

From Tears to Shouts of Joy

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[0 : 00] The following message was given at a Sunday celebration at Trinity Grace Church in Athens. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

! Please turn in your Bible to Psalm 126. Psalm 126. I think this is a most appropriate psalm for this morning.

It is often the very first sentence of an article that determines whether or not I read on, whether or not I read the entirety of a particular article.

And it was the following opening sentence that immediately captured my attention and sparked my further reading. The author, also a pastor, wrote, quote, I had an epiphany while listening to Johnny Cash that transformed the way I preached the psalms.

I was all in. I had to read how this individual, this pastor, had an epiphany while listening to a Johnny Cash song.

[1 : 19] Now, listen, in the interest of full disclosure, I must inform you that I, I hope you're not disappointed by this, I'm not a fan of country music, okay?

Yeah, I am not. Actually, let's rephrase that, I dislike country music. No, no, even that isn't full disclosure.

Let's rephrase that. I can't stand country music. I apologize. No, I don't. I don't apologize.

I can't stand country music. Our good friend, Bill Kittrell, he loves Johnny Cash. And when I am in his car, he enjoys annoying me by playing different Johnny Cash favorites as loud as possible. And Bill sings along as well. So it is a very unpleasant experience for me. But boy, does he enjoy tormenting me with Johnny Cash songs.

[2 : 25] Now, the author goes on to describe what preceded this epiphany. Before leaving on vacation with his wife, he assembled traveling music for the journey.

So he wrote, my collection contained an eclectic mix, praise music, jazz, rock, country, and my wife and I listened to this mishmash of musical styles all through the trip.

However, he writes, it was in the middle of a Johnny Cash album that it finally hit me. It was not just ballads that told stories.

Every song told a story, or at least a part of one. Every song, whatever style, connected in some way to a story. That's what attracts us to music.

Some part of the singer's experience resonates with us. And then he wrote, the Psalms are the same. They come from ancient people who experienced the same feelings, challenges, and joy we feel now.

[3 : 33] As we read them, their stories become ours. The author of Psalm 126 has a story to tell us.

And it is an intensely personal story. It's a story of his deliverance from great affliction and anguish. So what I'm about to read to you is a song superior in every way to fulsome prison blues, Walk the Line, or your favorite song by your favorite band this morning.

For what I'm about to read to you is a story and a song divinely inspired by God himself that is meant to become our story and our song this very morning.

Psalm 126. As a public service announcement, let me just inform you that I want to capture in my reading of this psalm, Not only the content of the psalm, but the tone of the psalm.

[4 : 47] So this psalm actually begins similar to Walt's eruption following pastoral prayer. When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream.

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.

The Lord has done great things for us. We are glad.

Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like streams in the Negev. Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy.

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

[6 : 02] Three points I want to draw your attention to from this sweet psalm. First, the psalmist's recognition, or reflection rather. First, the psalmist's reflection from verses 1 through 3.

Second, the psalmist's request in verse 4. And thirdly, the psalmist's realization in verses 5 and 6. But we begin with the psalmist's reflection.

So the psalmist begins this song by remembering and reflecting on a time when the people of God were liberated from captivity and exile.

The psalmist doesn't specify the historical occasion for us. But what is important is the significance of the liberation and the suddenness of the liberation.

So informing the composing of this psalm is the painful experience of captivity followed by a dramatic deliverance.

[7 : 07] A deliverance so dramatic it was like a dream. And there is no doubt that the source of this liberation and the reason for the liberation is the Lord himself.

So notice, notice in verses 1, 2, 3, and 4, in small capital letters, the psalmist references the Lord. So the Lord is the reason for this liberation. The Lord is the reason for this rejoicing and this laughter.

The Lord. This is the personal name of God. This is the personal name of God that was revealed to Moses at the burning bush and revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai in Exodus 34.

This is the personal name of God. Yahweh. Yahweh, the covenant making, covenant keeping, Lord of his people who intervened in the Exodus to reveal his name to his people so that they might know him, so that they might call upon him by his personal name, so that they might have access to him.

