

November 13th, 2022 AM – Pastor Kevin Olivier
Nehemiah 12:31-43 – “Sing to God with Joy”

- A. Why do we sing when we gather together for worship?
1. It is important to know why we have certain practices in this or any another church.
 2. Especially as our youth grow up, God wants each you to have a principled awareness in how you worship Him.
- B. The event described in today’s text is a dedication service for the walls of Jerusalem.
1. There was a dedication service for the first temple when it was opened for worship.
 2. In reference to special cases when a younger man was given a delay from having to go off to battle, one valid excuse was for the dedication of a newly built house. **Deut 20:5** says: **“Who is the man that has built a new house & has not dedicated it? Let him depart & return to his house, otherwise he might die in the battle & another man would dedicate it.”**

You are to sing to God with Joy.	I. <u>THE USE OF CHOIRS THEN & NOW</u> II. <u>GOD’S COMMAND TO SING WITH JOY</u>
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I. THE USE OF CHOIRS THEN & NOW → **vv31-32**.

- A. As we read further, we discover that this 1st choir included instrumental accompaniment.
1. **v35** says that **“some of the sons of the priests [followed] with trumpets.”**
 2. **v36** tells us how others had **“musical instruments of David the man of God.”**
 3. A prior summary statement for this dedication ceremony also mentions musical instruments to accompany the singing. → Look back at **v27**.
 - a. It is a blessing to have musical accompaniment in this church.
 - b. Some Presbyterian’s argue that a case that the modern church should only have one instrument to accompany the singing.
 - 1) Today’s text includes at least 4 different types of instruments.
 - 2) There is a helpful article from the OPC’s 2009 *New Horizon* magazine titled, “Reverence or joy in Worship?”¹
 - c. Some churches have music so loud you cannot hear yourself sing. Such music would greatly discourage our congregational singing. That is contrary to **1 Cor 14:26** which says regarding worship, **“...let all things be done for edification.”**
- B. When 1st reading the text you may have wondered if there was singing on the wall; → **vv38-40** suggest the singing didn’t start until both choirs entered the temple.
1. When inside the temple, the end of **v42** says, **“the singers sang, with Jezrahiah their leader.”** This choir had a leader yet what was their purpose? Was this similar to what some call “special music” in our worship today?
 2. That wasn’t how a choir was used in Jerusalem here & that isn’t how a choir should be used today. This wasn’t a spectator event; **v43** says **“God had given them [all present] great joy, even the women & children rejoiced, so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard from afar.”**

¹ https://www.opc.org/feature.html?feature_id=390

II. GOD'S COMMAND TO SING WITH JOY → Look again at the end of **v42-43**.

- A. For some it is very hard to sing with joy because you feel that you cannot sing at all.
1. It is very hard to sing & enjoy singing when you lack confidence & training.
 - a. If you lack at least half-way proficiency with singing or don't believe you can sing, I highly doubt you enjoy singing.
 - b. Some will never pursue vocal lessons because they are too self-conscious to try.
 2. Whatever the hindrance, the greatest obstacle in American culture to singing in worship is people being too self-conscious. The root of that problem is self. We think too much of ourselves rather than what is pleasing to God or commanded by God.
- B. God commands you to sing praise to Him.
1. → Turn to **Ps 33:1-3**
 2. **Ps 149:1-2** **"Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song, & His praise in the congregation of the godly ones."**
 3. These are just 2 of many commands to praise God with song.²
- C. Considering again those who are too shy to vocalize & only move their lips; that is a breaking of the 1st & 2nd commandments which says you shall have no other gods before Him & that you should not make any idols to bow down to worship them.
1. God doesn't want us consumed with ourselves making idols of ourselves especially when we gather to worship Him. For the most part, worship is not about you.
 2. Earnestly ask God for His Holy Spirit to help you to sanctify the Lord Jesus Christ in your heart— that He would be your greatest love & not yourself.
 - a. **2 Cor 5:14-15** **"the love of Christ controls ["compels" NKJV] us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; & He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died & rose again on their behalf."**
 - b. Don't sing for yourself but for Him who died & rose again for your behalf.
- D. Singing is a skill that takes some people years to develop; however, you will never develop this crucial role in your worship unless it is important to you.
- E. As you are able, sing with greater volume; **v43** says **"the joy of Jerusalem was heard from afar."**

Review, conclusion, & further application:

² Also see 1 Chron 16:23f, Ps 32:11, Ps 33:1-3, Ps 96:1-2 Ps 98:1-4, Ps 100:1 & Isa 42:10.