

Title: Don't Forget to Celebrate

DT: **There's a lot to be thankful for in Christ, so celebrate in a way that reveals your Lord.**

INTRODUCTION:

—Most of us love celebrations, but there are some bizarre ones out there: 1) "Wisconsin Cheese Day"—every other September in Monroe, Wisconsin (cheese parade/ cheese curd contest/ yodeling); 2) "The Rattlesnake Round Up"—each March in Sweetwater, Texas (snake shows, rattle-snake hunting, snake-charming, and snake eating contest); 3) "Rocky Mountain Oyster Festival"—each summer in Clinton, Montana (the motto: "Come have a ball!"). 4) "Goat Yoga Day"—June 21st location vary yearly (do yoga, while a goat climbs on your back)

—As westerners, most of the time we celebrate stupid and worthless things (sports team championships, sexual preferences, graduating from kindergarten LOL). Celebrations are important, because they communicate a story, a worldview, and a value, and therefore be careful of the things that you celebrate, because celebrations are a reflection of one's identity and what they've attached to it. **What you celebrate, you embrace, and what you embrace becomes part of who you are!**

—Celebrating isn't wrong or evil, our God is a God of celebration. -**Leviticus 23:1-2:** *The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, These are the appointed feasts of the Lord that you shall proclaim as holy convocations; they are my appointed feasts. Psalm 81:1-3: Sing aloud to God our strength; shout for joy to the God of Jacob! 2 Raise a song; sound the tambourine, the sweet lyre with the harp. 3 Blow the trumpet at the new moon, at the full moon, on our feast day.* The Lord commanded His people in the OT to have festivals with meals—parties! These festivals were important because they were reminders of who God is and what He had done, so that the people would remember who they were—God's people. Yet, like anything the enemy takes it, twists it, and perverts it—Mardi-Gras, Pride Month, Halloween. **Celebrations aren't just a good time with food, music, and people—celebrations make you into a people!** Choose carefully what you celebrate.

—One of the most celebratory passages of scripture is found in **Psalm 100:** *Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth! 2 Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing! 3 Know that the Lord, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. 4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name! 5 For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.* Here we find celebration and thanksgiving go hand in hand. Celebration is an opportunity to express thankfulness. **What a person celebrates reveals what they're thankful for.** Celebration helps to foster a heart of gratitude, and in a negative world filled with varying degrees of tribulation (Jn. 16:33), thankfulness becomes a lifeline for the believer and a guiding light to those searching for hope! Therefore, a celebratory heart of thanksgiving *really* matters for us in Christ!

—TRANSITION: I want to share three reasons why we should devote ourselves to a celebratory heart of thanksgiving.

MOVEMENT 1:

—Share: A couple of weeks ago I came back from a week-long vacation, and just entered into a hard ministry week. I was down and discouraged, resting in my pity party, but pity parties can become paralyzing for the Christian. —**1 Thessalonians 5:16-18:** *Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.* —This verse popped into my mind, so I began to pray with a thankful heart—thanking God for whatever I could, and that thanksgiving gave me reason to rejoice—lit. "Be cheerful" and "calmly happy." —Why? Because God says to!

—The first reason we should devote ourselves to a celebratory heart of thanksgiving is because: **God commands it—it's His will for us!**

MOVEMENT 2:

—This command to rejoice isn't some "fake it 'til you make it," but it's making the choice to set your heart and mind on the things of Christ, and where Christ is seated is on a throne of victory. It's hard *not* to rejoice when we're on the winning team! "It pays to be a winner," so stop thinking like a loser. —Remember you are redeemed, remember you are called, remember you are blessed in Christ—there's lots to be thankful for.

—**Philippians 4:4-7:** *Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. 5 Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand¹; 6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* —This passage reminds us that the Lord is at hand, and if you're familiar with Old Testament history "The hand of the Lord" was personified by The Angel of the Lord—the one who leads, fights, and provides for Israel. This passage reminds us that our Christ leads, fights, and provides for us now; therefore we have a lot to rejoice about and be thankful for in our prayers and disposition, and in this we discover the peace of God. —How often do you thank God in your prayers?

—**Gratitude doesn't change our circumstances, but it changes our perceptions.** How we view things really matter. If we constantly play the victim—our faith becomes less effective, but when we thankfully recall the works of God in our lives, we walk courageously as victors.

—The second reason we should devote ourselves to a celebratory heart of thanksgiving is because: **it's a spiritual weapon that helps us fight against the negativity that can render us ineffective.** —We worry less when we praise more. A thankful heart subdues a broken spirit!

MOVEMENT 3

—Our world is full of disenfranchised people who have no real vision, no real purpose—at least nothing rooted in eternity. We are a world full of broken hearts who are looking for hope, looking for celebration!

—Go to a restaurant, and watch the waiters and waitresses sing happy birthday; everyone looks towards the commotion. Walk the city streets, and listen for the loud music, smell of food, and the gathering of people. You'll be intrigued to find out what's going on, or nowadays...potentially horrified LOL. A celebration is difficult to ignore, we're drawn to the commotion. **People are intrigued by celebration and therefore the Church must celebrate!**

—**Acts 2:46-47** gives us a picture of a celebratory church: *And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

—The celebratory lives of the early Christian Community were counter-cultural and favorable, and the Church grew because of it.

—The third reason we should devote ourselves to a celebratory heart of thanksgiving is because: **Celebratory Christians attract others to Christ!**

CONCLUSION:

—A thankful and celebratory life is important: ****restores our identity, **creates community and belonging, **heals a broken heart, and **signals new beginnings.** —Remember in Christ you are a victor! —Recall the victories and gifts you have because of Him. —Celebrate those victories and gifts with others! —Memorialize those victories with a symbol.

—**There's a lot to be thankful for in Christ, so celebrate in a way that reveals your Lord.**

¹ "The hand of the Lord" is often used in the Old Testament to describe God's power (Ex. 9:3), judgment (1 Sam. 5:6), and guidance and provision (Ezra 7:6, 28). Ezekiel 1:3 equates the "word of the Lord," who is personified multiples in the Old Testament in the Angel of the Lord, with the "hand of the Lord" through Hebrew parallelism. In Exodus the hand of the Lord is the one who both leads and delivers Israel.