[8 : 31] This is the Lord who revealed himself to Moses on Mount Sinai as the Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love to thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.

This is the Lord. This is that Lord. And so every time the psalmist references the Lord, small capital letters, he is reviewing in effect and rehearsing what took place in the Exodus.

So the great deliverance in the Old Testament is what took place in the Exodus, which points us to a hill called Calvary.

They were delivered from Egyptian slavery. We, by the grace of God, have been liberated from our captivity to sin by Christ and him crucified.

So when the author of this psalm references the Lord, it means that this psalm is informed by the Exodus and has been shaped by the Exodus.

[10 : 02] The psalmist intentionally draws our attention to the Lord and he draws our attention to the experience of those at this time who had been set free.

And his description of their experience is very vivid. It's very animated. It's very noisy. It is characterized, I'm sure you'd agree, it's characterized by some serious joy.

Verse 1b, We were like those who dream. So it was such a wonderful liberation. They actually wondered if it was real.

Is this real? Is this liberation from captivity, is it real? Or was it just a dream? That's how affected they were.

Verse 2, Then our mouth was filled with laughter and our tongue with shouts of joy. Even the surrounding Gentile nations noticed and they remarked in verse 2, The Lord has done great things for them.

[11 : 04] Then in verse 3, the psalmist sums it all up. The Lord has done great things for us and we are glad.

They're so glad their mouths are filled with laughter. Think about that for a moment. Their mouths are filled with laughter. What makes you laugh? You can tell a lot about a person by what makes them laugh.

And as the psalmist reflects on their experience of this gracious liberation by God from captivity, he describes the response of those freed as unrestrained laughter and shouts of joy.

Why? Why all the laughter? Why all the noisy, joyful shouts? This is most unusual. Well, actually, this was the appropriate response to their sudden, unexpected liberation from captivity. Because they were humanly incapable of liberating themselves from captivity because of their sin. And God graciously took action.

[12 : 17] Action they did not deserve. God graciously intervened. God kindly and graciously set them free. Their fortunes were restored. It was like a dream.

It was all like a dream. And by the way, my friends, there is a very real sense when each and every Christian can relate to us. Listen, we always, when we come to the psalms, have every advantage over the psalmist because we read these psalms with New Testament eyes.

We understand that these psalms, each and every psalm, ultimately in some way points to the Lord Jesus Christ. And so when they're describing their experience of liberation from captivity at whatever point in redemptive history, we have every advantage.

When we read these psalms, we realize they point to the Lord Jesus Christ and they describe our liberation from captivity to sin. So there is a sense in which every Christian can relate to this experience, having been captive to sin, having been delivered from our sin by the grace of God. Listen, yes, yes, we are here to celebrate the sweet fifth anniversary of this very sweet and not crazy church. We are here to celebrate that.

[13 : 35] But first and foremost, as you've been so well led by your pastors, we are here, we are here to celebrate our liberation from captivity to sin.

That's what we are here first and foremost here this morning. And by the way, that's what you'll be doing next week. And for the foreseeable future, every Sunday, we gather to celebrate this liberation.

Every Sunday should be a reminder. Is it real? It's so wonderful. It's like a dream. I've been forgiven of all my sins.

Listen, whatever liberation from captivity the psalmist experienced. My fellow Christian, your deliverance was no less dramatic. Your liberation was sudden and unexpected as well.

And it was the merciful action of God alone as well. I mean, just for a moment, let's all just reflect on our conversion. Just reflect for a moment on your conversion.

[14 : 40] Was it not unexpected? Whether it appeared to be immediate and dramatic or gradual, as you look back, was it not unexpected?

Tell you something, my standing here today is most unexpected. My mom, 99 years old, still very much alive, mentally all there, remembers what I was like before my conversion, sadly into my shame, because of my arrogance and all my indulgence and all manner of sin.

I was very much immersed in the drug culture. My mom went to sleep many a night, as she would tell you today if you got her on the phone, crying as she thought about the future of her loser son. And then quite unexpectedly, completely unexpectedly, a guy who was a friend, an older friend who had actually participated in leading me in the drug culture, moved away to Florida, was converted, unbeknownst to any of us who remained in the Washington, D.C. area.

