

# A Spirit Of Rejoicing

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[ 0 : 00 ] Thank you, Lisa. Ooh, isn't that new announcement time so beautiful and short and love it, love it. I remember Elliot saying, I think it was Easter, we're just like, we have no announcements today and like everybody broke out into applause and we're like, hmm, all right, there's something there.

There's something there. Thanks for being here today as we jump back into the Nehemiah series. And Nehemiah is this beautiful story about God's renewal and what he's doing in and amongst his people.

And, you know, you can look at it in one of two ways. You could look at it as like, hey, this is like a building project and, you know, let's preach Nehemiah when that kind of thing's going on in the church. Or it's like, hey, this speaks into life, what it means to live on this earth following Jesus. And so it's more than just building walls. We're halfway through this book. The walls have already been built. So what is, what's there to talk about? It seems like Nehemiah did the thing he came to do.

Like, what is there left to do? But the story's halfway done. And that's the point. Renewal, man, it calls us to more and more and more. It calls us further than just building the walls.

[ 1 : 13 ] And you know what's interesting is there's some parallels here, even to just life in general. So if you're here and you're just like, hey, I want to learn more about this Christian thing, what it means to follow Jesus, or, you know, what does it say?

Maybe you're not a follower of Jesus yet. I mean, this speaks into our very existence. We spend the first half of our lives doing what? We spend it building a life.

And it's kind of the fun, spectacular part of life. We're young, and there's, you know, the world is our oyster. We can make all these cool decisions. It's intoxicating.

And we might build various walls and gates into our lives. And some of those might be in the form of careers and marriages and mortgages and kids and friendships.

And at some point, it feels like we kind of finished the building phase. We did, hey, we amassed all the important adult things that we were supposed to do, right?

[ 2 : 08 ] And so we're like, hey, cool, got there, boom, done, life is built. But then there's this next stage that we get into. We got to figure out how to live in the life that we built.

And everything that was so fun to build, we're now responsible to, to care for and to cultivate. And when our dreams turn into reality, what happens is they become obligations.

And this is where we spend the second part of our lives. And we do that without any of the youthful energy we had before, you know? All this stuff that was so exciting to do, we have energy for.

Now we got to take care of it. And like the things that make us happy is thinking of the dreams we have now is like, man, if I can get a nap, that would be amazing. Wow.

The point is that building walls isn't the destination. That like building your life, that sounds fun. But when you get there, you realize this isn't it.

[ 3 : 11 ] There is more. And the Christian life is similar. We get saved and we follow Jesus and we get to build our life on him. And what that looks like. And we do all the things.

And we start to go to church. And we start to get involved in church. And there's building campaigns and church planning and world missions. And finding what our gifting is. And locking in to where to serve.

And how to contribute to the kingdom of God. But you get to that place and you feel like, man, I've now arrived. I've done all the things. You feel like the walls and the gates, even for your life following Jesus, they're set.

They're well defined. I've got my church. I've got the ministry I'm involved in. I've got a small group that I go to regularly. I've got my friends. And the dreams become reality.

But after a while, same thing can happen. The excitement goes. The joy goes. And we can live in our well-built religious walls, lacking joy and wondering, is this it?

[ 4 : 09 ] And we can start to think that maybe following Jesus, maybe he just, joy isn't the point at all. He doesn't care about that. Maybe God just wants dogged commitment. And you know what?

If that makes us miserable and weary, then I guess so be it. There's a lot of Christians who walk around like that, you know? But as we will see in this chapter, man, that is not what God has for us at all.

God is joy. He is. He is ultimate joy. We were singing about the peak into heaven, that vision of heaven. There is so much joy and celebration happening there.

And so he is a God of joy, and he designed his people to be a people of joy. We're allowed to have fun and celebrate. And as we're going to see in this chapter, that happens.

Joy comes our way as we follow and obey God. And when we do that, what kind of goes on is that we enter into this spirit of rejoicing, this work of renewal. After the walls are built, man, we go, it takes us beyond, further beyond, and we enter in to the spirit of rejoicing.

[ 5 : 14 ] Nehemiah 8 verse 1 says this, And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the water gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses that the Lord had commanded Israel.

So Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard on the first day of the seventh month. And he read from it facing the square before the water gate from early morning until midday in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand.

And the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law. And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood Mattathiah, Shema, Ananiah, Uria, Hilkiyah, and Maaseah.

And on his right hand and Pideah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashem, Hashbadanah, Zechariah, and Meshulam on his left hand. And Ezra opened the book in the side of all the people for he was above all the people.

