

Disciplined Celebration – *Psalm 118:24*

Introduction – The title of the sermon sounds at first like an oxymoron. How can celebration, something which is free and happy and easy, be described as disciplined? Wouldn't disciplining your celebration ruin the very act of celebrating? And yet, without disciplined celebration what we find happening is less and less celebration, not more of it. Consider how hard it often is to get up for another birthday, anniversary, Fourth of July Celebration, or Family Camp. Consider how easily the Lord's Day becomes a burden rather than a feast and day of rest.

This is the Day (Psalm 118:24) – This is not a little ditty. This Psalm is fulfilled in Jesus Christ (vv22-23) and therefore "the day" the LORD has made is the day of Resurrection. The Day is the Lord's Day as well, the beginning of the new week, the eighth-day celebration. Fundamentally, what is this day for? *"We will rejoice and be glad in it."*

From Whence You've Come – There is no Good News without the Bad News. Part of our celebration is to rejoice over what we were saved from. All had sinned (Rom 3:23) and all were under God's judgment (Rom 6:23). Celebration pushes away the fog on the side of the ledge to reveal the thousand foot cliff you were pulled from. Realizing and remembering this increases the joy and thankfulness. And so, teaching the doctrine of Total Depravity (Inability) and the judgment of God is not doom and gloom unless one turns away in unbelief. It is a delight for it declares how much God has saved us from.

Gladness and Godliness – Being godly is often wrongly characterized as being prune-faced and dour. Being reformed and godly is characterized as something even worse. The Scriptures teach quite the opposite. The godly are characterized by overflowing gladness. They are overwhelmed with their deliverance and their Deliverer (Isaiah 35:10, 52:9). To be in His presence is a place of glory and honor, strength and gladness (1 Chron 16:25-27, Psalm 16:11). When the Spirit of Liberty grants you freedom from your bondage, it is as though you were in a dream (Psalm 126:1-6).

Not Empty Giddiness – The point isn't to deny difficulties in life and run a constant laugh-track with empty or vulgar humor, imitating the world. Wisdom and true laughter comes after we have been to the house of mourning (Eccles 7:1-6). There is a house of mirth to be avoided and there is the laughter of fools. But that is different than entering into a house of reverent thanksgiving, feasting and celebration over what the LORD has done and what He has promised to do. In fact, the more we are taken over with the exhaustive sovereignty of God and His infinite purposes in a world of vanity, we are told all the more, trusting Him, to *"go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God has already accepted your works"* (Eccles 9:6). *This is the day the LORD has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.*

Regulating Celebration – This seems like another oxymoron, but consider the nature of planned feast days. In the Old Covenant administration, the LORD set up particular days and required the attendance of all His people (or households) to come before Him and party. But, no different than for us, preparing for, traveling to, and setting aside time for such events was surely a sacrifice of sorts. We have a far simpler administration, but our weekly Lord's Day worship services serve similar and yet more glorious purposes. In that renewal service of gladness and celebration, we are prepared and sent to the world to be the bearer of Good News – not just a message, but a life of gladness.

When We Forget – *"Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of everything, therefore you shall serve your enemies, whom the LORD will send against you..."* (Deut 28:47f). This forgetfulness causes us to lose faith, to fall in the midst of temptations and tribulations, and to give ourselves to cheap thrills to heal the wound lightly, rather than deal with our sin and unbelief honestly and seek the pleasures of God. Instead, disciplined celebration trains us to *"give thanks always for all things to God"* (Eph 5:20) which is what the saints are doing in heaven (Rev 11:17).

The Fruit of Disciplined Celebration (Phil 4:6-7) – Disciplined celebration spills out into the rest of life; it produces a life of thanksgiving even when pouring out supplications to God. And this thankful turning to God results in a peace which guards our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. What happens because we discipline ourselves in it on the Lord's Day is that Monday morning comes and, even with the imperfect sanctification of ourselves and our world before us, we see the next sunrise and celebrate with God the works which He has already prepared for us. If you are physically weak, you need to discipline your exercise program. If you are spiritually weak, you need to discipline your celebration program. More partying... *This is the day the LORD has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.*