Spiritual Disciplines: Celebration

Leviticus 23Philippians 4:4-7

[based on the sermon preached on 26-03.23 – available on the church app or at https://lwac.org.au/sermons]

KEY IDEAS

1. Celebration is rejoicing to commemorate some significant event or person.
2. Celebration and rejoicing/joy have a reciprocal, mutually affirming relationship.
3. Old Testament Israel was commanded to celebrate; Paul instructs us to rejoice in the Lord always in Philippians.
4. For some people, celebrating comes easy; for others it is difficult. Regardless, all of us can grow in our capacity to celebrate and rejoice since it comes from the joy in our heart.

CONNECT

- What is one memorable celebration you have experienced? Why was it special? Share about that experience.

STUDY

Read Leviticus 23

- Each of the following seven passages provide a description of a different festival or feast which the Israelites were commanded by God to celebrate. Assign each person (or a small group of persons) in your group one of the passages. Each person/group should read their assigned passage and identify which festival it describes and any significant features of the festival. Each person/group should be prepared to share their results with the larger group.
    - Leviticus 23:3
    - Lev. 23:4–8
    - Lev. 23:9-14

- Lev. 23:15-22
- Lev. 23:23-25
- Lev. 23:26-32
- Lev. 23:33-36, 39-43

- Do these festivals have any features in common? If so, what are they?

- Why do you think God wanted the people of Israel to celebrate so many festivals?

- Are there any general principles from celebrating these festivals which we can learn from and apply today when we celebrate?

Read Philippians 4:4-5

- Define "rejoice" in your own words. What are some synonyms for rejoice and rejoicing?

- Twice in v. 4 Paul instructs us to rejoice. His second directive is so emphatic it warrants an exclamation point. What does this indicate about the importance of rejoicing?

- Note that this rejoicing is to be "in the Lord." What does it mean to "rejoice in the Lord?" Is this different from regular rejoicing? Is it even possible to truly rejoice apart from God?

- Note also that Paul instructs us to rejoice "always." Do you think this means even in the hard times and the bad times? Or does he mean just when things are going well? If in the hard and bad times too, why might rejoicing when things are not going well be especially important?

- Share about one hard time when you were still able to rejoice, or perhaps when you struggled to rejoice.

Read Philippians 4:6-7

- Describe "anxious" in your own words. What is so difficult about <u>not</u> being anxious?

- Share about one circumstance or event or person over which you have recently been anxious, or about one such event or person over which you could have been anxious but were not because you rejoiced and prayed instead.

- Why do you think Paul instructs us not to be anxious? How does anxiety rob us of joy and prevent us from rejoicing and celebrating?

- Paul asserts that when we present our requests to God in prayer our anxiety over those requests should dissipate or be relieved, not when we receive an answer to our prayer petitions, but by the very fact that we present them to God, before they are even answered. What is it about doing this which short-circuits or eliminates our anxiety?

- Paul then declares that a supernatural peace will replace our anxiety. This replacement Paul describes as "guarding our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." What does it mean to have your heart and mind guarded? Why is this important if we are not to get caught up in anxiety again and be free to rejoice?

- Have you ever experienced this peace which transcends understanding after presenting your prayer requests to God? Share about this as you are able.

- When we compare Phil 4:4-7 with Paul's list of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23, we notice that in Philippians Paul directly lists three fruit of the Spirit from Galatians (joy, gentleness and peace), and indirectly implies at least two more (patience and faithfulness). Given that in Philippians Paul seems to be stating that these fruit are connected to rejoicing, what does this tell us about the importance of rejoicing and celebrating for our Christian growth and maturity?

APPLY

- How can you present your requests to God through prayer, let go of your anxiety and rejoice in the Lord this week?

- How can you practice the Spiritual Discipline of Celebration this week?

- Which other aspect of this study has struck you the most and why? What are you going to do as a result ?

- Identify one or more truths from this study which speak to and can be applied in your life.

  1.

  2.

PRAY FOR OUR CHURCH AND FOR ONE ANOTHER

- According to need.