A few weeks after his conversion, decided that he wanted to return to the D.C. area to share with all those who were formerly his friends when he lived there.

[15 : 55] Wisely did not tell any of us that he had been converted, because had he done that, we would have all been on suspicious alert. So I had no idea the evening that Bob said, I would just like to spend time with you.

No idea what was about that big place. I began to smoke hash. I offered Bob some great Colombian hash. He declined.

I was momentarily perplexing. I wasn't deterred. I continued to smoke. And as I did, Bob, who had just been a Christian for a few weeks. Listen, so this is not a learned theologian who was coming for a visit.

This is somebody just converted. But he knew enough verses. Had a Bible with him. He knew enough verses to say to me from 1 Corinthians 15, Christ died for your sins.

All I can tell you is that in between tokes, the Spirit of God acted on my soul, dead in sin and trespasses. And I, by the grace of God, beheld the glory of God in the face of Christ, through the gospel of Christ, through the death of Christ, on the cross for my sins.

[17 : 14] My life was suddenly and dramatically changed that night. I can tell you, nobody saw that coming. Nobody called this. Nobody said, oh yeah, he's going to make a great Christian one.

Nobody.

And beyond that, he's going to be a pastor. Listen, it left people stunned, perplexed. But you know what it left me? Laughing.

Like I had never laughed before. By the way, had you known me before my conversion, I would call myself a happy sinner. I was. I was happy in sin. I was indulged in all manner of sin.

I was enjoying myself. I had a few friends who were more depressing kind of people. And when we'd get high, they wanted to ask, you know, we'd be outside. You know, is there a God? I mean, I would shut them down every day.

Hey, stop it. That's ruining my trip. Okay? I just, yeah, I just took some acid and I'm not interested in asking all of these kind of questions right now. So, I would always shut them down.

[18:09] I was a happy sinner. Oh my, my happiness was so superficial. It was so self-centered. It was so deceptive. No, no, the laughter this guy's talking about, yeah, that's real joy.

And that's what happened to me on that night. No one was prepared the next day for the C.J. Mahaney who woke up and was suddenly transformed and seeking to share the gospel with them. Your conversion was no different. It might not have been as dramatic as mine was. It might have been gradual over a period of time. It might have been a good kid. I've had plenty of people come to me over the years.

Yeah, well, you know, I was like, I was six and I was convicted in Sunday school because I wasn't sharing my Legos with my brother, you know, and so, you know, and they're trying to play it down as if, you know, but when I hear your testimony, I just, and this is my, well, part of my answer every time, I just say, hey, I want to talk to you, pal.

How I wish I was converted at six. God has been so merciful to you to arrest you at such a young age, convict you and reveal the gospel to you.

[19:25] Thank God for that Sunday school teacher or your parents. No, no, it's I who envy you, pal, not you who envy me because I live to this day with certain regrets about my sinful past.

Oh, I'm forgiven, but you are the one who should be grateful beyond words that you were converted at six when your sin patterns were only manifest at that time in not sharing your Legos with your brother.

I am the one who envies you. Regardless of your conversion experience, here's how the Bible describes our deliverance. I want you to remember this now just for this moment, just remember this.

Actually, I want you to not only remember it, I want you to feel this this morning. Ephesians 2 and you, you, yes, you, you, you, you, you, you, you, you, you. We're dead.

In trespasses and sins in which you once walked. Unaware of God. Unresponsive to God.

[20:27] Dead. Following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind.

And we're by nature children of wrath. Yes, objects of God's justice and wrath, like the rest of mankind. But now, here comes the unexpected. Here comes the sudden and the unexpected. But God, but God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ, by grace, you have been saved.

So that description of our conversion from captivity to sin, oh, that description, that description reminding us of the consequences of our sin, the righteous wrath of God against our sin, it's most unexpected.

And so, given its significance, given its suddenness, the effect should be delirious joy expressed by laughter.

