

Celebration

Prayer

This morning I am excited to bring this message to you!

“The Christian Church IS a community of celebration!”

I want to give you some fresh perspective today on why Jesus died on the Cross. People this morning we can celebrate because he didn't give himself to save a bunch of people in isolation and in so doing contribute to the loneliness in their hearts. No he came to create a community of believers that are uniquely his. People that would love, encourage, support, edify and value one another. A people that would embrace him and eagerly spread his good news to the world!

Many people feel all alone, especially at this time of year. Many are thinking of those they cannot be with either due to huge distances or because they have gone on before them.

I'd like to point out this morning that our Lord Jesus died in abject loneliness. His nation rejected him and even his disciples deserted him. Yet it was when he was at this point which looked like a low point that he drew all mankind to him Self.

Jesus came to give you Life and that life more abundantly (CF. John 10:10)

Remember how in previous sermons I have spoken about the four aspects of salvation. We talked about Redemption, Justification, Propitiation, and Reconciliation?

- Redemption – We are bought with a price
- Justification – We are imputed a righteous standing before God
- Propitiation – Jesus is our substitutionary sacrifice
- Reconciliation – Our relationship has been restored

What wonderful works of the cross, we now experience a nearness and full access to God. The veil of Holy of Holies was torn asunder. We have direct access to the creator of the universe.

So... that estrangement from God; that loneliness of our spirit has been replaced with something new... Let's celebrate some of the new characteristics associated with this great work.

Boldness: (Parresia) This word was a favorite word of the Apostles. It means: Plain speech, frankness and confident - outspoken conversation.

So we inherit an ability to come before the throne of God with boldness and confident assurance that we are joint heirs with Christ. We are covered in his righteousness and we are once again in right standing with the Father. Jesus is our high priest and because he has imputed his righteousness to us, we are free to approach God Almighty the Father in heaven.

In context, this boldness also speaks to our ability to witness and spread the good news of Jesus Christ. To do so without fear, we simply have to know who we are in Christ and embrace it!

Let's celebrate this gift of Boldness!

Love: This new characteristic is LOVE. We have capacity, we have opportunity; we have His example.

- GOD – Mankind
- Mankind – GOD
- Mankind – Mankind

There are four types of Love:

- Storge – Affection
- Philia – Friendship
- Eros – Romance
- Agape – Unconditional Love

We are going to focus on Agape...

Agape which means "love: esp. brotherly love, charity; the love of God for man and of man for God.

Romans 8:38-39

"I am sure that nothing can separate us from God's love-- not life or death, not angels or spirits, not the present or the future, and not powers above or powers below. Nothing in all creation can separate us from God's love for us in Christ Jesus our Lord"

Did you know that NOTHING is able to separate you from the Love of God?

That's God to Us...

We are given a commandment... but; I'd like to think of it as a Great opportunity

1 John 4:19-21

We love because God loved us first. But if we say we love God and don't love each other, we are liars. We cannot see God. So how can we love God, if we don't love the people we can see? The commandment that God has given us is: "Love God and love each other!"

This is our relationship towards God and this is our relationship towards each other...

Joy:

What is celebration without JOY!

The word tells us that the Joy of the Lord is our Strength (Ps 28:7 Neh. 8:10)

Psalms 28:7

You are my strong shield, and I trust you completely. You have helped me, and I will celebrate and thank you in song. You give strength to your people, LORD, and you save and protect your chosen ones. Come save us and bless us. Be our shepherd and always carry us in your arms

Nehemiah 8:10 NKJV

Then he said to them, "Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

Okay ... can't let a sermon go without a challenge... so here it is:

Are Boldness, Love and Joy not internal and private things to each of us?

Surely you must say: "Yes they are..."

Yet... and here is the kicker: We are told that Boldness, Love and Joy are to characterize our public ministry...

People you are Christians, so... LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE!

Celebrate! – Be Bold, Show Love - Exhibit Joy!

Be confident in what Jesus has done for you and in you. Show love towards God and to each other and Let your joy radiate forth so that the world can see you know that Jesus lives!

We are a Church! What a church it would be if we could only grasp that the church is to be a festival of JOY, BOLDNESS and LOVE brought together to celebrate what God through his Son Jesus has done for us. Circumstance doesn't matter. Paul told

us that we should learn to be content in whatever circumstances we find ourselves in. (CF. Phil 4:11) What a celebration of life when we don't have to worry about our problems, we can give them to God! (CF. 1 Pet 5:7)
What about Communion? That is somber right?

YES! But it is also a celebration... Let me share a few thoughts on this with you this morning...

The sacrifice – Do this in remembrance of me (CF. 1 Cor. 11:24-25)
...but the it goes well beyond commemoration of Christ's death.

We call it communion because it says in 1 Corinthians 10:16 NKJV

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.

WE COME TOGETHER in communion with one another and in Christ's Blood.
It is a (GR. koinonia)

CEV: When we drink from the cup that we ask God to bless, isn't that sharing in the blood of Christ? When we eat the bread that we break, isn't that sharing in the body of Christ. By sharing in the same loaf of bread, we become one body, even though there are many of us.

We are a community that is to come together to be bold, Joyful and full of love. I say it again: "The church is a community of celebration!"

