

Sermon Outline

“Dedication and Celebration”

Nehemiah series, part 9 – Nehemiah 12:27-47 – Robin Boisvert – April 10, 2011

Main Idea: God blesses His people with joy and gladness when they thankfully remember what he’s done for them.

Introduction

1. The identity of God’s people was wrapped up in the promises God made to them about the land and his presence. He promised that He would be with them in the land and that he would be their God.
2. In addition, Jerusalem was the city of the Great King; it was God’s city. For its walls to be broken down was more than just a civic issue. This was a picture of their broken relationship with God.
3. The walls had been in ruins for almost a century. Now they have been rebuilt. To mark the moment, to mark the demonstration of God’s grace in their life as a nation, the people gathered to celebrate the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem.

Organization

1. This dedication ceremony, remembering what God had done for them in the rebuilding of the wall, required organization and leadership. From various places, they brought the Levites to Jerusalem (12:27). They gathered the singers from the districts surrounding Jerusalem (12:28). They assembled two great choirs: one went to the south; the other went to the north (12:31). They arranged choreography and musical accompaniment. They offered sacrifices (12:43) and much more (12:44-47).
2. This all didn’t happen spontaneously. It required thought, planning, and leadership. It was all done for the purpose of remembering with thanksgiving what God had done for his people. The result was joy and gladness for the people of God.
3. When we gather together on Sundays to worship God, it doesn’t just happen. It requires organization and leadership. And when it is done well (which it is), we rarely think about all the thought, planning, organization and administration that occur to ensure a smooth, uneventful gathering. Instead, we are free to focus on remembering the great acts of God on our behalf through worship, the Word and the Sacraments.

Dedication

1. This ceremony included a dedication. “Dedication” means a ‘setting aside’ or ‘setting apart’ for a special purpose. In Nehemiah’s day, they met to dedicate the walls—to mark

Sermon Outline

the moment and remember the great things that God had done for them. God responded by blessing them with great joy and gladness. And the joy of Jerusalem was heard far away.

2. When we gather on Sunday morning, we also gather to mark an important moment. The early Christians met on the first day of the week because that was the day that our Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead! Because Jesus, the Son of God, came in human flesh, lived a sinless life on our behalf, died in our place and rose again on the first day of the week, we dedicate this day and this time, in particular, to come together to worship and adore Him.

Celebration

1. What did God's people in Nehemiah's time do when they gathered and dedicated the walls? They celebrated! In a word, it was worship. They expressed his worth and his worthiness. They expressed their gratefulness and lifted their voices and instruments in praise.
2. Psalm 126:1-3 may have had this celebration in view: "When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then they said among the nations, 'The LORD has done great things for them.' The LORD *has* done great things for us; we are glad."
3. Five times in this passage, thanksgiving and singing (along with musical instruments) are linked together (verses 27, 31, 38, 40, 46). What sets God's people apart from other religions and should characterize Christian worship are joyful, reflective songs of thanksgiving. Our celebrations should be marked by remembering Jesus with thanks for his great acts of redemption on our behalf.

Conclusion

1. Nehemiah recounts the story of the time when Jerusalem's broken down walls were rebuilt. Restored walls meant protection for God's people from their enemies. And the walls served that purpose until 70 A.D. when Roman invaders destroyed both the walls and the temple, again.
2. But before 70 A.D., the most wonderful event in history occurred. God sent his one and only Son, who died outside the walls of Jerusalem to save us from our greatest enemy—eternal punishment in hell. And because of Christ's redemption, God has promised to be our refuge, strength and help in trouble (Ps. 46:1-2) in this present evil age with all its pain and suffering.
3. And one day, Jesus will return for His people. When He does, all suffering and sin will be vanquished, and the ultimate fulfillment of the temple (i.e., God's presence) and the walls

Sermon Outline

(for protection and safety of God's people) will be in the new Jerusalem in the new heavens and new earth (see Revelation 21: 1-4, 9-12).

Fellowship Starters

1. Take time as a care group to read Nehemiah 12:27-47.
2. Robin described Nehemiah 12 as a passage about corporate identity. Why is it important for God's people to mark special occasions and important times together with a dedication and/or celebration?
3. As you consider Sundays at Covenant Life Church, where do you see the gifts of organization and administration functioning in the Body?
4. The dedication of the walls marked an important moment of God's grace in the life of God's people. What is the important moment we mark and celebrate when we gather each Sunday?
5. In Nehemiah's day, the people gathered to dedicate the walls and to remember the great things God had done for them. How can you make Christ's finished work (His life, death, resurrection and ascension) the focal point of your Sunday celebration?
6. Robin shared that God blesses His people with joy and gladness when they thankfully remember what he's done for them. How can you cultivate a lifestyle of thankfulness for all of God's grace and mercy in your life?
7. Take time as a family, friends or small group to give thanks to God and remember all that he has done for you in Christ Jesus.