

Sermon Series: “Hand Me Another Brick”—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—5/22/05

Title: “Donation, Celebration, and Refocusing”

Text: Nehemiah 7 and 8 (selected verses)

Intro: *Ills.: May Is National Month*

Theme: Today, with great anticipation and celebration we gather ourselves and our resources to serve our God who has given us reason to have great joy.

Characteristics of a godly celebration

- Generated by contagious generosity
 1. All gave as God prospered them
 - a. Nehemiah and the Jews gave from the least to the greatest *Some of the heads of the families contributed to the work. The governor gave . . . The total given by the rest of the people was . . . (ch 7: 70-72)*
 - b. *Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Cor. 9:7*
 2. A miraculous gifting was produced from God’s resource
 - a. Added together, total gift = 460,000 days wages (drachma=day’s wage) (vs. 70-72) from 42,000 people(7:66)
 - b. Similar to the giving and gifting our Lord of Life’s membership
 - i. Median age =24 yet our per adult giving is almost twice the national average
 - ii. *Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all. 2 Cor. 9:13*
 - c. **Ills.: Bob Hope on Giving**
- Raised up to a new and powerful unity (*all the people assemble as one man” ch 8: 1*)
 1. One-mindedness (*sharing of thought, purpose, existence, belief*)
 - a. **Ills.: Cheer Sheet**
 - b. Early Christian similarity in Nehemiah’s time
 - i. *And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them. Acts 4:32*
 - c. That only happens to us when we die to ourselves and our Savior and God becomes our identity
 2. Back from the dead
 - a. The remnant Jews realized that it was by God’s grace and plan that they had returned and succeeded
 - b. *And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. Acts 4:33*
 - c. Motivated by Jesus’ resurrection power, we are freed to miraculous generosity in our lives
- Word-motivation celebration (**Print chap 8: 1b-3**)
 1. Word hungry
 - a. All who could understand came out to hear God’s Word, missing for multiple generations (Nehemiah’s people)
 - b. Lord of Life’s people (prayer walk, devotional prayer journal participation, ever increasing attendance)
 - c. Thank Goodness Pastor Tim’s sermons aren’t even as long (*He read it aloud from daybreak till noon vs. 3*)
 2. Convicted and convinced
 - a. Willing to listen to hard words which pointed out their sins and their need for God’s forgiveness (**Print vs. 8-9**)
 - b. Finding that it is more important to find our “joy in the Lord” than our “happiness in this life”
 - i. *“Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength” (chap 8: 10)*

ii. *"I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full."* John 15:11

iii. **Ills.: Delight beyond just being happy**

3. Teachable

a. As Nehemiah and the people listened to God's Word they celebrated by learning and growing

i. *As the people listen attentively . . . They found written in the Law, which the Lord had commanded through Moses, that the Israelites were to live in booths during the feast of the seventh month . . . So the people went out and brought back branches and built themselves booths . . . until that day, the Israelites had not celebrated it like this. And their joy was very great. (vs. 3, 14, 16, 17)*

b. Our celebration doesn't end today or even with completed building but with God's will daily built into our lives

i. *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.."* 2 Tim 3:16-17

May is National month

More than a pretty face Buckle Up America Hamburger Month Salsa Asthma & Allergy
Moving Month Better Sleep National Egg Young Achiever's Barbeque

Cheer Sheet

In all of sports, there is perhaps no basketball rivalry quite as intense as that between the Universities of Duke and North Carolina. The campuses are only eight miles apart. Both teams have different shades of blue for their primary color, so North Carolinians are told, "Choose Your Blue!"

Duke fans take their allegiances seriously. Every fan is a cheerleader. When the two teams recently played each other in Duke's Cameron Arena, home fans (or "Crazies") were given instructions.

This is the game you've been waiting for. No excuses. Give everything you've got, and we will walk away the victors. Cameron should never be less than painfully loud tonight. At Coach K's request, please focus on our team tonight. Better to bring our team up than put theirs down. Especially coming out of timeouts, we need to be incredibly loud. During their free throws in the second half, forget the novelty stuff, just be unbelievably loud. This is a huge game. Stay in the bleachers and go nuts.

Perhaps we Christian worshipers have something to learn here. *Citation: "Duke-Carolina Cheer Sheet," ESPN.com; submitted by Eugene Maddox, Palatka, Fl*

Bob Hope on Giving

Laughter is an instant vacation. Giving is a two-week cruise—with pay

Delight beyond just being happy

What is the command associated with being given the desires of our heart? "Delight yourself." The word for "delight" means to be *soft* and *pliable*. We might say be *moldable* or *teachable*. It means more than being happy or excited about God. *Citation: Earl D. Wilson in Does God Really Love Me? Christianity Today, Vol. 33, no. 6.*

Nehemiah 7:70— 8:18

[70] Some of the heads of the families contributed to the work. The governor gave to the treasury 1,000 drachmas of gold, 50 bowls and 530 garments for priests. [71] Some of the heads of the families gave to the treasury for the work 20,000 drachmas of gold and 2,200 minas of silver. [72] The total given by the rest of the people was 20,000 drachmas of gold, 2,000 minas of silver and 67 garments for priests. [73] The priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers and the temple servants, along with certain of the people and the rest of the Israelites, settled in their own towns.

[8:1] When the seventh month came and the Israelites had settled in their towns, all the people assembled as one man in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded for Israel. [2] So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. [3] He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law. [4] Ezra the scribe stood on a high wooden platform built for the occasion. Beside him on his right stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah and Maaseiah; and on his left were Pedaiah, Mishael, Malkijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah and Meshullam. [5] Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. [6] Ezra praised the Lord, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, "Amen! Amen!" Then they bowed down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground. [7] The Levites--Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan and Pelaiah--instructed the people in the Law while the people were standing there. [8] They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read. [9] Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, "This day is sacred to the Lord your God. Do not mourn or weep." For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law. [10] Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." [11] The Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be still, for this is a sacred day. Do not grieve." [12] Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them. [13] On the second day of the month, the heads of all the families, along with the priests and the Levites, gathered around Ezra the scribe to give attention to the words of the Law. [14] They found written in the Law, which the Lord had commanded through Moses, that the Israelites were to live in booths during the feast of the seventh month [15] and that they should proclaim this word and spread it throughout their towns and in Jerusalem: "Go out into the hill country and bring back branches from olive and wild olive trees, and from myrtles, palms and shade trees, to make booths"--as it is written. [16] So the people went out and brought back branches and built themselves booths on their own roofs, in their courtyards, in the courts of the house of God and in the square by the Water Gate and the one by the Gate of Ephraim. [17] The whole company that had returned from exile built booths and lived in them. From the days of Joshua son of Nun until that day, the Israelites had not celebrated it like this. And their joy was very great. [18] Day after day, from the first day to the last, Ezra read from the Book of the Law of God. They celebrated the feast for seven days, and on the eighth day, in accordance with the regulation, there was an assembly.