A Season of Rebuilding
Building a Future with Joy and Celebration

- Church we are officially in week five of this incredibly important series that I believe if we actually catch will take us into a mighty God focused future. There is massive spiritual significance to what we are casting. We are casting vision, we are developing strategy to see this vision come to fruition. Because God has fruit for us here!

- This season isn't at all about physical buildings, not about rebuilding our property or anything superficial like that, this is profound and spiritual, God is rebuilding our church through the mission and strategy God has given us. I believe we are entering a season, and not a short season but a long season of God's Favor through this rebuilding, through this commitment to focusing on the future! Let's do a quick recap of the previous building blocks, they were:

-Prayer -Unity -Focus -Commitment -Perseverance

Building Block 6: Joy and Celebration

- I feel this may be an overlooked building block for building a supernatural God honoring future, but church let me tell you something we need joy! We need to celebrate the goodness of God. We must have the joy of The Lord, it is our very strength and we won't make it to the future God has for us without building a foundation of joy of the Lord!

- Paul writes to the church of Philippi, which was a strong thriving church with very little church issues, they were pretty healthy, especially compared to the other churches Paul writes letters to. Paul tells them some amazing truths in this passage. Along with verse 6 and 7 that tells us don't worry about anything but instead pray about everything! He even goes on in verse 8 to adjust our thought life by shifting focus and what we dwell on, dwell on the good things! But verse 4 will always be so profound to me.

Philippians 4:4: "Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice!" NLT

- Always be full of joy! Now that is a wonderful command, and a rather difficult one as well. We are to live in constant rejoicing and joy. Never letting our joy of The Lord meter run on empty. We are to always be full. Our community should see us and the way we live and know we are the most joyful people. No matter the circumstances.

- God says through Paul here “Always” be full of joy. Not sometimes, not when you just had something good happen, but in the midst of the hardest struggles of your life. The deepest losses, the most extreme pains and circumstances, those are seasons to walk in joy, just as much as the seasons where everything is easy. We are to be joyful! We must be joyful! We must be people who rejoice, who celebrate!

- And yet for some reason the world doesn’t see Christians as joyful, we haven’t done the best job living and walking out lives of supernatural joy. Many of you have heard stories about my exploits working at a movie theater. I believe I’ve shared more about it on Wednesdays but I worked quite a few years through high school and college at a small three screen theater, in a small northern Michigan town.

- This job was about thirty minutes of work before the movie began and then two hours of waiting for the movie to end with your coworkers. And I had a coworker, he was my boss actually. The manager, he was as atheist as atheist can get. This guy not only didn’t believe in God but hated everything about God. He had some great hurt in his heart.

- I remember we had many conversations about Christ, many conversations not about Christ, but he ended up becoming a good friend, he loved spending time with me to the point where he scheduled me and his shifts always together. I babysat his son, watched his house when he went on trips. We were good buddies. And I remember there was a tipping point before he fully warmed up to me.

- At this point he didn’t know I was a Christian yet and he asked why I was so full of joy and happy all the time. And at that moment I shared my love for Jesus and he was so confused, in his head all Christians were sour, dour, along with sad and mad all the time. He had a perception in his head based on the Christians he had met that Christians couldn’t have joy.

Let me tell you something church, as saved, redeemed, children of God we should be the most, fun and joyful people around. We are called forgiven by the creator of the world! How could we not be full of joy!

Psalm 71:23-24: “I will shout for joy and sing your praises, for you have ransomed me. 24 I will tell about your righteous deeds all day long” NLT

- We must be full of supernatural joy. Christ followers should always be the most joyful people, remember church we know the fruits of the spirit don't we? Glumness, isn't one. Goodness is. Kindness is. And you know what else is? Joy! We don't have to be sad or somber in life, in church, in your interactions, we are to be utterly full of abundant joy!

And when building a future we must not build and move forward on the mission somberly but to be done joyfully!

- The joy of the Lord is our very strength, we learned that in Nehemiah chapter 8 remember? In the midst of the spiritual revival and bible marathon going on everyone is so in awe of The Word of God. They were weeping at the word, and sometimes weeping comes, but let them be tears of joy. Look at what Nehemiah said in chapter 8 in the midst of their sorrow and somberness to the word of God.