[21:41] That's what the effect should be. Your conversion should make you laugh, should make you laugh because of the unexpected nature and effect of your conversion.

I'm saying that nothing should make us laugh, truly and gratefully laugh, like our conversion experience. Oh, Lord. There's nothing more unexpected, nothing more unanticipated than your deliverance from the captivity of sin by the grace of God through the gospel.

And Charles Spurgeon exhorts us to remember, remember our conversion, remember, don't forget your deliverance. He helps us to reflect on just what went down when he writes, let our hearts gratefully remember the former loving kindness of the Lord.

He did not merely lift us out of despondency. He raised us into wondering happiness. How good is that phrase? The Lord who alone turns our captivity does nothing by halves.

Those whom he saves from hell, he brings to heaven. He turns exile into ecstasy and banishment into bliss. None of us are so happy as those who are newly turned and returned from captivity.

[22 : 58] One more from his commentary on the Psalms. Alec Matier says, so throughout this Psalm, Psalm 126, laughter and singing and rejoicing are often the evidence of a salvation to which the recipients have contributed nothing but subsequent joy.

We took no part in it. It was done for us. We woke up to find out it was true. Sound familiar? My friends, so let's just never tire of reflecting on the miracle of our conversion.

You've been led so well the quote by John Piper drawing attention to our names being written in heaven. It's just all just wonderful leadership. Look, we took no part in our conversion.

We just woke up to find out it was true. As we look back on it, it's like a dream. It was so good. It was like a dream but it's not a dream.

It's reality. Now, notice as well the difference this reflection made in the heart and life of the psalmist. As he reflected on his past experience of liberation from captivity, here's what it motivated him to do.

[24 : 18] It motivated him to pray for revival in the present. So the psalmist requests, verse 4, restore our fortunes, O Lord, like streams in the Negev.

So reflection on his experience of deliverance from the past, it provoked him to pray for a fresh experience of God's mercy in the present. So this prayer, really this prayer reflects kind of the challenges of real life, challenges of real life following deliverance from captivity.

So time, it appears, his past and the experience of dramatic deliverance and its accompanying joy is now a distant memory. It's a vivid memory, but it's no longer like a present felt reality.

However, that vivid memory inspires the psalmist to pray that his good and gracious God, do it again, do it again, do it yet again.

So he prays for God to restore their fortunes again. He prays that God would do what he's previously done, what only God can do. He prays for another sudden and dramatic work of God where now dry land is suddenly filled with water and comes to life like streams in the Negev.

[25 : 30] He prays that captive hearts are suddenly liberated and laughing. And this language in verse 4, it's a strikingly similar language as verse 1, only here in verse 4 it's a prayer.

And Derek Kidner in his excellent commentary on the Psalms, he helpfully points out that there are two images, oh these are going to serve you, two images presented by the psalmist for revival and renewal in verses 4 through 6.

Mr. Kidner writes, the two images of renewal are not only striking, they are complementary. The first of them is all suddenness, a sheer gift from heaven.

Verse 4, the second is slow and arduous with man allotted to play a crucial part man allotted a crucial part to play in it and that will be verses 5 and 6.

So, the psalmist presents us and you want to keep these two images in mind, presents us with two images for revival and renewal, something sudden, something slow. Something sudden, something slow.

[26 : 38] The psalmist views his life and the life of God's people presently as a barren desert and so he appeals for God. God acts suddenly, acts suddenly, provide rain that would form streams of transforming grace and our experience in the past should provoke us and provoke our prayers and inspire our expectation for revival personally as well.

Revival in Athens, across our country and around the world. Our experience of mercy should provoke us to pray for others to have the same experience just like it has provoked your pastors to pray, Walt to pray this morning.

Then the psalmist noticed he articulates the second image for renewal and revival and the second one is slow and arduous with man allotted a crucial part to play in it through sowing.

So now we come to the final point, the psalmist's realization in verses five and six. Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy.

He who goes out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him. So the psalmist recognized he must not only pray, he must sow.

