

still waters

home church studies

Psalm 126

[Worship]

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.

Consider:

[Words]

Lent is a time to participate in the suffering and death of Christ, in order that we may be ready for the Easter gift of new life. Participation in that suffering consists in a life of trusting obedience boldly lived in contradiction to the way the world is organized. Lenten discipline is a practice of our own life as the willing giving up of self in obedience in order to receive a new self from God.

Paul's lyrical admonition, based on his own journey to Christ, is to share in the suffering (by ready obedience) in anticipation of the new power of Easter resurrection. Life with Christ is thus a two-step move that we make again and again, self-giving and receiving of new self, loss and then gain.

John's gospel anticipates Jesus' death. The woman treats his soon-to-die body as though it were already dead. Framing the story with reference to Lazarus (now raised from the dead) prepares us for the "life and death" questions that always swirl around Jesus. The woman uses her expensive perfume to anoint him and thereby "invests" in the death of Jesus. Her "investment"

is a narrative portrayal of the "sharing in his sufferings" that Paul commends.

Isaiah's poetry knows that the journey home is through the desert, the place without resources. The poet also knows that God makes a way out of no way. Thus the path through the arid place teems with rivers; all the animals gather around the water ... the gift of life found in an unexpected place.

Lent comes before Easter, suffering before new life. We travel the whole way with Jesus

in whose death we invest our most precious possessions.
Walter Bruggemann



[Scripture]

Philippians 3.4b-14

16 From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. 17 So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. 20 So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Question:

How is your Lent going?

Where has God shown you places of surrender, trust and reinvestment in following Christ, in your desert experience of reexamination?

What death are you going through in order to rise in new life?

Also, read John 12.1-8