Nehemiah 8:9-10: "Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and teacher of the Law, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, "This day is holy to the Lord your God. Do not mourn or weep." For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law. 10 Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."" NIV

- The joy of The Lord is our very strength church, we must find the strength of joy and live and walk in the joy of the Lord. It will change our very church's trajectory, the trajectory of your life, your families lives. When we operate in Holy Spirit joy, God is glorified! This future God has in store for us, this vision God has given us. It should be a joyful thing, we should be joyfully praying every single day for the souls God is going to allow us to reach, the situations we can minister to, the array generations we can bring the gospel too. The vision should bring you great joy!

- We are going to see the absolute joy a vision brings today as we dive into the book of Nehemiah because after the wall was built we read in chapter 8 all about the Word Marathons, and the literal written commitments the people made to God. Well today in chapter 12 we are going to see a Praise Party! Which is always the best kind of party! This party came during the dedication of the wall God gave the vision for to Nehemiah.

- The wall was built, the people rededicated themselves to God, and now it was finally time to dedicate the wall, and boy what a party we see here, what a

joyful time! All giving praise to God! Let's look at this praise party, really almost like a praise parade!

Nehemiah 12:27-32: "At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, the Levites were sought out from where they lived and were brought to Jerusalem to celebrate joyfully the dedication with songs of thanksgiving and with the music of cymbals, harps and lyres. 28 The musicians also were brought together from the region around Jerusalem—from the villages of the Netophathites, 29 from Beth Gilgal, and from the area of Geba and Azmaveth, for the musicians had built villages for themselves around Jerusalem. 30 When the priests and Levites had purified themselves ceremonially, they purified the people, the gates and the wall. 31 I had the leaders of Judah go up on top of the wall. I also assigned two large choirs to give thanks. One was to proceed on top of the wall to the right, toward the Dung Gate." NIV

- It goes on to list all the names of the choir leaders, as well as some priests who played trumpet for the event, let's continue down at verse 38…

Nehemiah 12:38-43: " The second choir proceeded in the opposite direction. I followed them on top of the wall, together with half the people—past the Tower of the Ovens to the Broad Wall, 39 over the Gate of Ephraim, the Jeshanah[h] Gate, the Fish Gate, the Tower of Hananel and the Tower of the Hundred, as far as the Sheep Gate. At the Gate of the Guard they stopped. 40 The two choirs that gave thanks then took their places in the house of God; so did I, together with half the officials, 41 as well as the priests—Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah and Hananiah with their trumpets— 42 and also Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malkijah, Elam and Ezer. The choirs sang under the direction of Jezrahiah. 43 And on that day they offered great sacrifices, rejoicing because God had given them great joy. The women and children also rejoiced. The sound of rejoicing in Jerusalem could be heard far away." NIV

- Talk about a praise party! I love that the sound of rejoicing in Jerusalem could be heard far away! Imagine that? Imagine if we praised God so joyfully, with such excitement, fervor, that all of Zeeland heard us? I at least want Moo-Ville next door and the whole gas station hearing our praise every Sunday morning! But imagine that? That level of joy and praise! And the big takeaway here for this display of joy is God was the source of their joy.

- You can have a wall, a building project without joy, but let me tell you church you can't have this level of joy without God. We see in verse 43 that no only was their joy contagious it was amazingly outrageous. That's why to you it probably sounds outrageous for me to say I want Casey's hearing us praise God with joy. But my goodness I want us to be that filled with joy in our Lord! And I want it to contagiously spread!

- This giant party it wasn't because of a wall it was because of their newfound joy in the Lord that came through the pursuit of the vision God birthed through Nehemiah. The wall construction didn't bring them joy they had this joy because of God. Church we must find that joy in God. This house, this church it should be the most joyful, celebrating, praise filled building in Butler County!

- And as we progress in this vision chasing after the future and strategy God has birthed for this church through me and through all of you. We must show this level of celebration and joy. We need to have some praise parties, we need to celebrate and we must always give God glory for all that happens!

- Church as God blesses and we see souls find Christ, we feed those who can't afford food, we see God set addicts free, we see families, marriages, rebuilt with God at the center. Through the next five years and beyond we are going to see huge things, God surpass every expectation! We are going to have praise parties for those things just like we see here! But we must always remember:

We don't celebrate the vision, we celebrate The God of the vision

- Remember I've told you the past weeks throughout this whole series especially last week, this vision is going to be hard! What God wants to do through us is going to stretch us beyond belief. The enemy is going to try to oppose what God is going to do through us. It will be difficult, I'm preparing you up front. This vision is audacious, this is huge. And if we pursue it somberly and devoid of joy it will drain and exhaust us. But if we find the supernatural Holy Spirit joy and pursue it joyfully we will stay fueled and exhilarated even when it gets extremely hard!

