

“When the Lord brought back his exiles to Jerusalem, it was like a dream! We were filled with laughter, and we sang for joy. And the other nations said, “What amazing things the Lord has done for them.” Yes, the Lord has done amazing things for us! What joy!”  
Psalms 126:1-3 NLT

## lectio // Psalm 126

Ok, I get it. Exile, captivity is awful. And having your entire country taken over and forced into labor is unfathomable. However, I know that humans adapt to the most EXTREME circumstances and situations and somehow find a way of life within a context of misery. Maybe it's hope that keeps a thread of dignity and freedom alive. Maybe it's finding strength in the unity and camaraderie of captivity - that we are ALL in this together. But humans survive and oftentimes learn to thrive under the worst of times. Here the Psalmist says, “when the Lord brought them back,” there was ecstatic celebration and JOY was rediscovered. This passage reminds me of a far less difficult situation, yet it has not been globally experienced in over 100 years, maybe never! The pandemic has shuttered people, all people. The global response to the virus was to STOP all gatherings. All believers in God, all non believers in God, all colors all cultures and all ages. The world was captured by a microscopic terrorist and held us ALL in its power. All social systems; education, politics, healthcare/science, religious gatherings and business, were shut down or seriously effected. And we still can't grasp the fact that we are ALL in this, and not everyone is fairing well - we're all in a boat, but not the same boat. Some are in yachts while others are in dingies. I am looking forward to the Lord bringing us out of exile, all of us. But I am also looking forward to seeing what God wants of us on the other side of all this. A gigantic reset button has been pushed on all sectors of society and I just want our world (certainly our country and local cities) to live differently, BE different because of the shared experience of being shuttered. Social shaming is on the rise and it is deplorable! Cancelling people, families and businesses is on the rise and it's worse than the sins of inequality. It's worse because it enacts the “eye for an eye” mentality that Jesus came to free us from. The church for years used guilt, shame, shading and cancelling to try to control behavior and force righteousness - it failed miserably and now the current culture wants its turn to take out an eye and leverage its social power to force conformity to its religion by using the same techniques! Oh, I'm excited to “come back” but what will this new world look like for my kids and grandkids?

Dad,

I beg of you, come and do your full work of correcting and cleansing your church and heal our land. Let you Kingdom continue to come and your will be done on this planet! Amen.