

First Baptist Church Merritt Island
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Deeply Rooted (JOY)
Matthew 1 and Psalm 126

The word Advent means arrival. It's the season that helps us celebrate the arrival of Jesus into this world on the very first Christmas Day.

And the structure for this year's Advent series is taken from the genealogy of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew. This family tree is the historical record of how God brought His Son into this world. But the ancestors of Jesus provide more than just an account of how God brought His Son into this world. They exemplify why He brought Jesus into this world. He came to bring abundant life to anyone and everyone who would trust in Him. A life filled with hope, peace, joy, and love. Those things are only found as our lives are deeply rooted in the life of Jesus.

This morning's Advent theme is joy. So, let's look for a lesson on joy from the genealogy of Jesus.

Matthew 1:1-2, 6, 11-12, 17

1 The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Verse 2 starts a new paragraph or section...

2 Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,

Go to the start of the next section in verse 6...

And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah,

Now, go to the end of this paragraph in verse 11...

11 and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

Verse 12 starts a new paragraph...

12 And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel,

Now, jump down to the very end of the genealogy.

17 So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.

Matthew breaks down the history of Israel into 3 sections.

Section 1 – Abraham to David.

Section 2 – David to Deportation.

Section 3 – Deportation to Christ.

Abraham was significant because God promised that his offspring would become a mighty nation and one of his descendants would bless the entire world. David was significant because God promised him that one of his descendants would sit on his throne and be the Great King who would rule forever.

But, what about the deportation? Well, as you might remember, God promised Abraham that his descendants would live in a special land where they would experience His blessing if they would

remain faithful to Him. But they didn't remain faithful to Him. And, though God warned them over and over again, they wouldn't listen. They rejected God's rule and began to serve pagan gods.

So, God allowed Babylon to invade the promised land and take the Jews as captives in Babylon. You might remember from our study last year that Babylon was the setting for the book of Daniel. It was a time when God's people were separated from the temple and the blessing of God's presence.

But, by God's grace, the exile didn't last forever. In His providence, God brought the exile to an end and allowed His people to return to the land of promise.

And that's where we find out lesson for this week's Advent theme of joy.

Psalm 126

A SONG OF ASCENTS.

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 they said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them." 3 The LORD has done great things for us; we are glad. 4 Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like streams in the Negeb! 5 Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy! 6 He who goes out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.

This Psalm is part of a series of Psalms known as the "Psalms of Ascent." These Psalms were used by God's people as they would make their annual pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem. As they sang these songs and meditated on the truths found in them, their hearts were prepared for worship.

And Psalm 126 is reference to the return of God's people from exile in Babylon.

Look at verse 1.

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

Zion is another name for the hill where the city of Jerusalem sits. It's where the Temple of God was built. And verse 1 is talking about the point in time when God restored His people to the city of Jerusalem. That happened in 538 BC. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah record what happened when they returned. God moved the heart of the Persian King, Cyrus the Great, to issue a decree that permitted the Jews to be free from their captivity and return to their home.

And verse 1 says it was like a dream come true.

Look at verse 2:

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."

When the people were liberated from their captivity, it brought them the kind of joy that made them laugh out loud. Have you ever had that kind of joy?

- The day the Cleveland Browns beat the Pittsburgh Squeelers, or...
- The day of your wedding, or...
- The day your child was born, or...
- The day your doctor declared you cancer-free...

Your mouth was filled with laughter and with shouts of joy. That's how the people of God were.

And the nations saw it. They saw this helpless group of captives receive a decree from the world's most powerful king. And all they could say was that the Lord had done great things for them. It was the work of God. He was the One who stirred the heart of King Cyrus. God brought them deliverance. And it brought them joy.

3 The LORD has done great things for us; we are glad.

That's what this Psalm is all about – the joy that comes through the work of the Lord.

But look at verse 4.

Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like streams in the Negeb!

The Lord brought His people joy, but there came a point in time when that joy was under attack.

After the Jews returned to Jerusalem with shouts of joy, what they encountered was a season of deep resistance. Enemies showed up and tried to thwart the work of rebuilding the wall around the city. They tried to destroy the work to restore the Temple. And the shouts of joy were replaced with cries of distress.

They had been restored by God's work, and they needed the work of God to restore them again. They needed the river of God's blessing to flow in their lives like streams in the Negeb. That might not mean much to you, but the Negeb was a desert land in the south part of the promised land. It was a dry, parched wilderness.