- The future we can anticipate depends on who or what we celebrate, where our joy is found. That's true for not just us as a church but you as individuals as well. The future you anticipate, the future you are expecting depends and hinges on who you celebrate, where you joy is coming from. ***So let me tell you Church, as we ask God for Kingdom growth through it all we will celebrate God and find our joy in Christ!***

- I want to show you from this chapter three things that happens when God is celebrated, the first is…

1.) When God is Celebrated Holiness is a Joy

- One thing you notice when you take a close look at this amazing praise party is before the celebration started the priests purified the people.

Nehemiah 12:30: "When the priests and Levites had purified themselves ceremonially, they purified the people, the gates and the wall." NIV

- Let's be honest here Jerusalem was in tatters before this point it was basically an abandoned dump, and they were calling people to come back and move into the city. And it wasn't just any old remodeled city this was a holy city! Jerusalem was set apart for God. The people that lived there needed to be purified and set apart as well.

- I'm curious whenever you invite someone over for dinner at your home do you serve them food on dirty plates? I'm assuming you don't and if you do you can skip my invitation for dinner. But in the same way God calls the vessels who claim His name to be clean. He wants His children to be pure.

1 Peter 1:15-16: "But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. 16 For the Scriptures say, "You must be holy because I am holy."" NLT

- We as Children of God are simply called to be holy and set apart. And there is a myth in the world about holiness and living to the holy standard set forth by God, and that myth is to be holy you can't be full of joy. I've heard so many people say it, Christians can't be fun. So many people try to say if you live a set apart life you can't have fun. That is a complete lie. The devil, the world they will try to tell you that you are giving up joy when you choose to live for God. The real truth is when you seek God and pick up the mantle of holiness you find true joy.

- I'm even going to make the bold statement that if you know a Christian that is joyless and never joyful at all it isn't because of their holiness it's because of their double mindedness. If you decide to wear Jesus one day and then take him off the next you won't experience the true joy that comes from always wearing and choosing Jesus! You want part time joy be a part time Christian.

When you choose holiness and living set apart it doesn't rob joy it brings joy! It brings the best possible life through Christ!

- It is not a burden to be holy! It is not a burden to seek holiness, it is an absolute blessing, it is a true joy to be filled with The Holy Spirit and seek after a life that reflects the holy standard of God! It is an honor to strive to live like the one who saved us! We should celebrate the honor to live like Christ and be so joyful because one day we get to see Him!

1 John 3:2-3: "Dear friends, we are already God's children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is. 3 And all who have this eager expectation will keep themselves pure, just as he is pure." NLT

- When you are pumped to meet Christ, when we are eager with expectation, it is pure joy to daily be transformed more and more like our Father and live how He wants us to live! It isn't a burden it is a joy! It should be our highest joy! As we joyfully build a future for God, it should excite us that God is building us for a future with Him! That should excite you! That is reason to celebrate when we congregate, and remember let's make Casey's hear us! God is so good!

- The second thing we see from this chapter is…

2.) When God is Celebrated Worship is a Joy

- As you read through the book of Nehemiah there is a through line of not just seeking to build a wall but Nehemiah seeking to build a culture of worship in the hearts of the people. Remember the first thing Nehemiah did back in chapter 7 after the completion of the wall was the appointment of musicians and Levites to prepare for corporate worship. In chapter 11 we see Nehemiah appointing others to lead in thanksgiving and other corporate acts of worship along with other musicians. This was a focus of Nehemiah! Remember how the awesome praise party of chapter 12 started? Look at verse 27 of chapter 12…

Nehemiah 12:27: "At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, the Levites were sought out from where they lived and were brought to Jerusalem to celebrate joyfully the dedication with songs of thanksgiving and with the music of cymbals, harps and lyres." NIV

- They started this whole celebration with praise, and they did it joyfully! Nehemiah wasn't just building a wall he was building that culture of joyful, celebration and worship the city had lost. Worship isn't just a part of the service we sit and wait through or endure it is a time of great joy! Praise and worship should be a priority of our church! We need to want to celebrate Christ!

- Remember the focus of worship isn't where are in life, what we are facing in life, it's who God is! God is good! The personhood and goodness of God doesn't change regardless of where I'm at on a Sunday or how I feel so my level of praise and worship unto God and joy doing it should never waver.

