

# Rejoicing, Thanksgiving, and Dedication: Neh 12:27-47

Sunday, September 3, 2023

Covenant Church

Pastor Zack Phillips

## Nehemiah 12:27-47

<sup>27</sup> Now at the **dedication** of the wall of Jerusalem they sought out the Levites in all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem to **celebrate** the **dedication** with rejoicing, with thanksgivings and with singing, with cymbals, harps, and lyres. <sup>28</sup> The companies of the singers gathered together from the circuit around Jerusalem and from the villages of the Netophathites; <sup>29</sup> also from Beth-gilgal and from the region of Geba and Azmaveth; for the singers had built for themselves villages around Jerusalem. <sup>30</sup> And the priests and the Levites purified themselves; and they purified the people and the gates and the wall.

Dedication

<sup>31</sup> Then I brought the leaders of Judah up onto the wall, and appointed two great companies that **gave thanks** and went in procession. One went to the right on the wall to the Dung Gate; <sup>32</sup> and after them went Hoshai and half the officials of Judah, <sup>33</sup> and Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, <sup>34</sup> Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, and Jeremiah, <sup>35</sup> and some of the young priests with trumpets: Zechariah son of Jonathan son of Shemaiah son of Mattaniah son of Micaiah son of Zaccur son of Asaph; <sup>36</sup> and his kindred, Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah, and Hanani, with the musical instruments of David the man of God; and the scribe Ezra went in front of them. <sup>37</sup> At the Fountain Gate, in front of them, they went straight up by the stairs of the city of David, at the ascent of the wall, above the house of David, to the Water Gate on the east.

Thanksgiving

<sup>38</sup> The other company of those who **gave thanks** went to the left, and I followed them with half of the people on the wall, above the Tower of the Ovens, to the Broad Wall, <sup>39</sup> and above the Gate of Ephraim, and by the Old Gate, and by the Fish Gate and the Tower of Hananel and the Tower of the Hundred, to the Sheep Gate; and they came to a halt at the Gate of the Guard. <sup>40</sup> So both companies of those who **gave thanks** stood in the house of God, and I and half of the officials with me; <sup>41</sup> and the priests Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah, with trumpets; <sup>42</sup> and Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malchijah, Elam, and Ezer. And the singers sang with Jezrahiah as their leader. <sup>43</sup> They offered great sacrifices that day and **rejoiced**, for God had made them **rejoice** with **great joy**; the women and children also **rejoiced**. The joy of Jerusalem was heard far away.

Celebration/rejoicing

<sup>44</sup> On that day men were appointed over the chambers for the stores, the contributions, the first fruits, and the tithes, to gather into them the portions required by the law for the priests and for the Levites from the fields belonging to the towns; for Judah **rejoiced** over the priests and the Levites

who ministered. <sup>45</sup> They performed the service of their God and the service of purification, as did the singers and the gatekeepers, according to the command of David and his son Solomon. <sup>46</sup> For in the days of David and Asaph long ago there was a leader of the singers, and there were songs of praise and **thanksgiving** to God. <sup>47</sup> In the days of Zerubbabel and in the days of Nehemiah all Israel gave the daily portions for the singers and the gatekeepers. They set apart that which was for the Levites; and the Levites set apart that which was for the descendants of Aaron.

## A. Introduction

What is descriptive and what is prescriptive?

1. They (all) gather (in Jerusalem)
2. with (a) musical instruments and singing; (b) and organized procession; and (c) (great) sacrifice
3. The leaders purify themselves, the people, the space
4. They stand in continuity with a tradition
- 5. for (a) celebration/ rejoicing; (b) thanksgiving; and (c) dedication**

## B. Rejoicing

One of the most pressing issues which needs to be at the heart of contemporary discussion is not what pleases us in worship but what most honours God... The purpose of worship is not to provide us with an exultant feeling inside... —Raymond Brown<sup>1</sup>

**Phil 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.**

Jim Wilder & Michel Hendricks, *The Other Half of Church: Christian Community, Brain Science, and Overcoming Spiritual Stagnation* (Chicago: Moody, 2020).

**Ps 16:11b: "In your presence there is fullness of joy" (NRSV) → "abundance of joy with your face"**

**Ps 21:6b: "you make him glad with the joy of your presence" (NRSV) → "You make him happy with joy with your face."**

Joy is seeing (and being seen by) God's face—so it can be a "supra-emotion," co-existent with suffering.

## C. Thanksgiving

**1 Thess 5:18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.**

Martin Rinckart (1586-1649): see Robert J. Morgan, *Then Sings My Soul: 150 of the World's Greatest Hymn Stories* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003): 16-17.

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<sup>1</sup> Raymond Brown, *The Message of Nehemiah: God's Servant in a Time of Change*, ed. J. A. Motyer and Derek Tidball; *The Bible Speaks Today* (England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1998): 206.

*Now thank we all our God, With hearts and hands and voices, / Who wondrous things hath done, In whom this world rejoices; / Who, from our mothers' arms, Hath blessed us on our way / With countless gifts of love, And still is ours today.*

#### **D. Dedication**

**Rom 12:1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.**

*"Where Gratitude Gets You," Hidden Brain podcast, November 2020.*

**Deut 6:5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.**

**Mark 12:30 you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.**

**Question: What is one thing that God may have said to you through this sermon?**