

JOY COMES IN THE MORNING

Psalm 30:1-5

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July 1, 2018

LISTEN: <http://www.fbcjc.org/sermon/joy-comes-in-the-morning/>

Nights can be awful. And nights can be long. A member of this congregation who served in the Vietnam War tells me how being on night patrol in the Southeast Asia jungle was nerve-racking beyond description, and how welcome the morning light was. Nights can be awful.

Bible scholar Archibald Hunter reminds us that our Greek way of thinking here in the West usually thinks of the darkness/light difference to be one of ignorance vs. knowledge. But for the Hebrew, the difference was between danger and security [*According to John*, p. 83].

There are all kinds of nights we have to endure. There is a night time of personal disappointment. When Sen. Bob Dole lost the presidential election, the morning after the national vote, a reporter asked Dole how he had slept. "Like a baby," he replied, "I woke up and cried every two hours!"

Nations can go through night. This is one of the few psalms that has a superscription, telling us what specific situation it is to be used for: "A song at the dedication of the Temple." Perhaps it was after their Exile, and they were ready to thank God for what God had brought them through. As Independence Day approaches, it's good to pause and thank God for our blessings, and to remember that God delivers nations out of our night time.

We have other sorts of other nights to endure. Illness is one. Hospitals report that usually, more pain meds are needed on a night shift (some Bibles have a second superscription: "Thanksgiving for recover from grave illness"). The night of grief and loss, of depression and anxiety. Children sometimes are afraid of the dark and need a night light.

Then of course there are spiritual nights. In John 13, after Judas took the bread from Jesus at the Last Supper, Judas left, setting in motion the crucifixion of God's Son, John makes one stark comment in v. 30: "And it was night." What does it mean to be lost without Christ, without hope? The Bible uses a word, "futile," (1 Peter 1:18), meaning empty, idle, fruitless, lacking truth, powerless, not going anywhere, won't hold water, foolish, dead end. Whatever his night was, the psalmist uses words like enemies, Sheol and pit. Night! One thing is for sure. He is not writing theoretically. He has lived this. It is real.

Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes with the morning. "Morning" is one of my favorite words. I drive my family crazy, but I love mornings. Morning signifies newness, starting over, a freshness, a blank slate. Helen Keller, both blind and deaf, used to sit on the porch and wait for the sunrise. She couldn't see it but she could feel its warmth on her face. According to the gospels, Jesus' resurrection was discovered early on a Sunday. For followers of Christ, it's been morning ever since!

A little girl asked her mother, “What was God doing last night during the storm?” Before the mom could answer, the daughter answered her own question: “Oh, I know. He was making the morning!” Yes!

At the height of the Montgomery bus boycott in the mid-1950’s, as a young Martin Luther King, Jr., led the work of desegregation, he found himself in a crisis in the middle of the night. He had been awakened by a threatening phone call. He got up, made a pot of coffee. The pressure and burden were almost unbearable—expectations of blacks and attacks by whites. Afraid and confused, he said with his head in his hands and realized he had nothing left to give. He said out loud, “I can’t face this alone.” As he spoke, the tears subsided and the fear melted away. He heard an inner voice saying, “It will be alright” [*Parting the Waters*, by Taylor Branch]. Billy Graham once said, “When we come to the end of ourselves, that’s when we come to the beginning of God.” Weeping endures for a night, but joy comes with the morning.

What night time are you living? Do you believe God created light? Do you believe that in Christ, God restored light? Do you believe the Book of Revelation that says in heaven, there will be no need for sun or moon, because God’s glory will continually provide light? (Rev. 21:23). Do you believe that looking back on your life, the best parts will always be those times when God turned your night into day? Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes with the morning.