

Nehemiah: FreeNotFree

Week 11 – freedom comes from celebrating

Transition: Last week we saw how the leaders helped the Jews who had returned from Babylonian exile re-establish Jerusalem (and the temple in particular) as the center of their faith and worship. One way they did this was to increase the population of the city through having one-tenth of those who lived outside of the city to move there (as determined by the casting of lots). Likewise, they also made sure that the members of the priestly/Levitical tribe fulfilled their roles (as stipulated by David and Solomon, 12:45) at the temple and throughout the city.

Context: Through the efforts of Nehemiah, Ezra, and the other leaders, the Jews who have returned to Jerusalem and Judah are well on the road to becoming healthy in mind and spirit. They have renewed their covenant with God, are filled with a new sense of purpose, and are secure in knowing that God is both with them and for them. As they recognize the enormity of how far they have come spiritually and physically in such a short time, in gratitude, they collectively decide to have a celebration to honor what the Lord has done and to worship Him.

Opening Question:

- How important is corporate singing to your worship experience on a typical Sunday? Explain. What kinds of things help you to worship deeper from the heart? What kinds of things tend to hinder you?
- Share a time when you experienced incredible joy. What was it that caused you to rejoice? What are some things that typically bring you great joy?

Scripture/Storying: Nehemiah 12

Discipleship Questions:

- Chapter 12 opens with a genealogy of the priests who returned from the Babylonian captivity. Why do you think they made this list? Why do we (as Christians) not need a list like this today?
- Why do you think the priests whose duties included singing are mentioned so much? What does this tell you about how their role was viewed by those in leadership? What value did the singers contribute to corporate worship?
- When has participating in worship through singing impacted you memorably? In what way(s) were you affected? If someone you knew (who is also a Christian) told you that they didn't enjoy congregational singing, what would you say to them?
- What dedications have you attended or participated in through your local church? What was it like/how would you describe it? How did it affect you? How did it affect the others who were there? What role (if any) do corporate dedications play in the health of a church?
- Read v43 again. What strikes you most about this verse? When have you been a part of something (if ever) that could be described similarly? How can we make rejoicing a regular thing while at the same time keeping it pure and not prescribed?
- How might we develop a reputation of joy so that it could be said of us that "the joy of Providence Church was heard far away?"

Prayer time: Pray that we will be a people who are known for rejoicing.