Read Psalm 126:4-6 — 1 When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dreamed. 2 Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, “The Lord has done great things for them.” 3 The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. 4 Restore our fortunes, Lord, like streams in the Negev. 5 Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy. 6 Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them.

Introduction: Given a choice between being joyful or negative, most of us want to be joyful. Psalm 126 gives us principles for a joyful life. This discussion centers on how, “We should work on praying and expecting.”

Key Points:
1. Christians ought to pray. Notice that Psalm 126:4 and I Thessalonians 5:17 support the idea that God’s people should be praying people. Our prayer lives should include some adoring or praising of God, confession of our sins, thankfulness for what God has already done, and supplication for what we want God to do for others (intercession) and ourselves (i.e., ACTS). Prayer is at its best when we make our requests in pencil, so God can easily erase them and give us what is best for us (see Lk. 22:42). Let’s work on sowing the seeds of improving our individual prayer lives.

2. Christians ought to pray together. Notice that in Psalm 126 and Matthew 18:20, we see that God’s people should be known for praying together. Yet, most of our modern churches do an unimpressive job of praying together. We do better with coming to heated church meetings and entertaining musicals than with attending prayer meetings. We confuse our young people and unchurched adults, by saying that prayer changes things and then refusing to come and pray with one another. Let’s sow the seeds of improving our corporate prayer lives.

3. God’s people should expect great things. Notice in Psalm 126:4-6, the people expected great things in the future. In like manner, we should never become hopeless about our future, even if we have been suffering for 70 years. The God who brought African American believers from “White Only” water fountains to a billionaire like Oprah Winfrey and a President like Barak Obama, in less than 50 years, is still able to do great things today. Let’s make sure we don’t become cynical about our future.

4. Most of us are going through something. Notice in Psalm 126:4-6 and Matthew 5:45b that being a child of God doesn’t exempt us from times of trouble. As those in the text had experienced...
70 years of Babylonian captivity, some who read these notes are going through some long-term troubles. Some wrestle with negative thoughts and emotions (e.g., anger, fear, guilt, depression, etc.). Some wrestle with health challenges like hypertension, diabetes, cancer, and other health issues. Some wrestle with growing expenses, shrinking income, and anxiety about retirement. And yet some wrestle with all kinds of family dysfunction and unsatisfying relationships (i.e., abuse, cheating, disappointing heart ache, and betrayal). Let’s live like we know that saved people can still experience long-term trouble.

5. God is the source of great things. Notice in Psalm 126:4-6; James 117; Philippians 1:19 that God is the source of God’s people expecting great things. God can raise up friends and people to help us in our time of need. God can also make ways out of no way at all - make bills, tumors, and even enemies disappear. Sometimes the “great thing” that God does is give us peace and joy in the midst of our troubles. Joy at the bus stop is better than depression in the luxury car. If our minds are not right, we will not enjoy the “great things” of God. Philippians 4:11b teaches us to learn to be content in whatever circumstances we find ourselves in. Let’s sow the seeds of expecting God to do great things, including helping us to be content.