And as he opened it, all the people stood and Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, lifting up their hands.

[ 6 : 31 ] And they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground. Also, Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akub, Shabbathiah, Hodia, Maaseah, Kalita, Azariah, Josabad, Hanan, Peleah, the Levites helped the people to understand the law while the people remained in their places.

They read from the book, from the law of God clearly, and they gave the sense so that people understood the reading. And Nehemiah, who was the governor and Ezra, the priest and scribe and the Levites, who taught the people, said to all the people, This day is holy to the Lord your God.

Do not mourn or weep. For all the people wept as they heard the words of the law. Then he said to them, Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready.

For this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved for the joy of the Lord is your strength. So the Levites calmed all the people saying, Be quiet.

For this day is holy. Do not be grieved. And all the people went their way to eat and drink and to send portions and to make great rejoicing because they had understood the words that were declared to them.

[ 7 : 51 ] On the second day, the heads of the father's houses of all the people with the priests and the Levites came together to Ezra, the scribe, in order to study the words of the law.

And they found it written in the law that the Lord had commanded by Moses that the people of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month. And that they should proclaim it and publish it in all their towns and in Jerusalem.

Go out to the hills and bring branches of olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees to make booths as it is written. So the people went out and brought them and made booths for themselves, each on his roof and in their courts and in the courts of the house of God and in the square of the water gate and in the square at the gate of Ephraim.

And all the assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and lived in the booths. For from the days of Jeshua, the son of Nun, to that day, the people of Israel had not done so.

And there was very great rejoicing. And day by day, from the first day to the last day, he read from the book of the law of God. They kept the feast seven days.

[9:03] And on the eighth day, there was a solemn assembly according to the rule. This is God's word. Amen. It's a wonderful passage.

See a lot of joy in there. But it opens with an outdoor church service that lasts for half a day. So either they're Pentecostals or something else is going on here, right?

How do you keep people's attention for half a day? What can be that interesting? Well, we see. What captivated them for hours on end was the teaching of God's law.

There was no band. There were no special performances. There weren't even bounce houses for the kids. And not even good coffee to get to, just to top up every once in a while.

And, you know, it makes me wonder because supposedly, if you read about this, the full assembly being there would have been over 40,000 people, maybe even close to 50,000. There is no mention of bathrooms anywhere here.

[10:08] I'm just wondering what is going on. It doesn't look like a recipe for success. And yet, these people, they stand there for four to eight hours listening to someone read and interpret the Bible to them.

The law of God. Which means that probably included Leviticus too. You know, about hour, if I was there about hour two in, I would have been saying, okay, Lord, I am ready for your imminent return. Like, anytime you want to show up, I'm good with that. But what we see here is the word of God causing his people to rejoice. Joy followed on from God's law getting into their hearts.

And that's a truth for us to reckon with today. We touch joy when God's word touches us. Think about that. But it also requires something of us.

And we see it at the end of verse three. The people didn't just show up. They showed up and it said they had attentive ears. Which meant they came hungry and expectant to learn something.

[11:13] And here's the thing. Every time you and I, every time we see the Bible opened, it is a chance to drink of everlasting joy from God.

Even if it's Leviticus. Now, let's step, let's just take a moment. Let's step into their sandals and think about what's going on.

The wall has just been finished. Things have improved. But at the same time, as great as it is for the Israelites, that remnant there for the walls to be finished, the gates to be set.

And all that meant for them, things were far from perfect. They were far from the former glory of Israel. They were still hated and despised and looked down upon by their neighbors.

They were still under foreign rule of the Persian king. So that's their reality. It's a tough and humble reality. But they see and hear this.

[12:07] God is still for them. And his work is still unfinished. And that makes them hungry. That makes them lean into this moment. And you see, because of that, God's word take effect.

And God's word brings joy, but it brings joy to humble and teachable hearts. We've got to come with that. You see how ready the people of Israel are here.

Verse 5, it describes Ezra standing up on this wooden platform he had made so that as he reads the book of the law over that massive congregation, his voice can carry as far as possible so that they can hear.

And then he gets up on the platform and he opens the book. And I don't know if it's scroll this way or book this way. I don't know. I think it's more scroll. You know what the people did?

So he opens the scroll. They all stood as one. Not because they were giving Ezra a standing ovation. They were just like, oh, here's the great preacher about to bring it. They were standing in reverence for the book of the law.

[13:06] Now, then Ezra goes on to bless the Lord, the great God. And all the people say, amen, amen, with hands raised, head bowed. It's this posture of reverence and awe and humility.

