

Celebrate Good Times...Come On...August 11th – Celebrate Good Hope

Introduction – Imagine being stripped of every tradition and celebration we enjoy as citizens of America...no holidays, festivals, gatherings, parties, nothing...no Independence Day, Christmas, Thanksgiving, Memorial Day, Labor Day (sign up soon)...imagine our enemy has swallowed us up for the purpose of slavery and stripping from us every vestige of our heritage so that we will no longer have any hope...to such a circumstance Moses was sent to set God's people free. It would be 1500 years before Christ was born so how did God intend to preserve, prepare, and perpetuate His people until Christ could fulfill God's promised plan of eternal hope? How could He preserve the guiding principles invested in them through the Law of Moses? How could He prepare them to endure the ever-changing geopolitical landscape they would negotiate? How could He perpetuate the power of hope that would guide them through corruption, conquest, and an additional 70 years of captivity? God chose to do that through feast and festivals celebrated yearly or regularly (7 years...40 years...etc.) which were designed to keep God's people in touch with His Power and His Presence and His Promise. They were a shadow of the things we experience too as Christians through Christ Jesus...**Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival...These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. (Col 2:16-17)**

There were 3 Major Feast each year that required God's people to journey back to Jerusalem. There was the Feast of Unleavened Bread which was connected to the Passover. There was the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost), and there was the Feast of Tabernacles. Each had a unique traditional purpose connected to the harvest of barley, wheat, and fruit of the vine. They were much like the Great Darke County Fair in which we gather as a community to appreciate the very best in everything from livestock, to the harvest, to the use of that harvest as we eat, drink and are merry. But each festival was forerunner of what we fully experience in our relationship with Christ, and that will be our discovery in the next few weeks. We will talk about God's authority expressed in the power of the plagues and Passover which was a shadow of the authority expressed in the power of the resurrection which gives us hope no matter the circumstances of darkness. Next week we will talk about God's authenticity expressed in His presence as we consider the birth of the church during the Pentecost celebrated after the resurrection of Jesus. The last Sunday of August, we will talk about God's authorship expressed in His promise as we consider His daily provision to us which leads to His eternal provision. We will talk about all these feasts in the application of our celebration of hope, home, and health.

7 million people are expected to attend this year's Oktoberfest in Munich and millions more to celebrate it around the world. It started as part of a royal wedding celebration in 1810 but

beer was not the primary focus, although it was served free along with the royal food. But beer has become the reason for the celebration which can be made with barley so if you can understand celebrating with beer, you can also understand that the feast of the unleavened bread was a celebration of the barley harvest for the children of Israel.

The Passover Feast was important reminder to the Hebrews that their people served in slavery for 430 years, and that it was only through the Power of God demonstrated through the plagues which established His authority over all people which allowed for His people to be set free from their bondage. It calls to remembrance the night that the angel of death “passed over” the homes with lambs’ blood on the door post while taking the lives of the first-born sons of those who did not, including the Egyptians. They ate unleavened bread as a symbol of their haste in leaving Egypt for the “Promised Land.”

The Israelites would gather in Jerusalem in the spring for Passover as a part of their celebration of the Barley Harvest. Jesus connected this remembrance with the establishment of the Lord’s Supper in which we partake weekly. It is a reminder of God’s power to resurrect us in the face of impossible odds. The rich history of this feast can be better described by the website “Jews for Jesus”. I would encourage you to access it and look up the information about the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread.

“These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.” We can truly appreciate how God preserved, prepared, and perpetuated His people through the celebration of the Passover. Generation after generation would hear the story of slavery and the incredible price of life and blood that was paid for freedom. Jesus makes that connection of life and blood when He encourages us to remember through the Lord’s Supper. It was no coincidence that Jesus instituted this new remembrance during the Passover with the disciples in the upper room. But how are we to find in Christ the reality of this experience as Christians. Should we send our kids on a “leaven hunt” or eat the bitter herbs and unleavened bread? No, Christ fulfilled the Law, and Paul reminded us in Galatians 5:1; **It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.**

Our freedom in Christ is realized in fulfilling the law through love and choosing to walk in accordance with the Spirit. Paul said; **You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. (Gal 5:13-16).**

Our celebration of the Passover is our celebration of the Lord’s Supper; Paul instructed the

Corinthian church; For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (1Co 11:23-26)

So we celebrate by proclaiming the story of the death of Christ Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins, and we don't reserve this to once a year, but unto every occasion and circumstance. This celebration preserves our faith through guiding principles of the law of love. It prepares us so that we can endure the ever-changing geo-political landscapes which we must negotiate. It perpetuates the power of hope that guides us in the face of corruption, conquest, and captivity.

What happens to us if we don't regularly celebrate the Lord's Supper? What happens to us if we forsake the assembling of ourselves together as some are in the habit of doing? Truth is we deliberately sin and no sacrifice for sins is left for us;

If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? (Heb 10:26-29)

We may not intend to step all over the sacrifice of Christ as we treat unholy the covenant of blood as we insult the Spirit of grace, but that is what we are effectively doing. But is this a bad thing, is it something we can survive? The shootings in Dayton and El Paso have created another national debate over what causes such evil. A visit from President Trump to console the victims and families created a firestorm of political criticism when there was an effort to promote Dayton Strong. But it has been the prayers, and giving, and service and sacrifice which has set those in Dayton apart. As one newscaster said; the world impressed with the generosity of Daytonians in the face of such tragedy. What is it that sets them apart, prayer, giving, service, sacrifice, all elements of the Lord's Supper remembrance. We proclaim the power of the resurrection in times like these because it is the only power that can help us rise above our sorrow and fear. How would we describe the evil which could kill so mercilessly? As trampling underfoot the most holy covenant of life and love, as insulting the Spirit of grace! We don't have to be mass murderers to do this. Any of us who forsakes the celebration of the Lord's Supper is slowly losing the sacrificial value of life and love. It will come out in ways that are ugly and evil.

Celebrate Good Times...Come On! There's a party goin' on right here...A celebration to last throughout the years...So bring your good times, and your laughter too...We gonna celebrate

your party with you...Kool and the Gang. This celebration last to eternity, it brings goodness and laughter to believers. We gather tonight for a pool party to extend our celebration this morning...Come on, let's celebrate our good times.