crown. It's the planting that produces the harvest, the death that produces life.



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). He is bringing us home to be in heaven with Him.

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

Let's end with praying the Lord's Prayer together today.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

Let's end with singing I'll Fly Away.

This lesson was taken from parts of a post entitled, "Learning to Live Here," from the blog Things of This Sort, by David McLemore.





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Today's HOPE (main point): Greater JOY is coming!

Psalm 126

1 When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dreamed. 2 Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs 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 are filled with joy.

4 Restore our fortunes, Lord, like streams in the Negev. 5 Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy.

6 Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them.

The word Nostalgia comes from two Greek words meaning "homecoming" and "pain." Aren't we all homesick? We're homesick for God, for what only he can provide. We're homesick for final freedom, forgiveness, refuge, victory, and peace.

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Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

Abide with Me

1. Abide with me: fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

2. I need your presence every passing hour.
What but your grace can foil the tempter's power?
Who like yourself my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, Lord, abide with me.



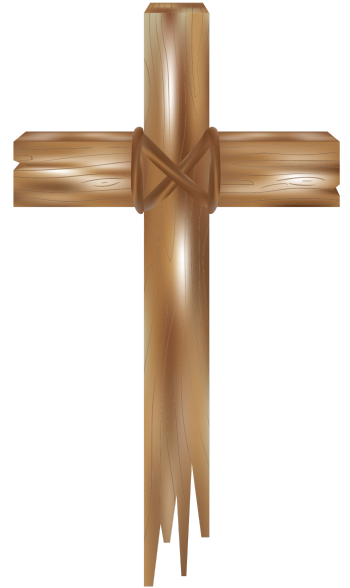
To God be the Glory

1. To God be the glory, great things he hath done;
So loved he the world that he gave us his Son.
Who yielded his life an atonement for sin,
And opened the life-gate that all may go in.

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
Let the Earth hear his voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
Let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father through Jesus the Son,
And give him the glory,
great things he hath done.

2. O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
To every believer the promise of God;
The vilest offender who truly believes,
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
Let the Earth hear his voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
Let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father through Jesus the Son,
And give him the glory,
great things he hath done.



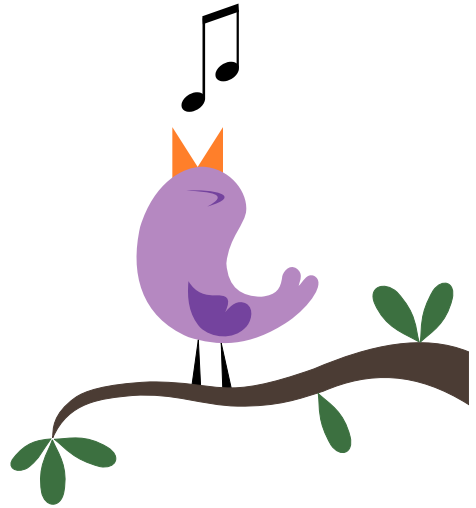
Blessed Assurance

1. Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine;
O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.

This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior, all the day long;
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long.

2. Perfect submission, all is at rest,
I in my Savior am happy and blest,
Watching and waiting, looking above,
Filled with his goodness, lost in his love.

This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior, all the day long;
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long.



I'll Fly Away

1. Some glad morning when this life is over,
I'll fly away;
To that home on God's celestial shore,
I'll fly away.



I'll fly away, oh glory, I'll fly away
When I die, hallelujah, by and by, I'll fly away.

2. When the shadows of this life have gone,
I'll fly away;
Like a bird from prison bars has flown,
I'll fly away.

I'll fly away, oh glory, I'll fly away (in the morning)
When I die, hallelujah, by and by, I'll fly away.

3. Just a few more weary days and then,
I'll fly away;
To a land where joys shall never end,
I'll fly away.

I'll fly away, oh glory, I'll fly away (in the morning)
When I die, hallelujah, by and by, I'll fly away.

Complete the Sentence; Psalm 126

Let's hide Psalm 126 in our hearts. Fill in the blanks using the word bank. All sentences are from Psalm 126.

Created on TheTeachersCorner.net Fill-in-the-Blank Maker

When the Lord _____
_____ the fortunes
of Zion
we were like those who
_____.
Our mouths were filled with
_____, our tongues
with shouts of joy .

sow fortunes
great Lord seed
restored nations
laughter done
dreamed return
filled

Then it was said among the _____ ,
The Lord has done _____ things for them ,

The _____ has _____ great
things for us , and we are _____ with joy
.

Restore our _____ Lord like streams in the
Negev

Those who _____ with tears will reap with
songs of joy

Those who go out weeping carrying _____
to sow

will _____ with songs of joy carrying
sheaves with them .