

REST: From Sorrow to Celebration
Nehemiah 8:9-12
May 20, 2018

WARM-UP QUESTIONS:

1. This weekend was the wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, a major news event. Like Pastor Jason, would you have liked to attend that ceremony? Or are celebrations like that stressful or uncomfortable for you?
2. What was the most exuberant celebration you have ever attended? What was the most joyful church service you have been to? How were they similar and different?
3. Looking back to the past year, what experience of grief have you gone through - at home, at work, with other people? Were you able to find joy and celebration at the end of this process? What helped you through this transition?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. Pastor Jason noted that, in many English translations of the Bible, there is a paragraph break between John 11:37 and 11:38. We live in the paragraph that asks “why didn’t He do more?” and await the paragraph in which Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead. In our own stories, how do we experience that paragraph break? In what areas of life are you saying, “why didn’t He do more?”
2. The Sabbath and the festivals of the Jewish people gave them a rhythm of joyful celebration of what God had done. Why is that rhythm important? Does such a rhythm exist in our own lives?
3. Read Nehemiah 8: 9-12. What does celebration accomplish in the midst of sorrow and grief? What does this inform us about God and the nature of faith? Why did the spiritual leaders establish the rule about sharing after the command to celebrate? What purpose does sharing accomplish? In what manner does it enrich the celebration experience?
4. How does the story of Lazarus in John 11 help us in our understanding of celebration in spite of grief and sorrow? What aspect of observing the Sabbath enable us to celebrate?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. In Nehemiah 8, Ezra tells the people that in their celebrating, they should share their feast food with those who had not prepared anything. How can we bring others into our joyful celebrations in spite of the difficulties of life? Can you think of someone whom you can bring God’s blessing to during a time when they may not be able to celebrate?
2. What is something that God has done in your life that you can celebrate this week? How can you celebrate it?
3. As we have concluded our series on “Rest”, what insights or life lessons has God implanted in you about your life? How are you seeking to intentionally experience God’s rest in all that you do?