[27 : 59] He must do both. He must pray and he must sow. In the first image, praying, the results are sudden. They're sudden and they are undeserved. In the second image, sowing, the results

come only after a lengthy period of sowing.

And by the way, those results are undeserved as well. So both of those images are meant to inform our lives. There are times, my friend, when God works suddenly and unexpectedly and it appears we made little or no contribution.

There's a suddenness. By the way, those are my personal preference. That's my, my personal preference is pray suddenness. That's my personal preference. That's how I personally prefer to roll.

I'm going to pray, you move, suddenly, everything changes, laughter's everywhere. That's good. That's how I like to roll. That's my personal preference. But, often, the reaping and the rewards, they come only after the hard work of sowing and watering and weeding and waiting because normally, listen, normally, the slow precedes the sudden.

The sudden, rather, precedes the slow. No, the slow precedes the sudden. That's right. The slow precedes the sudden. So, separate the sudden, verse 4.

[29 : 28] 5 and 6 is about the slow and the slow precedes the sudden. And obviously, either way, the source of fruitfulness is God himself and God alone.

So, got two images. Verse 4 is this appeal to the sudden work of God. Verses 5 and 6 that they describe the slow and arduous work with man allotted a crucial part to play in it.

So, I'm sure this is obvious to you and actually, anybody in this room could address you more effectively on this point than I could because the psalmist is drawing from the world of agriculture. Drawing from the world of agriculture given their familiarity with, their dependence upon farming and really draws our attention to the most important aspect and challenging aspect of farming, I've been told, sowing.

So, we've moved, we've moved well beyond the realm of my experience, okay? I grew up in the Washington, D.C. area, didn't know a farmer, sadly, too cool to join the 4-H club.

[30 : 30] So, farming was not familiar to us in the Washington, D.C. area. So, you know, we're with, I'm with Tony Roberts last night, your administrator, and he just casually talks about, you know, where'd you grow up?

Grew up in Kansas, grew up on a farm, grew up on a farm that was 330,000 acres. Now, I just, I have no category for that, don't really have a category with farming, farmers, 330,000 acres. Yes, he wasn't exaggerating, he described his childhood, you're driving by 10 years old. It's just like, whoa, this is a world I can't relate to.

And he was talking to me kindly about different vehicles, I'm sure you don't call them that. Again, I'm way out of my expertise here, okay? This is like when I walk into Lowe's or Home Depot in Louisville, everybody working there knows, that guy doesn't belong here, that clown doesn't know what he's talking about.

Yeah, and that's true, I'm guilty. So, when you go farming, but listen, if you have a familiarity with farming, you have an advantage. Because the metaphors in Scripture are all drawn from the world of agriculture.

[31 : 46] And they're meant to be instructive to us. So, the metaphors in Scripture, they're not drawn from the world of technology. They're not drawn from the world of business. No, no.

No, they're drawn from the world of agriculture. And that's why this psalm is so appropriate for the celebration of the fifth year anniversary of Trinity Grace.

This psalm is so appropriate. And here is why. There's nothing romantic about this reference in verses five and six. There's nothing. This is, I think real farmers will tell you, this is the most challenging aspect of farming.

It involves hard work and it involves patience. And did you notice? You must have noticed. This hard work of sowing, it's often done with tears.

So, this reference to tears, it informs the work of sowing. It informs us that the work of sowing is going to be difficult and at times it's going to be heartbreaking and the results of sowing aren't immediate.

[32 : 53] Those who sow in tears, those who go out weeping, John Piper actually helps us to understand and apply this when he writes these words. This psalm teaches the tough truth that there is work to be done whether I am emotionally up for it or not and it is good for me to do it.

Suppose you are in a season of heartache and discouragement and it's time to sow seed. Do you say, I can't sow the field this spring because I'm brokenhearted and discouraged? Well, if you do

that, you'll not eat in the winter.

Suppose you say instead, I am heart sick and discouraged. I cry for no reason at all but the field needs to be sowed. That is the way life is.

I do not feel like it but I will take my bag of seeds, go out in the fields and do my crying while I do my duty. I will sow in tears.

