

God's delight

You shall be called by a new name. (v. 2)

After nearly fifty years of captivity in Babylonia, Jewish exiles were able to return home. Perhaps they expected a joyous welcoming celebration and a bustling city far removed from the ravages of war. Instead, they faced an enormous rebuilding task. City walls were rubble. The once-magnificent temple was in ruins. Fields and vineyards were barren and desolate. Their once-proud nation had become “Forsaken,” and the land once flowing with milk and honey had become “Desolate” (v. 4).

Most of us have experienced times when everything that can go wrong does. We know what it is like to feel forsaken, to feel abandoned even by God. In such times, our homes and relationships seem to become desolate wastelands of empty hopes and deflated dreams.

God shatters such feelings for good. God's promise turns that way of thinking upside down. So, forget those labels of “Forsaken” and “Desolate.” The Lord names God's children, “My Delight” (v. 4)! No more isolation; no more brokenness. God makes us “a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD” (v. 3).

Thank you, Jesus, for loving me, especially when I feel abandoned. Amen.

Prayer concern: Those living with mental illness

Living in God's love

All people may take refuge in the shadow of your wings. (v. 7)

Margaret and Matthew spent their childhood in a land where mountains ascended directly from the sea. A few miles inland were vast stretches of desert, interrupted by clusters of trees that surrounded deep caverns containing springs of bubbling water. Paradise? Not really. Even one hour without water was dangerous, and a few hours in the blazing sun could be fatal. They learned to rest in the shadows of any foliage or rock outcropping. They learned that water was life.

Today's psalmist lived in a land like that. Notice the sights and sounds of the place where the writer celebrates the Lord's precious love: a river of bubbling water (v. 8) and mighty mountains rising from the sea (v. 6). The psalmist delights in the loving embrace of the Lord's very own shadow (v. 7) and in the steadfastness of God's love (v. 5).

What sights and sounds of steadfast love might the Lord show us today?

**Lead us into the safety of the shadow of your wings,
O Lord, through Christ. Amen.**

Prayer concern: Those moving to a new land

Not only in strength

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. (v. 7)

I stood near the top of the 14,000-foot mountain, looking down in near panic. Most of my youth group was well ahead of me; there was a storm coming, and we had to get off the peak quickly. Our descent was through a boulder field filled with loose stones, and the footing was treacherous. The constant clambering up and over had left me exhausted. One youth was still near me. Though Mike was tall and looked solid, he was also struggling—he wasn't in the best physical condition either. "Mike, can you give me a hand over this boulder?" I only had to ask once; after that, he stuck close and pretty much pulled me over every obstacle until we got down.

Later I overheard him lamenting the "weakness" that left him trailing every other kid. "Mike," I said, "if it hadn't been so hard for you, I don't think I would have gotten down uninjured. I can't tell you how grateful I am. Because you were struggling, too, you were there when I needed you."

God doesn't use only our strengths to help us care for one another; our struggles can be a gift, too.

God, remind me that the gifts you give may not be the ones the world values. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Prayer concern: Those struggling with self-doubt