



Homemade E-devos

March 31, 2022

Reflection— Rev. Karen Oehl

Traveling Songs

When the Lord changed Zion's circumstances for the better, it was like we had been dreaming. Our mouths were suddenly filled with laughter; our tongues were filled with joyful shouts. -Psalm 126:1-2

As a huge fan of both the *Lord of the Rings* books by J.R.R. Tolkien and Winnie the Pooh stories by A.A. Milne, I am enchanted by the idea of traveling songs. I picture the hobbits setting off on their journeys with rucksacks, walking sticks, and a song. Winnie the Pooh, of course, made up various songs and hums to go with his adventures.

Perhaps, this is why I appreciate the section of the Psalms in which each identifies itself as "a pilgrimage song," Psalm 120 through Psalm 134. These songs are prayerful, joyful, evocative of the human experience and short! Some of my favorite Psalms are in this collection:

121—I lift my eyes to the hills; Psalm 130—out of the depths; Psalm 131—I have calmed and quieted myself; Psalm 133—how good and pleasant it is when families live together as one. I love to imagine a family or caravan of people coming through the valleys and over the hills to Jerusalem for one of the great festivals like Passover or Pentecost. Someone begins a song and they all join in.

When I was growing up and we would travel on long car trips, my mother would read to us (including Winnie the Pooh) or lead us in songs. Silly songs, fun songs, family songs. These are good memories. The other good memory that I have of traveling songs was in church camp experiences. On the day the campers were going to arrive, I remember that my song, as I climbed the hill to my cabin where I would greet them was based on Miriam's song in Exodus, perhaps the oldest song in the Bible: the horse and rider song, celebrating safe passage through the Red Sea. And we would also use a song based on I John 4:7-8 as a hiking song, since it had a good rhythm.

People still appreciate traveling music. We listen to music in our cars (and sing along loudly), I see runners and walkers with earbuds (which drives my husband Chris crazy), and in worship each week we journey towards the cross with singing and prayer. This Sunday we will be reading Psalm 126 together. I love to imagine that time as we gather and stand and celebrate God.

"It is good to have an end to journey towards, but it is the journey that matters, in the end." Ursula K. LeGuin

