

Devotion: Thursday, April 2, 2020

Psalm 126

¹ When the LORD restored the fortunes of^[a] Zion,
we were like those who dreamed.^[b]

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,^[c] 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.

An atheist was telling a Christian, "There is no God, and there is no life after death."
The Christian said, "Well, let me ask you this: A horse, a cow and a deer all eat grass. Yet a deer excretes little pellets, while a cow turns out a flat patty, but a horse produces clumps. Why do you suppose that is?"

The atheist said, "I have no idea."

The Christian said, "How can you talk about God when you don't know sh*%?"

A guy goes to his barber and he's all excited. He says, "I'm going to go to Rome. I'm flying Alitalia and staying at the Rome Hilton, and I'm going to see the pope."

The barber says: "Ha! Alitalia is a terrible airline, the Rome Hilton is a dump, and when you see the pope, you'll probably be standing in back of 10,000 people."

So, the guy goes to Rome and comes back. His barber asks: "How was it?"

"Great," he says, "Alitalia is a wonderful airline. The hotel was great. And I got to meet the pope!"

"You *met* the pope?"

"I bent down to kiss the pope's ring."

"And what did he say?"

"He said, 'Where did you get that crummy haircut?'"

A man dies and finds himself in a small room furnished with a couch and a TV. There's another guy sitting on the couch watching the TV.

"So is this heaven or hell?" the newly deceased man asks.

"Well, there are no windows or doors and no apparent way out," the man on the couch answers.

"So this is hell?" the newcomer responds.

"I don't know," says the other guy without looking up. "They did give us this big-screen TV."

"So maybe this is heaven?"

"Maybe, but the TV only gets one channel."

"Okay, so maybe this is hell."

"I'm not sure. The only station the TV gets is PBS."

"So maybe this is heaven after all!" exclaims the relieved newbie.

"Yeah, except for one thing."

"What's that?"

"It's always pledge week."

OK only one more:

An atheist was spending a quiet day fishing on Loch Ness. Suddenly his boat was attacked by the legendary monster. In one easy flip the beast tossed the man and his boat high into air. Then it opened its mouth to swallow both.

As the man tumbled head over heels in the air, he cried out, "Oh my God! Help me!"

At once the ferocious attack froze in place. Time stood still with the atheist suspended in midair. Then a booming voice came down from the clouds: "I thought you didn't believe in Me!" "Come on God, give me a break!" the man pleaded. "Two minutes ago I didn't believe in the Loch Ness monster either!"

A Christian that can laugh in the face of disaster is a Christian that understands the victory of the resurrection and enormous power of God. A laughing Christian understands that the smartest of humans and the most amazing accomplishments of humanity are but foolish child's play for God.

In these last few days before the solemnity of Holy Week, we need to recall the great things God has done for us and the reason we celebrate Easter. Because when Easter finally does arrive, laughter and shouts of joy should bubble out of our mouths. God has done great things. God has left us an empty tomb as a punch line to the greatest prank ever played: Jesus rising from the dead. The resurrection of Jesus is no joke. We can imagine God's pleasure, even laughter, when everyone thought death would overcome divine power and love.

Being a Christian and following Christ is very serious as is our commitment to God, but we need to remember that we are called to rejoice in the Lord always. Even when we are shut-in. Rejoicing means to be filled with joy and that means being able to laugh at things sometimes, just as God was probably laughing a little bit when everyone looked for Jesus in the empty tomb. God's great joke was that Jesus was not dead; he was alive again. Our Lord and Savior is risen. Be glad and rejoice and let out a good laugh.

Let us pray:

Gracious and Loving Creator, we know the whole world is your sanctuary, and you are present at every roadside altar we build. We know your voice is heard from mountaintop to mountaintop, and your mighty reach spans the horizons from sea to shining sea. We know when any knee is bent in humility and any voice raised in praise, you are there.

O God, teach us to laugh at porcupines, giraffes, playful kittens and ourselves. Surely you must have a sense of humor to create such as these. Give us wisdom to worry less and trust more. Help us discover the difference between values which are real and dreams which are only plastic.

Show us the best way, not necessarily the most expedient way.

Help us express kindness to those in need and give us courage to seek justice for the oppressed.

Give us patience enough to try on someone else's sandals before we criticize.

And now, O God, hear our words of praise and accept our celebrations of gratitude for your love and mighty words. Amen.---*Rev Jerry Johnson*