

## **Dec 12 – (Leaders) Psalm 126 “Sowing in Sorrow, Reaping in Joy”**

1. We all yearn for joy. Why is it that joy seems so elusive?

*Joy is elusive for we so often wrap up our joy in circumstance. Circumstance is something that we have little to no control over.*

*We all have our circumstantial “if onlys”. If only I could get into that school, land that job, meet that special someone, find healing and wholeness etc etc. then I would have joy. But we know that if we have every seen one of those circumstantial if onlys met our joy is temporary for another if only quickly takes its place.*

*We are bombarded by advertising that tells us that joy can be purchased. It is a commodity up for sale. If you just had that car, looked this way, went on that vacation, invested in that asset you would have joy. But joy in anything that is mutable, anything that changes will never last, will always fade.*

### **Read Psalm 126**

2. The psalm reflects both overflowing joy and the sorrow of a life likened to a dry arid desert. This reveals to us that life is the intermingling of joy and sorrow. In the sermon Tim proposed that this is a truth we shouldn't just accept but rather embrace. Why? because Jesus, who reveals to us what it is to live a truly human life, was a man who embraced fully both joy and sorrow. Where do we see this in the life of Jesus? What impact did that have on those around him?

*His enemies accused him of being a drunkard and a glutton, hanging out with all the wrong people (Luke 7:34) He was immersed in the joyous occasions of people's lives – turning water into wine to keep a party going (John 2)*

*He was a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief (Isaiah 53). One of the most common phrases used to describe Jesus' emotional life is that he was 'moved with compassion' – a Greek word that relates to the internal organs, he would feel things down to the very core of his being.*

*In his joy Jesus was a joy to be around and brought more joy to lives of those around him by his joy in the normal things of life – feasting – children – etc...*

*In his sorrow – when Jesus encountered evil, sin, brokenness, pain, he was moved with compassion and from that it drove his actions – with tears that relate – with words that taught – a touch that healed – a strength that protects – a welcome that embraces. His sorrow brought change to the world.*

3. How does coming to know and follow Jesus both deepen our joy and deepen our sorrow?

*We come to discover in Jesus the immutable unchanging love and grace and forgiveness of God for us in Jesus. This is the foundation for our joy - a joy no circumstance can take from us.*

*Jesus was a man of sorrows for he saw unlike anyone else who has ever walked the face of the earth the father's good for his creation and saw clearly how sin and death had marred the goodness of what God intended. As we come to know Jesus we will come to see more clearly what the world is meant to look like under his reign and how sin and death undermine that goodness. That will naturally and by the Spirit bring deep sorrow - that we pray moves us with compassion to respond with loving action.*

(vs. 5-6) The Psalmist invites us to sow our sorrows, to do something intentional with our tears to reap a harvest of joy.

4. This reveals to us that there is a way to waste our tears, we come through the other side with nothing to show for it. What are some of the ways we waste our tears?

*In a reflection on this psalm Tim Keller highlights two ways (there may be more) that we waste our sorrows.*

*The first is by bottling them up, covering them over, not giving them expression. We may do this because we want to give the impression that we are strong, we have this. We may do this because we are fearful of them, that they may bury us...*

*The Second is by spilling them out, venting them. This often sets up a pattern of venting our frustrations but then going back into the same situation no different, the frustration will build again, until we once more vent them out.*

5. The psalmist in their sorrow sows their tears by both looking back and looking forward. The psalmist looks back to the character and work of God displayed in history (vs 1-3), and also looks forward (vs. 4) to the promise that God would flood the earth with new creation. How does this posture of looking back at God's character and work most notably in the person and work of Jesus, and looking forward for the realization of his promises sow our tears for a harvest of joy?

*In the sermon Tim reflected a little on how we can process our sorrows before the cross.*

*We often process our sorrows by assigning blame. They did this to me, I wouldn't be this way if not for them – which may well be true – but processing our sorrows before the cross – before Jesus dying for my sin – means I can both look at their sin and at my own sin. I can ask honestly how have I contributed to this? Where is my self-centeredness in this? Where is my sin in this? I can answer those honestly without being crushed or buried in guilt for there is Jesus crushed for my transgressions, buried for my sin, stripped naked that I would be covered with his forgiveness.*

*Processing my sorrow before the cross means that I won't wallow in self-pity – for there on the cross is the only truly innocent victim and it isn't me.*

*Processing my sorrow before the cross means that I can see that God can bring meaning and purpose and redemption out of even the sorrow I am facing – for when I look at the cross it appears foolish and yet it was the means by which God brings about new creation.*

*Processing my sorrow before the hope of glory, before the promise of new creation means my sorrow will be mingled with hope for I know that Jesus is returning to bring peace where there has been conflict – justice where there has been wrong – life where there has been death – healing where there has been disease.*

6. What have you learned from this psalm that can help you “pray your sorrows”?

*The first part of the conversation will probably lead naturally into answers hear that can guide your prayers for one another as you wrap up your time however it might help to bring in here a reflection on the organic nature of the truths you are considering. It is no mistake that these truths are expressed in agricultural imagery.*

*As you pray your sorrows to reap a harvest of joy there may be times and seasons in which you don't see many results (as you do when you observe the growth of a plant) – but then a shoot of green – a leaf unfurls – a stem reaches for the sun... take heart it will come it just may take time.*

*Agriculturally the more seeds you sow the more fruit you reap. As you pray your sorrow know that the more you sow the more you reap – the more you pray out your sorrows holding nothing back the more the harvest of joy – so let it all out – hold nothing back – bury it all under the fertile soil of his love, grace, and forgiveness.*