

Aldersgate UMC of Butte, MT

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April 3, 2022

Background to Scripture

Matthias Krier

One of our lectionary passages of scripture slated for today is Psalm 126. I confess that I have not spent much time with this psalm until this past week or so. When I read the very last word of this psalm, it reminded me of a hymn I heard years ago in Protestant churches. "Bringing in the Sheaves" was not a hymn we sang in the church I grew up in. I get very nostalgic with the theme of harvest since I grew up on a farm in South Dakota. Not only is this reminiscent of harvest time, I think about all those who have been oppressed or who have suffered since the dawn of humanity. Whether it was the early Christians, or African Americans during the slave trade or Native Americans being stripped of their heritage, I pause to reflect on those who have wept and those who have laughed and come to know joy. Imagine how many oppressed people would appreciate this most joyous psalm. This is a brief summary of what you are about to hear:

VS 1-3 ... past deliverance

V 4 A prayer of help in the present

VS 5,6 ... A joyous future

Scripture Lesson: Psalm 126

A Harvest of Joy

¹ When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dream.

² Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
and our tongue with shouts 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 rejoiced.

⁴ Restore our fortunes, O Lord,
like the watercourses in the Negeb.

⁵ May those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy.

⁶ Those who go out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home with shouts of joy,
carrying their sheaves.

The Word of God for the people of God. **Thanks be to God.**

Message

I Come With Joy

I come with joy to meet my Lord, forgiven, loved and free, in awe and wonder to recall his life laid down for me, his life laid down for me.

Hymn: "I Come With Joy"

Ever get choked up with a hymn that we are singing in church and can't get the words out? There are a number of hymns that do this to me and that is okay, as a friend here in church has said to me, "when you get tears or when you get all choked up, you are near to God."

I know that to be the case for so many with hymns like "Hymn of Promise", "Amazing Grace" or "How Great Thou Art". I believe this is so because we have sung these hymns during the funerals of loved ones and it brings back a feeling of both joy as well as sorrow. Joy for knowing this loved one

who has passed and sorrow because they are no longer here with us, at least not in physical form.

For those who may or may not remember there is a qualitative difference between happiness and joy. Simply put:

Happiness is dependent on happenings
Joy is dependent on a relationship to God
No one can steal your joy
Without your permission!

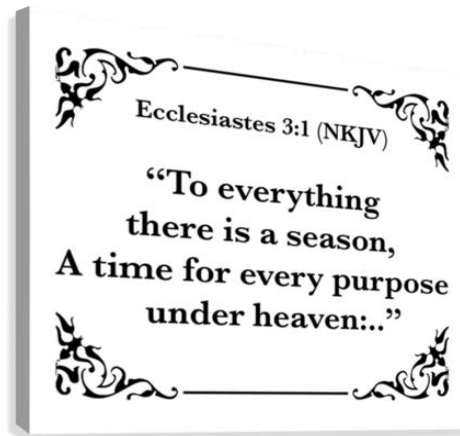
When I read this lectionary psalm for today, I was reminded of one of my all time favorite scripture passages, Ecclesiastes 3, that I use on a regular basis.

For everything there is a season and for every matter under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die



I confess that I have been more emotional these past two years and not just because I have been away from family. I, like some of you, have lost loved ones these past couple of years. I, like you, have loved ones with serious illnesses and some are not going to live much longer here on planet earth. Now we can say they will be in a better place, but don't say that to me, because I am not ready to let go. Just listen and hear my pain and I shall do the same for you.

We cannot know joy without knowing sorrow.
We cannot know happiness without knowing pain.

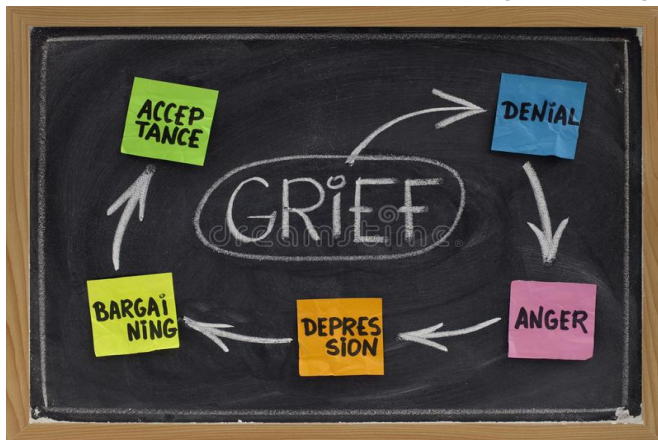


In order for us to truly live the abundant life Jesus promised, we must deal with our pain and grief. Many of you are aware of the Five Stages of Grief Developed by Elizabeth Kubler Ross and this 3 minute video will remind us of how important it is to pay attention to what happens to us during times of loss:

VIDEO OF FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF

[The Five Stages of Grief and Loss](#) 2 min.50 seconds

When we experience serious loss of one kind or another, remember, as said in the video, we may not go through these stages in this order.



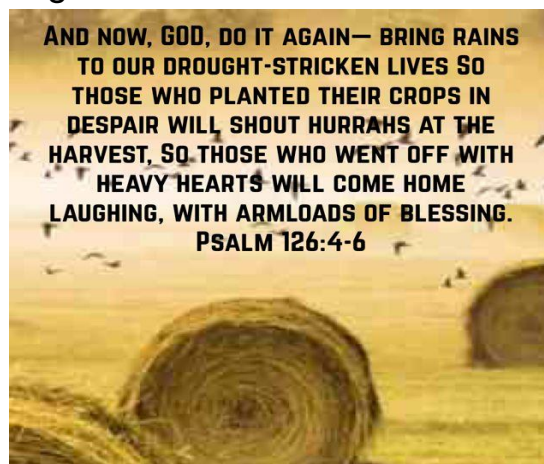
We may not want to admit it, but the stages of denial, anger, depression, bargaining are real before we can get to acceptance. We must be true to ourselves and own each stage if we are to move forward in our lives.

The final stage of acceptance leads us to serenity as we know for those of us who pray the Serenity Prayer on a regular basis. As many of you know, I have printed on my business card, the Serenity Prayer, because of how much I use it on a day to day basis.

GOD,
grant me the
Serenity
to accept the things
I cannot CHANGE;
Courage
to CHANGE
the things I can;
and
Wisdom
to know the DIFFERENCE.

When I read from Psalm 126, it goes to the heart of how we need to live and move and have our being. We cannot be afraid to weep, because there is much to cry about. We cannot be afraid to mourn, because there is much to grieve. When I get into a dark place with my grief, this verse comes to mind: *“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”* Many of you that are sitting here today, have lost a loved one—a relative or a friend in the past couple of years. Let’s be honest. It is painful to lose someone you love! And then there are those of us who now have a loved one with a terminal disease. When we are honest with our emotions we will indeed weep when we need to weep and by doing so, there will come a time that we will laugh and even dance. For everything there is a season and for every matter under heaven.

Let us return to the verse on the front of our bulletin and use this during our time of Communion. This time, however, we will focus on the Peterson’s version from the Message Bible:



I come with joy to meet my Lord, forgiven, loved and free

In awe and wonder to recall his life laid down for me
His life laid down for me.

Let us sing verses 1-3 of our hymn of preparation for the Sacrament of Holy
Communion.

Hymn of Preparation # 617 I Come With Joy vs. 1-3