

Sunday, March 21 – **Fifth Sunday in Lent**

Readings: Isaiah 43:16-21

Psalm 126

Philippians 3:4b-14

John 12:1-8

Prayer: *Creator God, you prepare a new way in the wilderness, and your grace waters our desert. Open our hearts to be transformed by the new thing you are doing, that our lives may proclaim the extravagance of your love given to all through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen*⁵⁶

Focal Verse: “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.”” Psalm 126:2

Reflection:

Too often people simply surrender offerings to the church’s ministries without much thought. These actions regularly are responses of those who feel as if they are doing their duty. Despite their understanding of returning a portion of firstfruits to God, this dutiful mindset lacks the joyful aspects of holy worship. Psalm 126 reminds faithful stewards that what we give is merely a response to God’s rich generosity toward God’s people in the first place. We give to others because God first gave to us.

Veteran pastors know the truth about people who give with open hands to the church’s ministries. These pastors might tell us that the evidence is obvious. Generous people habitually reveal a character that is spiritually enthusiastic and happier than that of the ungenerous. The size of the gift has little to do with this stance. It has to do with the level of generosity with whatever we happen to have. Psalm 126 reminds stewards that all generosity is rooted in this: God’s benevolence toward God’s creatures.⁵⁷

What do you hear?

How does it make you feel?

Toward what are you being drawn?

What do you sense you should do?

⁵⁶ Evangelical Lutheran Worship

⁵⁷ Mosser, David, *The Stewardship Companion*, Westminster John Knox Press, © 2007, p. 192.