

## SERMON-BASED STUDY: JOY OF THE LORD IS MY STRENGTH

*Nehemiah 8:1-12, ESV – And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the LORD had commanded Israel. <sup>2</sup> So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month. <sup>3</sup> And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. <sup>4</sup> And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his right hand, and Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam on his left hand. <sup>5</sup> And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood. <sup>6</sup> And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, “Amen, Amen,” lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. <sup>7</sup> Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, helped the people to understand the Law, while the people remained in their places. <sup>8</sup> They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.*

*<sup>9</sup> And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, “This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep.” For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law. <sup>10</sup> Then he said to them, “Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.” <sup>11</sup> So the Levites calmed all the people, saying, “Be quiet, for this day is holy; do not be grieved.” <sup>12</sup> And all the people went their way to eat and drink and to send portions and to make great rejoicing, because they had understood the words that were declared to them.*

### Notes:

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- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

### QUICK REVIEW

Looking back at your notes from this week’s teaching, was there anything you heard for the first time or that caught your attention, challenged, or confused you?

## ENGAGE WITH THE MESSAGE

1 This week we learned that the Bible is a bearer of bad news and the bearer of the best news. Why are both important to the story of God's dealings with people?

2 How have you made time to know God through His Word? What actions have you taken recently as a result of studying God's Word?

3 Why is it important to study Scripture with other believers?

## DIGGING DEEPER

A **Luke 15:3-7, ESV** – <sup>3</sup> So he told them this parable: <sup>4</sup> “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? <sup>5</sup> And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. <sup>6</sup> And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ <sup>7</sup> Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

4 Looking at the passage above, we see the first of three parables illustrating the idea of the lost being found. Each parable ends with joy and rejoicing. Why is this the case? How is this similar to Nehemiah's instructions to be joyous and not weep and mourn?

5 Where does this joy come from? Whose joy is it, actually? How can we have access to this joy?

B **Zephaniah 3:17, ESV** – *The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.*

**Psalms 16:11, ESV** – *You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

6 How does the joy we receive from God provide us with strength?

7 In Psalm 16:11, we see that God makes the path of life known to us. What response is needed by us? What does the psalmist mean by “pleasures forevermore”?

C **Deuteronomy 6:4-9, ESV** – <sup>4</sup>“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. <sup>5</sup>You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. <sup>6</sup>And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. <sup>7</sup>You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. <sup>8</sup>You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. <sup>9</sup>You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

8 Read Nehemiah 8:1 and 8:13. Looking at the passage above, why is it important for everyone, and especially parents, to study the Word of God on a regular basis?

9 According to the passage above, the family unit is the primary discipleship vehicle for passing on the gospel to the next generation. How does this impact the way you disciple others?

## TAKING IT HOME

“Joy is not a feeling; it is a way of approaching the world that is informed by God’s saving actions.” – N.T. Wright

How has God’s saving actions brought joy to your life? How is this joy strengthening you in your daily life and activities? How has it moved you to action? Share with your group or accountability partner what God has been showing you. Pray for one another as you seek to be strong in the joy of the Lord and moved to action as a result.

## PRAISES AND PRAYER REQUEST

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## FOR FURTHER STUDY

Leviticus 23:39-43  
Deuteronomy 16:13-15  
Acts 2:28; 37-39  
2 Corinthians 12:9  
Hebrews 4:16; 12:2