

## PREPARING AT HOME

December 11-17, 2017

*Focus reading:* Psalm 126 (<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=377777275>).

*Other lectionary readings:* Isaiah 61:14, 8–11; Psalm 126; 1 Thessalonians 5:16–24; John 1:6–8, 19–28

*Theme:* Shout with Joy

The third Sunday of Advent is often known as “Rejoice Sunday”. The first two weeks focus on the need and the longing for God’s presence. The candles that are lit are purple, the color of penitence (think Lent) as well as royalty. On the third Sunday of Advent the candle to be lit is pink, symbolizing joy. Even when there is evidence to the contrary, we can rejoice in God’s presence and promises. Psalm 126 is from a collection of psalms that were collected by the exiles after they were given permission to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. It is one of the “ascent psalms,” so called because the people sang these songs as they climbed to the top of Mount Zion, the place where the temple stood. The returning exiles sing with joy, even though there is much work ahead of them! There are references to water, seeds, and a bountiful harvest in this psalm. Living in the Negeb desert, experience had taught those who sang this psalm that such bountiful harvests were rare. When it did rain, it did so with such force that the dry soil was washed away from the river banks where seeds were planted. The psalmist rejoices with the image of returning exiles who “shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves” (verse 6). God has restored their fortunes and their hope.

**NOTE TO PARENTS:** If you are lighting Advent candles at home, remember to light the pink candle this week as a sign of rejoicing.

### PSALMS OF ASCENT

Psalm 126 was one of the “ascent psalms” that were sung as people made their way up the mountain to the site of the temple. These psalms are also known as “traveling psalms.” What happens as your family is going to church? Is there joyful singing or complaining and bickering? Choose a “traveling song” to sing on the way to church or create another ritual, appropriate to your family, which allows you to rejoice and give thanks!

### SINGING CAROLS

This week’s emphasis on rejoicing and singing psalms naturally leads us to the practice of singing Christmas carols. Some of the “old, familiar” carols are not so familiar to our children! Let the sounds of Christmas carols fill your home this week. Sing along! Dance! Share the words with your child and talk about what they might mean or what part of the story they recall. Come to the December 17<sup>th</sup> Sensational Sunday in Fellowship Hall from 9:15-10:15, when we will be singing favorite carols. All ages are welcome! Please join us with your family!

**PRAYER** (Sing your prayer this week, using the refrain from “Angels We Have Heard on High” - “Gloria in excelsis deo!” Explain that “Gloria in *excelsis deo*” means “glory to God in the highest.”

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