Psalm 100:1-5: "Shout with joy to the Lord, all the earth! 2 Worship the Lord with gladness. Come before him, singing with joy. 3 Acknowledge that the Lord is God! He made us, and we are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture. 4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving; go into his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name. 5 For the Lord is good. His unfailing love continues forever, and his faithfulness continues to each generation." NLT

- We should be joyful in our worship for the exact same reason we should be holy, because God is and God is good! And we need to remember just as God is holy God is joyful, He is the author of joy! He is the most joyful being in existence. He is full of joy so too should we be, and our worship should be full of joy! We should be full of joy. Romans says it like this…

Romans 14:17: " For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" NIV

- If we as members of the Kingdom of God don't have joy, don't worship joyfully there is something wrong. If you don't feel a washing of joy when you walk into the house of God and get around other children of God something is wrong. In Galatians chapter 4 Paul writes to the church of Galatia and this church had grown steeped in legalism and he asks them what happened to their joy?

- When the joy of the Lord is gone something is wrong. Joy in our spirits, joy in our worship, joy in our ministering, joy in everything should be our primary language. Especially in worship we must have joy. Worship isn't something we must do it's something we get to do. And when we constantly celebrate who God is we will worship God with joy and freedom like never before. Worship is a privilege and blessing.

- My prayer for every single one of us is in knowing God's goodness and character we will better worship His character and goodness with joy and freedom. Worship is our opportunity in the midst of struggle and trial to say despite it all God you are real, you are good, your are in control, and trust you and honor you! We need to do that filled the more joy than we can contain! Our worship should be overflowing with joy!

As we pursue this vision we will and must be intentional about celebrating the God who brought us this vision for the future and in doing so we will no longer worship out of duty or obligation but out of delight and joy!

- Church worship is a privilege but also so is giving. Look at verse 43 of Nehemiah chapter 12 again…

Nehemiah 12:43: "Many sacrifices were offered on that joyous day, for God had given the people cause for great joy. The women and children also participated in the celebration, and the joy of the people of Jerusalem could be heard far away." NLT

- Many sacrifices were offered that joyous day with great joy they sacrificed unto God, their sacrifice was done joyfully! So just as holiness and worship is a joy when you are intentional about celebrating God so too is it joyful to sacrifice for God.

3.) When God is Celebrated Sacrifice is a Joy

- Nehemiah knew what it was going to take to keep this praise party going, it would take sacrifice and giving. Building a future is no fun without funds. Look at what they do after they offer sacrifices unto God. Nehemiah sets them up for tithing and giving unto God. The very same day of this amazing praise party they continue the party by setting up this storeroom for giving unto God.

Nehemiah 12:44-47: "On that day men were appointed to be in charge of the storerooms for the offerings, the first part of the harvest, and the tithes. They were responsible to collect from the fields outside the towns the portions required by the Law for the priests and Levites. For all the people of Judah took joy in the priests and Levites and their work. 45 They performed the service of their God and the service of purification, as commanded by David and his son Solomon, and so did the singers and the gatekeepers. 46 The custom of having choir directors to lead the choirs in hymns of praise and thanksgiving to God began long ago in the days of

David and Asaph. 47 So now, in the days of Zerubbabel and of Nehemiah, all Israel brought a daily supply of food for the singers, the gatekeepers, and the Levites. The Levites, in turn, gave a portion of what they received to the priests, the descendants of Aaron." NLT

- The people didn't want this praise party to stop, they wanted the culture of worship to continue in the city so they knew in order for it to be sustained God's workers needed to be sustained and so they decided they would be faithful in their tithes, their first fruits, their offerings, and give to God. And guess what it wasn't a burden to give, it was a blessing! It was a joy!

- It was a joy to give sacrificial, to be generous, and that shouldn't be surprising to us because all throughout the Bible generosity and joy go together. The same should be true of us, we should find joy in giving generously! The very words of Jesus said it is more blessed to give.

Acts: 20:35: "In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"" NIV

- A great example of this very principle in scripture we see is in 2 Corinthians. Paul is collecting money for believers struggling in Jerusalem and 2 Corinthians chapter 8 in his letter to the church of Corinth he writes about the generosity of the Macedonian believers.

2 Corinthians 8:1-3: "Now I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters,[a] what God in his kindness has done through the churches in Macedonia. 2 They are being tested by many troubles, and they are very poor. But they are also filled with abundant joy, which has overflowed in rich generosity. 3 For I can testify that they gave not only what they could afford, but far more. And they did it of their own free will." NLT

- Just a little later in the very same book Paul wrote that God loves a cheerful giver. A giver who is filled with joy to give. And we ask why does God want us to be joy filled givers? Well it's simple and the same reason God asks us to be seek holiness, God Himself is a joy filled giver and we are to be like our God! God is the most cheerful giver in the universe and God loves when His children try to be like Him!

