

Sunday, January 11, 2015

The Joy of the Lord is our Strength

Speaker: David Robinson

Scripture: Nehemiah 8:1-12

Sermon Notes:

1. On the first day of the seventh month (the Jewish new year), the people gathered at the Water Gate in Jerusalem and called Ezra to read and explain the Law.
2. The Bible is not reserved just for those allowed in the temple but it is for everyone.
3. The people wanted Ezra to read God's word, as shown by their building the platform. And Ezra read for an extended period of time: from dawn until lunchtime, about 6 hours!
4. Ezra was a scribe skilled in the law of Moses, who had set his heart to the study of the law of the Lord and to do it and to teach it to Israel (Ezra 7:10).
5. He was a man of integrity: he practiced what he studied. And that's what God looks for in a teacher and pastor and that's what the church should look for.
6. The people raise their hands when the law was read, lifting God's name on high and expressed their dependence on him and trust that he will provide for their needs.
7. They also bow their heads, which signifies reverence, submission, and humility. God's word is something we need, we submit to, and treat with reverence.
8. The ears of all the people were attentive the whole time Ezra read. Listening to preaching requires patience and careful listening.
9. If you find yourself complaining: 'I didn't get anything out of that sermon' ask, were you there with a spirit of listening?
10. The people needed help understanding what they read. The Levites, men who had studied the scriptures, went down to the people to help them understand.

11. Evangelism is always personal. You need someone who can meet you and apply the word to you directly.
12. We need to be part of a local church, because we need pastors and teacher who know us well and teach us personally.
13. The people wept over what they heard. The Bible reveals our sins and weaknesses. But the Levites say this is a day for feasting and rejoicing. The people are commanded to have a party (Neh. 8:10; cf. Lev 23:23).
14. God is a God of feasting and rejoicing. Both are sacred activities. Christians are a people who celebrate and we make sure others can celebrate (Neh 8:10).
15. We always feast in thanksgiving and acknowledging God's goodness to us, not for the sake of sensual pleasure.
16. God is the source of our joy. Joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). Holiness and joy go together.
17. Our joy can come only when we know Christ and put our trust in him.
18. We don't know what 2015 holds for us, but we go in the light and knowledge of God's word and we go rejoicing.

Application Questions:

1. Who should be included in hearing and teaching of God's word?
2. Do we come to church in a spirit of humility and reverence?
3. Do we discipline our minds and exercise patience while we listen?
4. What does it mean to make this verse our focus for 2015? "the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh. 8:10).
5. Explain the importance of "going to the people" in instruction and evangelism?
6. In 2015 how can we spread the rejoicing and feasting that God has gifted to us?
7. What are the conditions for true human joy?