Now we're going to conclude in a minute with how relevant this is to the fifth year anniversary celebration but just for a moment, we all need to apply this to our lives personally. What field in your life do you presently need to sow with God's word and prayer?

[34 : 13] Particularly if you're in a season of heartbreak and discouragement. Is it the field of evangelism? Do you need to sow in the field of evangelism?

Are you tempted to ignore the lost or are you reluctant to share the gospel with the lost because you actually can't even remember the last time you shared the gospel with someone where that individual was converted?

Or are there issues of fear of man in your life? Do you need to sow into the field of evangelism? Or do you need to sow in the field of parenting?

Because it is all too easy to grow weary and tired from all of the teaching and the training and the discipline involved in parenting particularly when as you study your children there seems to be no indication of fruit.

When our children were small there were countless times when I was discouraged because it didn't feel, it didn't seem that there was any fruit in all our investment in teaching and praying and conversations and appropriate discipline etc.

[35 : 29] My dear wife would always when she found me in this kind of lamenting state of discouragement she would always say to me this phrase she would just say dear we're sowing we're sowing right now you are prematurely looking for reaping we're sowing and let's keep sowing in faith matter of fact just the other day kind of now we're driving and she identified something in the life of one of our children that would clearly be the fruit of the spirit and then she just looked at me and just said that's from all that sowing that's from all that sowing she is exactly right so perhaps you need to consider this field of parenting and how you can sow into your children or maybe this morning actually your concern is your own heart like you you might not be entering into all the joy and laughter maybe maybe it's diminished in your life since your conversion so when you think about your conversion

I'm encouraging you to ponder it for a moment maybe for you that is just a distant memory it's not really a rich present reality so this consistent experience of joy everybody's talking about man that just seems elusive to you this morning where do you need to sow where do you need to sow God's word where do you need to sow God's word where do you need to continue to sow where do you need to continue to sow even if tears are necessary but the psalmist doesn't just talk to us about the challenges of sowing he also provides us with hope he provides us listen oh my he provides us with hope for our tear filled sowing because the psalmist did you notice I'm sure you noticed he is certain he is certain of the gracious purpose of God following sowing the psalmist is certain of the promise of God he is certain that those who sow even in tears did you notice he's certain those who sow even in tears shall reap and when they do reap their tears will be replaced with shouts of joy and my friends each of us is to leave here this morning sharing in the certainty of the psalmist we are to sow not only in tears but we are to sow with this same certainty

James Boyce writes countless generations have looked up from their hard work and seemingly fruitless labors strengthened by this promise in Psalm 126 so here's what I'm going to encourage all of us to do look up look up this morning everybody look up look up from your labor whatever the field look up from your labor in evangelism labor in parenting labor to address your heart look up your labor is not in vain look up and let the psalmist make eye contact with you and say to you keep sowing keep sowing and sow with certainty sow with certainty even if there are tears in your eyes as you sow keep praying and keep sowing God's word and don't be dismayed that the work is so hard and arduous and even at times heartbreaking because those who reap they're going to reap with songs and shouts of joy and so when you're sowing even with tears in your eyes have that certain future in mind because listen what we're reading here this is the divine pattern sowing precedes reaping the slow precedes the sudden tears precede joy tears precede songs of joy and when I thought of what to preach on this morning after making my way through different passages

I thought ooh I think this is ideal to encourage this wonderful church so look up look up from your hard labor over the past five years look up I think I got to know well I know I got to know you well before this church started because when I would visit Knoxville and preach at Cornerstone at some point in the weekend Bill would always reference the people from Athens who drove a lengthy distance more than an hour right yeah every Sunday every Sunday and were serving throughout the church that's why crazy doesn't accurately represent what I thought I thought that is so admirable that's just so impressive so listen all of you who made that commute all those years oh you should you should know a particular joy today you need to be connecting some serious some serious dots this morning you need to have a certain like you need to have a very pronounced joy because apart from your commuting to Knoxville each and every Sunday this church would not have started so you sowed for years you sacrificed for years let me tell you on the fifth year anniversary oh this is a time for shouts of joy so thank you so very much and thanks to all those who were a part of Cornerstone who moved here who left this church they loved and were familiar with and moved here why for the church plan not for career advancement for the church plan you moved here so you sacrificed so this day should be a uniquely joyful day for you connect the dots your sowing has resulted in this reaping and for that everyone in this church is very grateful and then for those of you who came to this church and stayed I love hearing your stories of how you found this church last night one was told about I guess this church initially was difficult to find online and so somebody drove by the building wherever you were meeting and I just smile