But there would be times when God would send rain. And that rain would funnel from all the mountain regions in the north to the desert land of the Negeb. The desert valleys would be transformed into a land of flowing streams. And verse 4 is a call for God to do a work that would bring streams in the desert.

Can you relate to that? Sorrow turned to joy and then joy turned to sorrow. That's where many of us find ourselves today. We are in a fight for joy. The days of laughter find themselves in the rearview mirror of our lives. The place of blessing has become a desert land.

The joy of our wedding day has turned into a desert land as marriage has become hard. The joy of our child's birth has turned into a desert land as our prodigal has gone astray. The joy of our health has turned into a desert land as cancer has returned.

And we find ourselves, like the people of Israel, in a fight to find joy. We need the God who has worked in our past to do a work for our future.

Now, look at verses 5-6.

Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy! 6 He who goes out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.

As the Psalmist looks to the future, notice the hope in these verses. Sowing in tears will bring about reaping with joy. That's hope. The Psalmist believes God will work again. God will bring a harvest. The Psalmist confidently believes God will restore their joy.

The joy they had at the beginning is rooted in the faithful and powerful work of God. And the joy they will have in their future is rooted in the faithful and powerful work of God.

And that gives us our big idea for this morning.

Big Idea: Joy is deeply rooted by confident faith in the work of God.

If you are fighting for joy today, you need to know it only comes from one source: the faithful and powerful work of God.

This world will not produce true and lasting joy. Your job, your health, your marriage, your children, your bank account, your president, your friends, none of them are sources of joy. They are gifts that might bring you joy. But they are gifts not sources. God alone brings joy.

That's why Philippians, the great book of the Bible that's all about joy, says, Rejoice, in the LORD. Only the Lord can bring you joy. Joy comes through the work of God. So, if you want joy, then look to the Lord, rely on His work.

So, what does it look like to pursue joy in the work of the Lord when our joy is under attack?

That's what Psalm 126 gives us. There are four things in this Psalm that describe what it looks like to pursue joy in the work of the Lord. Let me show them to you in the time we have remaining.

1. We pursue joy in the work of the Lord when we REFLECT ON GOD'S WORK.

3 The LORD has done great things for us; we are glad.

Although their joy is under attack, the Psalmist looks back and acknowledges what God has done. And notice what he says: we are glad. That's present tense. He doesn't say, "We were glad." He says, "We ARE glad."

Joy comes when we look back and acknowledge all that God has done for us. Has God done anything for you? You bet He has. If you are struggling to remember something, I'll help you out.

2000 years ago, in a little town called Bethlehem, God sent His Son into this world. On that first Christmas Day, the angels announced His birth of Jesus. Do you remember what they said?

Luke 2:9–11

And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. 10 And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

Good news brings great joy. And what is the good news? Jesus has come. And that's a reason to rejoice.

REJOICE BECAUSE JESUS IS A SAVIOR

He came to save His people from their sin. Through His perfect life, His sacrificial death on the cross for our sin, and His glorious resurrection, Jesus has provided deliverance from our captivity to sin, death, hell, and the grave. If you are trusting in Jesus as Savior, Rejoice! You are forgiven of all your

sin. You are set free from the powers of darkness. You are no longer a slave, you're a son or daughter of the Most High God.

If you've never placed your faith and trust in Jesus, today is your day of deliverance. If you will call on the name of the Lord Jesus, the Bible says you will be saved. Good news. Great joy.

REJOICE BECAUSE JESUS IS CHRIST THE LORD

He is God in the flesh. He is the promised King who is ruling and reigning over heaven and earth. He is mighty and in control. Every problem that is over your head is under His feet. Good news. Great joy.

Christmas was the arrival of God on planet earth. Jesus is the Savior who is Christ the Lord.

As you fight for joy, reflect on the work of God who so loved this world, who so loved you and me, that He sent us Jesus. He has done great things for us. Heaven has helped us, and we are glad!

2. We pursue joy in the work of the Lord when we PRAY FOR GOD'S WORK.

4 Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like streams in the Negeb!

As you fight for joy, pray. Ask God to fill you with a stream in your desert and that's exactly what He will do. You see, joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit produces a river of life flowing out of those who trust in Jesus.

John 7:37–39

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" 39 Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive...

Joy comes through the filling of the Holy Spirit and the filling of the Holy Spirit comes as we pray to be filled with the Spirit.

So, if you are in a fight for joy, let me ask you what you are doing to pursue joy? Honestly. Are you seeking joy in money? You won't find it there. Are you seeking joy in worldly pleasure? You won't find it there. Are you seeking joy in hobbies or games or social media or romantic relationships or a promotion at work or alcohol or your spouse or your children? Friend, you won't find it there.