So in communion:

- We remember Christ's sacrifice - individually and corporately
- We partake of its benefits - ourselves and the body
- We proclaim his sacrifice - in our own hearts and to those around us as a witness
- We attribute our unity to his sacrifice - we come together with him and with the church

Now this babe which came to earth as fully God and fully man; came to fulfill all righteousness for the benefits of the cross so we could have life and life more abundantly in him.

Let's do a little academic thing here...

The finality of Christ's sacrifice on the cross can be seen clearly when we look at the original Greek. The words (hapax or ephapax) mean literally "once for all" When

Jesus came he sacrificed himself once for all who would accept him and believe on him. (CF John 3:16)

Jesus is our great high priest, the living Son of God. When he said it is finished it was finished, nothing more is required to redeem us. He intercedes for us. We do not have to sacrifice to atone for sin any longer...

Whoa! Wait a minute that doesn't mean you are off the hook.... Stay with me here! We don't have to sacrifice for sin. There is no more blood sacrifice required of us. BUT... we are called upon to make a spiritual sacrifice of praise. This sacrifice is not like an animal sacrifice; which was a replacement for our sins (Propitiatory) NO! it is given cheerfully because God loves a cheerful giver as we read in 2 Corinthians 9:7

So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

Our sacrifice of praise should be bold, joyful and full of love for God as an expression of gratitude for all he has done for us...

We offer up our lives as a living sacrifice to him in celebration!

Romans 12:1

Dear friends, God is good. So I beg you to offer your bodies to him as a living sacrifice, pure and pleasing. That's the most sensible way to serve God

Hebrews 13:15

Our sacrifice is to keep offering praise to God in the name of Jesus

Psalms 141:2

Think of my prayer as sweet-smelling incense, and think of my lifted hands as an evening sacrifice

Psalms 51:15-17 ESV

O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise

Philippians 2:17-18 CEV

Your faith in the Lord and your service are like a sacrifice offered to him. And my own blood may have to be poured out with the sacrifice. If this happens, I will be glad and rejoice with you. In the same way, you should be glad and rejoice with me

Hebrews 13:16

But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

2 Timothy 4:5-7

But you must stay calm and be willing to suffer. You must work hard to tell the good news and to do your job well. Now the time has come for me to die. My life is like a drink offering being poured out on the altar. I have fought well. I have finished the race, and I have been faithful

So what spiritual sacrifices do we offer up to God (Abridged. STOTT):

- Our Bodies as a living sacrifice (Rom 12:1)
- We offer Praise, Worship and Thanksgiving (Hebrews 13:15)
- We pray (Psalms 141:2)
- We offer up our broken and contrite hearts (Psalms 51:15-17)
- Faith as a sacrifice in service (Philippians 2:17-18)
- Gifts and Good Works (Hebrews 13:16)
- We pour out our lives into Gods service (2 Timothy 4:5-7)
- We share the Gospel (Philippians 2:17; 2 Timothy 4:6; Rom 15:16)

These sacrifices are not legal but based in the Grace of our Lord Jesus. We Celebrate Jesus Sacrifice for us by offering up joyfully these spiritual sacrifices to God. The amazing thing is when we do them they don't feel like a sacrifice, they create joy! They nurture a boldness and they all show love.

In the New Testament we are called "priests" and we are called upon to offer up these 8 spiritual sacrifices joyfully to the Lord.

Here is my point... We were so unworthy to approach God... Mankind sinned against God and brought damnation upon him-self. God set into play the law and the prophets of the Old Testament, which would culminate in the great work of the Cross, which goes forward and backward from Christ's sacrifice. From the moment of our transgression, God put into place a plan for restoration of his people. That's you and that's me. Now we can approach the throne of grace not as penitent and unworthy people, but because of Jesus Christ who has covered us in the robes of his righteousness we can actually make an offering of value, we can make spiritual sacrifice to God through our great high priest. We are worthy because of him. Because He made the sacrifice for us: "Once and for all" Because of his righteousness we can offer up praise and thanksgiving to the Lord, this is pleasing to him.

When we step out in faith. When we are Bold, Joyful and show love, we celebrate our lives in Jesus and we become a light to the world. That light is a tool of the Holy

Spirit, which draws all mankind to Christ. When someone is no longer lost, we can celebrate a new brother or sister. We can celebrate our inheritance in Christ Jesus. We can celebrate our relationship with God and with each other.

I leave you with this thought:

Hebrews 10:22-25

So let's come near God with pure hearts and a confidence that comes from having faith. Let's keep our hearts pure, our consciences free from evil, and our bodies washed with clean water. We must hold tightly to the hope that we say is ours. After all, we can trust the one who made the agreement with us. We should keep on encouraging each other to be thoughtful and to do helpful things. Some people have gotten out of the habit of meeting for worship, but we must not do that. We should keep on encouraging each other, especially since you know that the day of the Lord's coming is getting closer

Celebrate! – Be Bold, Show Love - Exhibit Joy!

The Christian Church is a community of Celebration!
We give praise to Jesus for what he has done for us.

Let's celebrate these new lives we were given together!

Can I get an AMEN?

Prayer