

## **“Joy Comes in the Morning”**

**Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost: September 6, 2009**

**Psalm 30:5b**

**A sermon preached by the Rev. Dr. Ivan H.M. Peden Copyright: 2009, I. Peden  
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I must express my indebtedness to the Late Dr. Clovis Chappell for the inspiration I gained from reading one of his sermons on this text: Psalm 30 verse 5b. Dr. Chappell was a distinguished United Methodist minister with a strong evangelistic flair in his preaching. He was also a predecessor of mine at FUMC in Charlotte. He died in 1972 after giving 41 years of his life as a pastor. Dr. Chappell wrote prolifically and I am grateful for a sermon of his that I found online called *The Transiency of Tears*.<sup>(1)</sup> He preached this sermon in 1931. I hope he would feel honored to know that we are meditating on some of the points he made in that sermon this morning. They are, of course, blended with my own thoughts and theology.

What is it that brings this psalmist in Psalm 30 to conclude that “weeping may linger for a night, but joy comes in the morning?” The simple, short answer is surely faith. “Weeping may linger for a night, but joy comes in the morning” is a statement of faith. “But what,” we must ask, “is the faith of this psalmist?”

First, it is a *rare* faith. The faith he declares represents an uncommon way of looking at life. He stands out, therefore, as a spiritual giant in the midst of small-minded and tiny-spirited people. In this respect he is more than a psalmist, he is also a prophet. He declares an unusual, rare, almost unique faith in God.

Why is his faith so rare? The answer: Quite simply because there are few people who share his faith. The psalmist dares to tell all who read his psalm that in this world of change and decay ...in this world where our hearts are so often broken and our faces so often wet with tears ... joy may be a more abiding guest than sorrow. He does not imply exemption from sorrow. He makes no claim to the discovery of an ideal world. But what he does say is that while it may come into our lives as a stranger and spend the night, this unwelcome guest called “weeping” need not abide ...need not take up permanent residence in our lives.

Weeping may remain for the night but it cannot tolerate the dawning of the day when

the welcome guest of joy comes in to replace it. Tears *will* come ...tears are inevitable ...tears are sometimes necessary in the night ...but tears are transient. Such is the faith of the psalmist: With the rising of the sun tears will vanish like the dew. “Weeping may linger for a night, but joy comes in the morning.”

What rare faith! What daring faith! What an unusual and positive perspective on life! How refreshingly unique it is! It’s just the opposite of a more common view of life. The psalmist challenges the tendency we all have from time to time to bemoan our lot in life, constantly reminding ourselves of the transiency of our blessings and joys in life. How quick we are to begin to doubt the sustainability of joy. We think: “How joyful we are for a while, but how fleeting it will be ...how soon we will find ourselves having to leave it all behind again ...how quickly we will pass out of our Eden of morning gladness into the harsh and rugged world where swords will bruise our bodies again and where daggers will pierce not only our hearts, but also our minds. How fleeting is the springtime of life!” But this was *not* the faith of this psalmist. His was a rare and daring faith.

Next, notice that the psalmist’s faith was not only a rare faith; it was also a *realistic* faith. He did not do his theology in a cocooned existence ...in a life of comfort and ease and protection. This statement of faith, “Weeping may linger for a night, but joy comes in the morning,” is not uttered from his arm chair or from an ivory tower.

The psalmist’s faith is not born of a stubborn refusal to face the ugly facts of life. He does not believe that weeping will linger only for a night because he has shut his eyes to the grim but real tragedies that cause tears. On the contrary, he readily recognizes that our sin, our willful neglect of the will and the ways of God, may cause our tears. He does not deny that our tears may be the result of the reality of our sinful nature ...that by ignoring or disobeying God we have brought tragedy and terror, crisis and calamity upon ourselves and caused tears of guilt or shame or repentance.

Neither does the psalmist deny the reality of pain as a reason for weeping. Pain is real. Physical, mental, and emotional pain can make us cry all night. He also faces the reality of that final calamity called death as a cause of great grief and nights of weeping and wailing. This psalmist acknowledges all the terrifying realistic foes that try to defeat and destroy us,

yet he still clings to his buoyant faith.

“Weeping may linger for a night, but faith comes in the morning.” Clovis Chappell comments: “The faith that this statement represents is not the easy optimism of one who has lived on the sunny side of the street and has had everything come to him right-side up. He speaks out of his own experience.” Not only is his faith rare and realistic; it is also a *relevant* faith. That is part of the glory of the psalms. They were lived before they were written. Dr. Chappell adds: “When, therefore, the psalmist sings that, though weeping may linger for a night and joy will come with the morning, he is declaring a truth to which he has come by the painful path of experience.” He is not affirming some vague, unrelated doctrine; rather, he is affirming a relevant conviction that, at great cost, he has hammered out upon the anvil of his own experience as a human being. Unlike many preachers who simply string texts together, recite them, and pound the pulpit and call what they are doing “preaching,” this psalmist knows what he is talking about! His faith reflects what he has actually lived.

We see how realistic the psalmist’s faith is as he traces for us the road along which he traveled from a dark night of weeping to a sunny morning of joyful faith. Try to picture this: ...imagine that for many years life dealt most kindly and gently with him. Sickness and sorrow came to others, but not to him. The hearse drew up in front of other homes, but not in front of his. He knew that suffering and tears were a part of the human lot, but that was not his experience in the early days of his life. Reports of the tragedies that were taking place day by day in the lives of men and women all around him seemed somehow strangely remote. He tried his best sympathy with the less fortunate, but he got poor grades for his efforts. The stories of their sorrows seemed to come to him from a distant world.