They're in that moment and they're saying, hey, this is something special is about to happen here. That's what they're coming with. And we read this and we look and we're just like, man, so far, none of this sounds very joyful, sounds very solemn, maybe a little too serious.

But maybe that's our problem. Perhaps we are missing out on joy. Maybe our lives are a little devoid of joy because we don't hold God's word in a solemn and serious way. We don't imagine what it could do every time that book is open and is we're reading it or it's taught to us. But they did it here. And because of that, it has this profound effect as it enters their ears. Because not only did they hear it, it says they understood it. It was taught to them. And when we understand God's word rightly, what that means is that it will do something to us. [14:10] And as it does something to us, it does something else. It demands something of us. God's word, what it does, it discerns our hearts and it demands a response. It does.

We see here what happens to the people of Israel. They are cut to the heart. They're weeping. Which again, it's like, hey, it doesn't seem like there's much joy here. I know. I mean, none of us are signing up for the Bible class on how God can expose your heart and convict you of sin, right? We're not like, hey, that's the one I want to go to. We like God the encourager. We like God the cheerleader. He was like, I don't care what you do. I'm just going to rah, rah, rah you. We don't like God the heart surgeon.

The Bible describes itself much like that, as being sharper than a two-edged sword. It's like a scalpel that does major surgery at the deepest levels of our being. It cuts into us to deal with some of those things, all of those things that are in there that need to be dealt with. And the reading of God's law, it comes that way, like a two-edged sword, and it cuts them to the heart.

[15:12] It has that effect on the whole assembly. And I want you to think about that. There's 40, maybe 50,000 people there in tears and snot bubbles. That is what's going on. I mean, the word of God came powerfully.

And you look at that, and you're just like, man, I'm like Ezra, you killed it, buddy. Successful sermon. But apparently, that is not what he was going for. He wasn't going for the tears and the crying.

This day that they are on, this day that this is happening, is actually a particular day on the Jewish calendar that was set apart for the Lord.

It was set apart to be a day of rejoicing and a day of feasting. It's meant to start with this trumpet blast that's saying, good news, everybody. We're going to celebrate God today.

But they're reading the law, and it's convicting them of sin. It's showing them how they fall short. And I'm thinking like, oh, Ezra, you got them right where you want them. Great altar call moment.

[16:08] Dude, I mean, you got like 40,000, 50,000 people. That's like Billy Graham-style opportunity there. But that is not what he was going for. Verse 9, Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe and the Levites, who taught the people, said to all the people, this day is holy to the Lord your God.

Do not mourn or weep. For all the people wept as they heard the words of the law. And I'm reading this, and maybe you're reading this, and you're thinking, gosh, this really doesn't make sense. Like Ezra and Nehemiah, you're kind of blowing it here.

Let the Bible continue to do its work. Let the people repent. You know, let them have their moment. And then after that, you can celebrate. Like why didn't they just let them do that?

It seems the obvious direction things were heading, but they didn't do that. And maybe they didn't do that for a good reason. Maybe there is something deeper at play here that you and me and they needed to understand.

And I think the answer is at the end of verse 10. For this day they're being told, stop weeping. Go celebrate. Go eat fat food and sweet wine, man.

[17:15] Go and feast on ribeyes and port. Your best port you can find. That's what they're saying to them. And do it with everybody. Have a great potluck.

Why? Because this day is holy to our Lord. This day is set apart unto him. It's not about you. Do not be grieved. Why? For the joy of the Lord is your strength.

And here is the lesson that they are being taught. Here's the lesson we are being taught. You and I are always going to fall short of obeying God's law. That's what they're seeing here.

That's what they're experiencing. But here's the thing. If we can only be happy when God's law says we are perfect, guess what? We ain't ever going to be happy. It's never going to happen.

The people weren't told like, hey, the joy of your obedience is your strength. They weren't told the joy of your performance is your strength. Because if you want to follow Jesus, if you want to live in

your relationship with God like that, that's going to land you at the corner of guilt and grief.

[ 18 : 22 ] And you can live there if you want to. I don't. Give me option two all day long. The joy of the Lord is my strength. That's the way I want to live. But what does that mean?

We can say that. We can have it sewn into stuff and put it on our walls. What does it mean? What does it mean that the joy of the Lord is our strength? Well, first, it reminds us whose joy we need. Right? It isn't my joy. It's not a joy I can drum up in my own strength. It comes from a source, and he is the source. It's the joy of the Lord.

And that joy, it names who he is. It's not the joy of God. It's the joy of the Lord. And the word that is used here is the covenant name of God, Jehovah. And they do that for a reason.