- To build a supernatural future we must find joy in what you are sacrificing to build. We must find joy in giving sacrificially! Finding joy in generous giving is

imperative in our vision and simply in honoring our Father. It is a blessing to serve in The Kingdom of God, to sacrifice for our heavenly Father!

- Sometimes sacrifice comes from more than our money. Let me tell you it was a sacrifice to come and pastor this church, and I did it gladly and I continue to pastor here with joy despite the sacrifices. It is a sacrifice to no longer see my family, Autumn's family on a regular basis, that was a sacrifice God called us to. And it's a joy to leave our home state and cling to the will of God. Because my God and His plan is worthy sacrificing anything!

- We have to find joy in sacrificing for the will of God and future of God! We have to know investing in the Kingdom of God is so worthy it is a joy to sacrifice for God's Kingdom, God's will and future! Look at how Jesus taught the joy of The Kingdom in Matthew 13…

Matthew 13:44: ""The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field." NIV

- Jesus compares it this way because the truest joy of life is being in The Kingdom of God. The most joy and the highest valuable is the treasure of sonship and daughter ship of Christ and we should be willing to sell or sacrifice anything just to own the treasure. Just to be a son or daughter of Christ. The most joy comes from seeking The Kingdom, being in The Kingdom. Sacrificing for The Kingdom.

- One of the devils biggest concerns is you finding out how truly valuable The Kingdom is, how much The Kingdom is truly worth it. Because once you figure that out you will stop selling out for all the trivialities that are robbing you of real joy. The real joy of Christ and The Kingdom of Christ.

- ***So that becomes the question for us:*** do we believe in the future of The Kingdom of God more than anything else we could give our lives to try and build? And does our joy back up what we say we believe?

The thing we need to realize is our joy is our witness. The joy of The Lord is our very witness to Situations and Generations.

- Looking at this amazing praise party of chapter 12 of Nehemiah, this party started on the wall not in tabernacle, why do you think it started on the wall and not in the church or even somewhere else? ***Nehemiah wanted their celebration to be a proclamation!*** Verse 43 of chapter 12 doesn't say from

far away you could hear the music, it says from far away you could hear their very joy.

- Outrageous joy is contagious joy! Maybe that is why in Acts chapter 16 Paul and Silas while in Philippi were surrounded by a mob of angry people arrested, stripped of their clothes, severely beaten with wooden rods, and thrown into a the depths of the inner dungeon, and shackled and before the night is over they both are singing songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God!

- And before that very night is over they are leading the very jailer who shackled them to the Lord. They had the joy of the Lord! And it's apparent in that chapter the world wants to know where that joy comes from! So church as we seek situations and generations the next five years and years to come we must remember to rejoice in The Lord!

- We must find our joy in the Lord! We don't even find joy from the vision but we find joy in the God of the vision! And through that joy we will build a supernatural future and that joy will be contagious. People will notice our joy. People will want to partner in that joy and in our vision and the future we are building through Christ. Church here is my prayer for us, for each and every one of you today.

Romans 15:13: " I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit." NLT

- Paul's prayer for the church of Rome is my prayer for our church right now, today. I am utterly overflowing with confident hope that through the work of The Holy Spirit Purpose Church will experience revival, Zeeland will experience revival, Ottawa County will experience revival all like it's never experienced before. People in the muck and mire of horrendous situations will find Christ and the hope of Christ. Families will all find Christ from generation to generation and we will see a work and move of God bigger than anything we could even dream up.

- I am confident in that hope. And I have joy and peace in what God is building and is going to do. And along the way we are going to have some amazing praise parties! But today there are some people in this room who need the joy of the Lord in a new way. And what I want us to do is I'm going to pray, the band is going to come up and we are going to a Holy Spirit praise party right now.

- We are going to praise God for His goodness, for His nature, for who He is and we are going to do it joyfully. And in this act of praise we are going to supernaturally find joy in the midst of devastation. Because some of us have been facing devastation from health devastation, family devastation, work devastation, financial devastation, so no matter what devastation you are facing strength comes from the joy of The Lord. Remember the words of Nehemiah in chapter 8…

Nehemiah 8:10: "…do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength" ESV

- Right now through praising and celebrating The Lord we are going to find strength in The joy of The Lord. Let's have a Holy Spirit Praise Party right now and find some supernatural joy and strength in The Lord right now!