



Growth Group Questions
September 8, 2024
“Dealing With Drought and Doubt”

Context:

Psalm 126 is considered one of the psalms of ascent (Psalm 120-134) which were the songs that the nation of Israel sang as they made their way to Jerusalem to worship God at the temple. It begins by remembering a time when God had rescued the nation and restored their fortune. No one is certain what specific event is being remembered, but many believe it would have been when the people of Israel returned to Jerusalem after the Babylonian Exile.

The psalm expresses a sense of awe and gratitude. Whatever negative situation they had been enduring has been restored by God. There is laughter and songs of joy. Even the other nations recognize the work that God had done for Israel. This public recognition reinforces the Israelites’ understanding that their deliverance was divinely orchestrated by God.

Mention is made of the Negev desert – a vast expanse of land known for its barrenness located in southern Israel and occupying about sixty percent of the country. The psalmist is praying that their desperation and uncertainty will be transformed like the rushing streams in the Negev that transform from dry, barren land to flowing waters. =

The word joy appears four times in these six verses as desperation and uncertainty lead to songs of joy and a prayer for their fortunes to be restored. Prayer eventually ends in praise.

The final verses present a vision of hope through the imagery of sowing and reaping. Those who sow with tears, the psalmist writes, will reap with joy. This suggests that while present hardships and doubt and difficulty may exist, they are not permanent. Through perseverance and prayer and faith, the struggle of the people will turn into rejoicing as they see the fruits of their labor resulting in an abundant harvest.

Scripture:

Psalm 126

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

Psalm 63

¹ You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you;
I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you,
in a dry and parched land where there is no water.

Proverbs 24:30-34

³⁰ I went past the field of a sluggard, past the vineyard of someone who has no sense; ³¹ thorns had come up everywhere, the ground was covered with weeds, and the stone wall was in ruins. ³² I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw: ³³ A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest—³⁴ and poverty will come on you like a thief and scarcity like an armed man.

Joel 2:23-24

²³ Be glad, people of Zion, rejoice in the Lord your God, for he has given you the autumn rains because he is faithful. He sends you abundant showers, both autumn and spring rains, as before. ²⁴ The threshing floors will be filled with grain; the vats will overflow with new wine and oil.

John 20:24-29

²⁴ Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.” ²⁶ A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” ²⁸ Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹ Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”



Questions:

1. The title of this week's sermon is "Dealing With Drought and Doubt." What is the drought and the doubt that Christians often face?
2. What does the Bible tell us about doubt?
3. Pastor Paul said if we have faith, we will also have doubts. Do you agree? Why or why not?
4. Why is so important to deal with our doubts and times of drought?
5. What does it mean to be a "good steward" of our doubts?
6. How do we keep moving through our doubts and times of drought?
7. What do you see as the main message of Psalm 126?
8. What lessons can we learn from the story of "Doubting Thomas" found in John 20:24-29?

Pastor Paul's Sermon Reflections:

1. How honest are you with God when you pray? Do you believe Jesus can handle your doubts?
2. Psalm 126 looks back and remembers God's faithfulness as a way to encourage people in their faith. Can you remember a time God brought "restoring rain" to your soul? How did that make you feel? How does that encourage you today?