[42 : 06] I see the sowing and the reaping working together as this individual and this individual speaks for many of you became a part of this church so you should experience a special joy this morning as well Walt you and Kim oh my my I mean this obviously is a special day and your joy you know your eyes fill with tears even just so do mine you gave up your role in a very fruitful church you left all that was familiar to you you left your dearest friends why'd you do that come here plant a church I think there were times you sowed with tears I'm sure there were times you wondered is that wise is it going to be fruitful every church planter does is this going to work oh should be some shouting from both of you today

I know your husband is more of a shouter than you are but Kim you should enter into the shouting as well there should be some shouting as well you left that fruitfulness you left the familiarity of Knoxville you left all your close friends to come here and now you get to add your voice to all that's going on in this congregation hasn't the Lord been good to you and to every one of you who is a part of this church the Lord it's the Lord's doing and yes I'm going to shout unashamedly without restraint shout this is the Lord's doing but it happened over time many people who sowed and sacrificed wasn't sudden and that's why this psalmist seems appropriate by the way I should add Walt's parents to this today as well because they sowed into their knucklehead son all those years they did they did all the hard work you reaped all the fruit of their sowing so this should be a very wonderful special day for them and I doubt they saw this as their son's future at one time I doubt they did I haven't asked them personally my mom thought my future was in jail and that that was yeah that was where it was head but then God intervened so just look around you my friends before I close it's the Lord doing and it happened because people sowed now just one more point I must make this briefly because you can't read verses 5 and 6 without thinking of the ultimate fulfillment of these verses the ultimate fulfillment of these verses in the person of Jesus Christ and his work on the cross Jesus himself would have been familiar with this psalm most likely he had this psalm all the psalms memorized so he read this with an awareness of its fulfillment pointing to himself and by the way Luke reminds us of a particular scene as the son of God is drawing near to Jerusalem Jerusalem the hour of his death was approaching fast approaching and Luke informs us that when he

Jesus drew near to Jerusalem and saw the city he wept over it saying would that you even you had known on this day the things that make for peace and then he would make his way to the cross where he would sow himself with tears through his death he was the seed he fell into the ground and died resulting in massive fruit but he died certain he died certain that the father would raise him from the dead and he died certain that he would come home with shouts of joy bringing his sheaves with him who for the joy set before him endured the cross and in a matter of weeks following his death resurrection and ascension we read in Acts chapter 2 that in response to Peter's proclamation of the gospel there were added that day about 3,000 souls so the man entered the

son of God entered Jerusalem weeping sowing his life through his death on the cross but my friend he has been reaping ever since and you are part of the sheaves oh my you are part of the sheaves he has reaped it was all so unexpected so surprising so stunning and stunning and the fruit includes sinners like you and me so my friends the only appropriate response this morning to your conversion in the celebration of the fifth anniversary of this church in light of all this unexpected mercy mercy the only appropriate response is laughter and shouts of joy because it's the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes amen let's pray oh Lord it is your doing and it is marvelous in our eyes and I thank you for giving me this sweet privilege of celebrating this fifth year anniversary with this wonderful church and so

Lord though it is appropriate to thank all of those who sowed it is most appropriate for us to transfer all the glory to you for all the grace that is present and pronounced in this room all because your son sowed his life on the cross so that he might reap sinners like us so be glorified we say this morning not to us not to us but to your name be the glory in Jesus name amen you've been listening to a message at a Sunday celebration at Trinity Grace Church in Athens for more information about Trinity Grace please visit us at trinitygraceathens.com to