

## The Local Church - A Place of Joy Nehemiah 12

### Introduction:

1. Some people have a false image of Christians. They picture them as people who are somber, with sour faces, and always mad about something.
2. But as you study the Bible you will find something that is always true of those who walk with God - they are **full** of joy and gladness.
3. **Nehemiah 8:10** states, "...for the joy of the Lord is your strength."
4. In chapter 12, Israel assembles together to dedicate the wall of Jerusalem that they had built. Jerusalem's wall was a symbol of God's salvation and her gates of joyful praise.
5. What was it that characterized this worship service? vs. 27, 43 - It was a time of joy, gladness, and rejoicing for all of God's family.
6. Don't get me wrong, it wasn't a time of fleshly indulgence or worldly entertainment, but as they worshipped God, there was genuine joy coming forth from their hearts.
7. I think this is missing in many local assemblies today. Hearts are cold; the atmosphere is one of deadness. It is too much like a funeral parlor.
8. When believers meet together, joy and gladness should abound. Why is this? Let's look into our text and see why.

### First, because joy is indicative of thankful hearts.

1. Notice the recurring theme of thankfulness in our text. vs. 24, 27, 31, 38, 40, 46
2. Notice how thanksgiving goes hand in hand with joyful singing. vs. 27, 46;  
**cf. Psalms 95:1-2, 100:1-2, 4**
3. We see this in Paul's epistles to the church also. **Ephesians 5:19-20**
4. Thankful people are joyful people, and Christ puts a song of praise in your heart. Do you feel like singing when you are griping?
5. When God's people assemble together and they are filled with thanksgiving, do you know what characterizes the meeting? Joy and gladness!
  - When God's people's hearts are full of griping, complaining, and murmuring, joy is the first casualty.
6. This is why the song portion of the service is so important (vs. 42). If our attitude is wrong, the songs are there to readjust our thinking and recognize God's goodness, and take on an attitude of praise and thanksgiving, which brings that joy.

### Second, because joy is a gift from God.

1. Some people think that if you go to church and enjoy it, something must be sinful or wrong. They think of church as something to be **endured**, not enjoyed.
2. But these people rejoiced. Why did they rejoice? According to verse 43, Who made them to rejoice? It was **God** that made them to rejoice! **cf. Ezra 6:22; Psalm 16:11**
3. What about the church age today? Does God want us to have the gift of joy too? **Galatians 5:22** - God gave you the possibility and privilege of endless joy; the moment you got saved and received His Spirit.

4. Here is what I want you to see: **Joy is God's idea!** It comes from God.  
**Romans 15:13**
5. When Christians go around with sour, rotten, nasty dispositions, this is not God's will. God did not put that sour look on your face or rotten disposition in your heart.
6. Joy is a gift that God wants all of His children to have. **1 Thessalonians 5:16; Philippians 4:4** - Heaven is a place of joy (**Luke 15:7**) and singing (**Revelation 5:9**).

### **Third, because joy is a testimony to others.**

1. Notice the end of verse 43. Their joy was a testimony to others that God was at work and that God had done mighty things. As they rejoiced, people knew that "Something is happening over there."
2. Christ has given you His Spirit and His very life. He desires to live His life through you. He wants to demonstrate His joy through you. **John 17:13**
  - Do you demonstrate to others the joy of knowing Jesus Christ?
3. **1 Thessalonians 1:6-7** - They had inward joy despite adverse circumstances and they were a testimony to others.
4. When believers go around with a negative, defeated attitude, what kind of message does this send to others? You get enough people like this in the local assembly and what does it do to the meetings? It will have an effect.

### **Fourth, because joy is a choice.**

1. These people made a choice to rejoice (vs. 44). Circumstances were not perfect. Jerusalem still needed a lot of work. There was still the danger of the enemy attacking it. Many of these people still didn't have homes to live in.
2. But they recognized the goodness of God and chose to praise God and take on an attitude of thanksgiving.
3. Your joy is not based on outward circumstances around you. Your joy is based upon your attitude and the daily choices you make. **2 Corinthians 7:4, 8:2**
4. If you are walking around with a scowl or frown on your face, God didn't put it there. It is not God's fault. I like what the prophet Isaiah said. **Isaiah 61:10**

### **In Conclusion:**

1. The local church should be a place of joy. When the saints of God get together, joy, gladness, and rejoicing should characterize God's people.
2. Why is this? Because we have a God that loves us, came to this earth, and died for us so that we could be completely forgiven of all sins. He has given to us His very life. This life is a life of joy! **Psalms 35:9**