

**Notes for Brian's Sermon at Brentwood Presbyterian Church**

**Sun, Sept 9, 2018**

**How Do We Go from Tears to Joy? – Joy/Celebration  
(Psalm 126)**



**Those who go out weeping,  
bearing the seed for sowing,  
Shall come home with shouts of joy,  
carrying their sheaves.  
(Ps 126:6)**

**A lesson from the psalm**

Think of a time when you felt that you were lost in an arid desert – isolated, parched, frightened, hopeless – you wept tears of despair, if there was any fluid left for tears – you felt fragile and forlorn - where was help going come from? – not from the hills – we all have these seasons of desperation in our lives – sometimes they pass quickly, sometimes they linger far too long, sometimes they feel as if this one is here to stay – we feel stuck in a state of living death – the community composing and refining this psalm in their corporate worship services over the centuries drew on a natural image that would have been familiar to all in the Middle East – a dry wadi in the midst of the desert – most of the year barren, with maybe a few hardy scrub bushes hanging on – but when the rains came, as they did regularly, the wadi would fill with life-giving water and the land around it would flourish – seeds were sown in the dry season and came to abundant life when the waters rushed down from the hills – and for the composers of this psalm, those life-giving waters were a gift from God – turning tears into shouts of joy for the essential resource that made the desert bloom with new life – it's a powerful image, even for urban dwellers today

**Provocative points to ponder**

- There was a regularity to the seasons of drought and abundance in the old days, when this psalm would have been sung by rural people working the land, coming into Jerusalem for the festivals of their faith – a bit like Thanksgiving Sunday used to be for us in Canada 50 years ago – a celebration of the regularity of God's grace in nature – still there, but we are less and less aware of it – easy availability of the labours of many others in our contemporary supply chains for almost everything that sustains our urban lives – while not as obvious to us these days, the regularities are still there, sustaining our flourishing – just think of the regularity of your breathing and what happens when that gets disrupted – and think further of what we have done to the environment that is disrupting those patterns so dramatically these days, especially with wild fires and oceanic storms – our rebellions, grounded in our delusions of being gods, are having devastating effects on our common home – tears abound – how do we go from there to joy?

- The faith that informs the psalm is pretty clear – trust in the God who created and is lovingly caring for this world – trust in the God who wants us to return to our role as partners with the community of the Trinity in sowing seeds that will make this place a commonwealth of blessing for all God’s creatures – you may go through seasons of arid despair, but the waters of God will come to make the deserts bloom with abundance for the well-being of all – your terrors and tears will be turned to shouts of joy – because of your contributing friendship with the loving energy that infuses the whole of creation

### **Finding this in God’s living Word, Jesus Christ**

- What that energy looks like, and sounds like, and acts like, when it takes human flesh, is seen most clearly in Jesus of Nazareth – that’s far more specific and concrete than a lot of people these days want their gods to be – but that is the claim of Christianity – the loving Creator who had called Israel to be his co-workers in cultivating the abundance of creation completed and expanded that work in Jesus, the Christ, and is completing that work through the influence of the Holy Spirit – God chose to take flesh in a Galilean peasant preacher who turned the tears of his people to joy by assuring them of God’s reconciling presence in their midst, at work for their freedom to be the people God had created them to be
- That freedom is as important in our day as it was in theirs – it is the freedom to be defined and nourished as significant contributors to the world’s well-being – the freedom not to be confined by our own tears and fears, or by those who cause them – so, in that freedom, we keep sowing the seeds of God’s peace with every conversation we have, in every place we speak, for every person in our circles of influence – sow those seeds with rejoicing this week – within yourselves and among all those you meet

### **Your Notes**

### **Prayers of the people offering thanks, seeking help, and being awed**

[The form and flow of thanks, help, and awe is taken from Anne Lamott’s wonderful little book on prayer, *Help, Thanks, Wow: The Three Essential Prayers* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2012)].