

**23C* THE TIMELESS PSALMS:
A CALL TO WORSHIP
LENT 5C 2013
PSALM 126**

We come to worship our God, the Great Deliverer who still delivers!
With joy and celebration, we give thanks for God's gracious mercy.

We come to worship our God, the Great Restorer who still restores!
With songs of elation and delighted praise we sing: *"Thanks be to God!"*

We come to worship our God, the Great Redeemer who still redeems!
**With peaceful hearts and minds, we give thanks that God loved all that
God created, and considered us worthy of another opportunity to live in
the fullness of joy, found only with and through God's gracious generosity. Amen.**

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**PRAYERS OF THANKFULNESS & TRUST:
LENT 5C 2013
PSALM 126**

Pilgrims God, just as long ago, the people of Israel sang this Psalm as they approached the city of Jerusalem on their annual pilgrimage to the Temple, so we, too, sing our songs of thankfulness for God's goodness and mercy to each of us! Trustworthy God, you have been our Guide and Mentor through our life's journey of faith in you, and so we join with the pilgrims to say: *".... Yes, the Lord has done amazing things for us! What joy....!"* Just as they had experienced disappointment, sorrow, family separation and even despair, they also had experienced the joy and delight of trusting in their God to save and deliver them from harm; and we, too, have had struggles, pain, grief and disappointments.

This Psalm had two parts to it – there was the joyous celebration of the people knowing that they had been blessed by God – but they also thought about and remembered their experiences of personal spiritual growth as a result of various traumas. So they could also confidently sing: *"... Those who plant in tears will harvest with shouts of joy. They weep as they go to plant their seed, but they sing as they return with the harvest...."* Today, we give thanks for the harvest that has grown through our own faith experiences—and how God has so richly blessed us as we have grieved, wept, planted and nurtured; and have eventually harvested God's generous blessings in life.

Nurturing God, as we reflect on God's goodness to us, and how blessed we have been, and how in hindsight, the sorrows we encountered along life's way now seem like one long bad dream! We give thanks for the great mercy God has given to humanity, that remembered pain does eventually lose some of its sting; and that we are also blessed with hope for the future, that we never ever again experience such agonies! Comforting God, we thank you for our past, which had made us the people we now are, and we trust the future to you. Amen.

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**A PERSONAL MEDITATION:
LENT 5C 2013
PSALM 126**

I believe that the last few hours of any plane flight are always the longest; and that the last remaining miles/kilometres to our destination are the slowest of the entire journey! As those pilgrims trudged their long and slow way through the hills of Zion and into Jerusalem, and saw in the distance, the dome of the Temple - they too must have believed they would never reach their destination, and its glorious celebrations of worship and praise to God; and the precious time catching up with their family and dear friends!

Creative pause: The road nearest to home often seems the longest to travel!

The people of Israel would have dreamed and planned for these journeys to Jerusalem for the Passover Festival, but not every good Israelite was able to fulfil this dream. I imagine that there was great anticipation for this potentially hazardous pilgrimage, but the people always thought it was worth the risks associated with their journey. My only trip to one of the New Testament "Young Churches" was to Rome, and I prepared very carefully and prayerfully for that important and spiritual event. The most uplifting part of that experience was a visit to a house reputedly the home of one of the women active in the "Young Church", and to see the well-preserved villa with its ancient style gardens. My imagination easily experienced the shadows of long-ago spiritual experiences.

Creative pause: Often the anticipation and preparations are better than actual events.

After many years of drought, farmers in Australia, as in many other countries, plough and plant their wheat and grains, in hope and expectation of rain. Their prayer has long been: *"Restore our fortunes, Lord, as streams renew the desert."* For farmers, there is never any guarantee of suitable conditions for germination of seed or growth, and in the recent drought, numerous a farmer sowed their seed through a mist of tears, as for many, this was their last chance to harvest a viable crop. Some of them finally rejoiced in their harvest, whilst many others walked off their farms - broken, dejected and defeated. I believe that God does not give us guarantees for a pain-free life, or a perpetually joy-filled life; but what I do believe is that God gives us - or provides for us - the resources to live with that which descends upon us under the heading of "Life". I believe God trusts us to use those resources as best we can, and also provides us with nurturing compassion and comfort when things go wrong; and is always ready to hear and answer our prayers.

Creative pause: God provides us with the resources we need – we only have to access them!

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jstott@netspace.net.au