You don't have joy because you are looking in all the wrong places.

If you need joy this morning, you need to stop running around trying to find joy in this world and get on your knees and go to the source. Joy comes as we pray for the filling of the Holy Spirit. When was the last time you did that?

3. We pursue joy in the work of the Lord when we JOIN IN GOD'S WORK.

5 Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy! 6 He who goes out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.

As I was studying this text, I spent a pretty good amount of time trying to figure out what the Psalmist is referring to here. Namely, I was a bit stumped by what he means by seed. In some parts of the Bible, seed is a reference to the word of God, like in Jesus' parable of the soils. In other parts of the

Bible, like 2 Corinthians 9, sowing seed is a reference to giving generously to the mission of Jesus through the local church. So, what is the seed here?

After diligent study and, might I say, brilliant observational prowess, do you want to know what I think the seed is referring to? I think it's seeds. Remember the historical context of this Psalm. The people of God had been in exile 70 years. The fields had become overgrown. There weren't any crops. People were hungry and in need. They weren't joyful, they were hangry.

And the Psalmist is calling them into something. He is calling them to step into the God-ordained order of this world. God is constantly at work. He is causing rain. He is renewing the soil. He is making the sun to shine. He is germinating seeds and causing them to spring to new life. He is changing the seasons and turning winter to spring and springtime to harvest. It's a work He is doing.

But these people would have missed out on yet another time of harvest, consigning themselves to another year without food, unless they stepped into God's fruit-producing work. We have to join it if we want to have joy in it. You can't make things grow. You can't control the weather or produce new life. Those are God's works. But you will not enjoy harvest if you don't sow seeds when it's time to plant. Even if the first drops of water that fall on your newly planted seeds are the tears that are coming from your own eyes.

So, I take the Psalmist to be urging God's people to join the work God is doing in the world. Though there is a time for allowing yourself to grieve (which is exceptionally important and healthy), we aren't supposed to sit endlessly in our sorrow. And we won't be able to wait until we feel joyful again to step back into life. There will be sowing through tears as we wait for God's work in our marriage or our children or our job or our grief. But we will never enjoy the season of harvest if we sit paralyzed by our joylessness and miss out on the opportunities God has given us to plant.

What would it look like for you to join in where God is working? To start planting new seeds in faith and moving into new times of joy-filled harvest?

- Do you want the joy of seeing new people come to Christ? Then step into a time of planting by witnessing to your "ones" or inviting the people in your life to join you for worship next week or our Christmas Eve service.
- Do you want the joy of seeing fruit grow in yourself and others? Then step into a time of planting by joining in what God is doing in our children's ministry each week.
- Do you want the joy of seeing God miraculously provide for the needs of hungry and hurting people? Then step into a time of planting by joining in what He is doing through the House of Hope or the Agape Women's center.

4. We pursue joy in the work of the Lord when we ANTICIPATE GOD'S WORK.

6 He who goes out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.

These verses are filled with confidence in God's work. Verse six says they shall come home with shouts of joy. It's a guarantee. And there is a kind of joy that comes simply from believing that joy is coming.

Do you know what I mean? It's called the-kid-at-Christmas effect. Kids anticipate that Christmas day will be filled with joy as they finally get what they've been waiting on all year. And there's joy in the anticipation. If you really believe that joy is coming in the future, it produces joy even in the waiting. It's grieving the death of your loved one yet rejoicing that you will see them again one day.

And, that dynamic is what Advent is all about. It's a time to prepare our hearts to celebrate the arrival of Jesus with Joy.

And that's not just looking back at the arrival of Jesus at Christmas, it's looking forward to the arrival of Jesus when He comes again. And, make no mistake about it, Jesus is coming again. And when He does, He will right every wrong. He will heal every wound in the heart of everyone who is trusting in Him. He will make all things new, including you if you are trusting in Him.

For those who are trusting in Jesus, He will wipe away every tear from every eye. There will be no more sorrow or sadness or sickness or pain. There will be no more bad news. You will be reunited with all your loved ones who have gone on before you in Christ. You will bask forever in the eternal harvest of joy and pleasure forevermore as you live in the house of God your Father and look on the face of Jesus Christ the Lord. You will never sin again. You will never be disappointed again. You will never be hungry or thirsty and the time of planting will be over as you pull up a seat at the eternal feast prepared at the table of Christ.

Jesus is coming again. And joy comes as your heart believes it and says, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."