As often happens, his prosperity continued and it began to intoxicate him. It also began inoculate him against the needs of others. He begins to think of himself as superior to others. He arrives at a place where he says complacently: “I shall never be moved.” Never say “never!” Like a bolt from the blue, the blow fell. Before he could realize what was happening, the light went out of his sky, and his life began to topple in ruins.

The same person who had gone for years without an ache or a pain suddenly found himself the victim of a deadly disease. He went for the first time to consult a physician. The

doctor looked him over, and his face went grave. “What’s wrong?” the patient asked anxiously. The doctor shook his head and passed a death sentence upon him, telling him frankly that he would suffer and that the only remedy available for his condition was death. Then followed dreary days and nights of hopeless suffering during which he tried to be brave. But his efforts became more and more futile.

At last, in his bewilderment at the perplexing permission God provides for disease to strike, he thinks and speaks as if he has lost his faith. With physical and spiritual health gone a strange guest comes into his home. That guest is weeping. It is an unwelcome guest, but weeping lingers none the less. It sits with him at every meal, and by so doing, steals his appetite and taste for food. This unwelcome guest even insists on sharing his bed with him. Therefore his nights become long and full of agony. And what makes his situation utterly desperate is a fear that his unbidden guest may stay with him always.

But wait, that’s not the end ...there is more ...much more ...because you see, this faith of the psalmist becomes a *rediscovered* faith. When it seems like all earthly hope is gone, this man decides to make one last effort. Maybe the God who seems to have forsaken him will help him even yet. Clearly he began thinking that there must be a God in a world like his ...a God who can help when all human help is failing. So this sorely troubled man, this man whose physical tortures are almost forgotten in the presence of the tortures of his soul, begins to pray again. He throws himself in his weakness into the everlasting arms of God, and God does not fail him. God never does. God never will.

“He has turned for me my mourning into dancing,” the psalmist sings proudly. “He came,” he declares, “like a wise and tender nurse and removed my galling garment of sackcloth and decked me in a garment of gladness.” Can you see now that this psalmist’s faith is actually a *rediscovered* faith? When he looks around for the unwelcome guest that he thought would never leave, he finds that it has gone, and that a new guest, one called “joy,” has come in its place. “And what God has done for me,” he declares with assurance, “God will also do for you. Weeping may linger for a night, but joy comes in the morning.”

As we come to the end of this message, as well as the end of our Summer Preaching Series, *Encountering God through the Psalms*, what do we make of this text in Psalm 30 and

the psalmist's faith? How does it help us? Is there a word from God for us in this beautiful text, "weeping may linger for a night, but joy comes in the morning?" We have seen that the faith of this psalmist is a rare faith, a realistic faith, a relevant faith, and a rediscovered faith. And what might this mean for us today ...we who live on the other side of the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ than the psalmist? What does it mean for those of us who know that just when there was weeping for two nights, the sun rose on a Sunday morning, as it did this morning ...the dawn defeated the darkness of death and despair, and there was joy, joy, joy, joy! *Jesus Christ is risen today, Hallelujah!* ...that's what we sing on Easter morning, but it is just as appropriate to sing those words every morning.

Sure, we are Easter people, but do we sustain our faith in the risen Christ without doubts, without fears, without worries and anxieties? Or does that precious gift of faith ...so fresh and novel at first ...get tarnished with our tempers and taunts? Does our faith become so familiar that we take it for granted or even get bored with it? Like a new toy or game or piece of equipment, does faith soon lose its appeal? Do terror, trouble and tragedy test our faith to the point that we toss it aside? Let's be honest with ourselves and with God

The psalmist was honest with God. He not only confesses to God his despair and hopelessness through tears of anger and resentment and pain in the night; he also affirms his triumph over adversity when he rediscovers the faith that was there from the moment he first began to walk with the Lord. He shares with us his lessons: he learned about the transiency of tears at night; he learned about the permanency of joy in the morning.

What was this psalmist's faith? We must conclude that his was a *reversible* faith. There came a time when he encountered the living God again: and encounter that quickened his spirit ...that revived, renewed, and restored his faith ...that put doubt, fear, and despair of the night into reverse, and moved his life forward with renewed faith, hope, and love in the morning. And there was joy, joy, joy, joy!

And this, my brothers and sisters in Christ, may be our experience ...our encounter ...our entry or re-entry into a rare, realistic, relevant, revived, refocused faith in Jesus Christ who stands among us in his risen power. Joy in the morning may be our experience. New every morning are your mercies, O God, and great is your faithfulness! AMEN.

(1) *From "Sermons from the Psalms" by Clovis G. Chappell, 1931*

Dr. Clovis G. Chappell was ordained into the ministry of the Methodist Church in 1908, and over the next 41 years held pastorates in Washington, Memphis, Houston, Birmingham and Charlotte, North Carolina. He officially retired in 1949 but filled numerous speaking engagements each year throughout the country. Born at Flat Woods, Tennessee on January 8, 1822, he studied at Trinity (now Duke) and Harvard Universities. He held doctoral degrees from Duke, Centenary College of Louisiana, and Birmingham Southern College. He died in 1972.

*Excerpted from an Obituary at [www.ewgrove.com](http://www.ewgrove.com)*