That was purposeful for a reason. Because they're saying, hey, pay attention. It's the joy of this God that we know. He's given us his special name for the people of Israel exclusively.

[ 19 : 21 ] And he says, this is how you are going to know me. And he's given that for all time. I am Jehovah. You are going to know me this way. I am the God who makes covenant with you. I am the God who is for you.

I'm the God who loves you, who's faithful and gracious and merciful and forgiving and just and true. That is who I am. That is my name. What's in a name? Everything.

Some of you barely know me. And so if someone was to come and say, hey, tell me about Jesse, you would probably say, well, he seems like, seems a little intense. Seems like a nice guy. I wish he preached a little bit shorter sometimes.

You know, that might be the extent of what you know me. But if you went to my wife and my kids and to ask them the same thing, well, they know me really well. They could answer that in many, many, many ways.

That's the lesson for us here. Do we know this Lord? Do we know what his name means? Do we know what that implies? And rejoicing flows from knowing that.

[ 20 : 24 ] For those from knowing this God that makes covenant. Rejoicing flows from knowing that God has you. Full stop. Nothing else. And you're not going to come to that conclusion.

You're going to act like these Israelites in this moment thinking like, oh, my God. Oh, my goodness. What just happened? I feel so bad. Maybe I got to do something. I got to figure this out in my own strength. That's kind of our instinct that we always bring to the table.

But you don't find that in the Bible. When you go to the Bible, it like cuts against our instincts. It cuts against our sensibilities about God and says, no, no, no. The God of the Bible is the God who covenants. From cover to cover, that's what we discover over and over and over again.

God is a God who doesn't loosely relate to his people. He's just like, hey, I'm in this as long as it suits me, as long as you keep your act together. He makes binding covenants with them that define and hold the relationship.

And here's the thing. Even when you fail to keep his covenant, his covenant keeps you. That is what's happening with Israel here. There's a remnant. And it's not because they're great and they're doing all the right things.

[ 21 : 33 ] They failed to keep his covenant. They should have been written off a long time ago. But despite that, his covenant keeps them. And it's true for us too. That's what's being taught to them in this moment.

And that's good teaching. Ezra killed it. He got the right gist here. They needed to know that. And they go home and they're released from this assembly. And they're like, oh, there's this covenant God, this God who cares for us.

And he has us. Even when we blow it. Even when I realize that I'm so sinful and I'm so terrible according to the law. And yet this God says, you know what? Despite that, you can go and rejoice in me.

This day that is set apart to know who I am. To rejoice in my name. To consider who I am. To remember those things. And you're welcome to do that. And you're welcome to eat and enjoy the blessings richly together.

They make great rejoicing. Because of the revelation of who God is for them. Friends, do you believe that God is stronger than your sin?

[ 22 : 34 ] Stronger than any addiction you might be in? Stronger than your apathy? Stronger than your confusion? Stronger than any circumstance you're facing that seems impossible? Stronger than any circumstance you're facing.

Some of us don't. That might be why we keep going on sinning. Because we think, oh, Godly, surely he can't do this. Surely he can't forgive or heal this thing. When God cuts you to your heart over sin, it doesn't mean he's cutting you off. Okay? You may feel conviction, but it doesn't mean he's cutting you off. His commitment to you is going to be way more powerful than your commitment to yourself. And his commitment can overcome anything you've done or will ever do. His power can overcome anything you've done or will ever do. And he isn't giving up on you. One pastor long ago said he is the hound of heaven. So when you run from God and you're ducking and diving and trying to escape him and think you got it figured out, guess what? [ 23 : 37 ] The hound of heaven always has your scent. And he's right behind you. And he's catching up. And one day he's going to overtake you with his love and his grace and his goodness. And you are going to be wrecked. And it's going to be a beautiful thing.

Let that truth sink in. Let that truth change you. Open yourself up to that. What it does, it turns tears and snot into great rejoicing. It turns guilt and shame into gratitude and worship. And all that you and I have to do is just give up trying to fix things our way, which I'll be honest, not easy to do. We have to stop trying to be smarter than God. We are not that clever. Our good ideas compared to his, not so great. We got to trust him in his ways. And then when you do that, what you'll find is that God leads us into joy in the most unexpected ways. His ways are higher than our ways. The very next day, the leaders and priests look into God's law with Ezra again.

[ 24 : 45 ] They're thinking like yesterday, well, hey, that went pretty well. Why don't we try that one more time? Which is like, hey, that's like good leadership, you know, lesson 101. If it worked before, maybe try it again. What they found in the law this time was an annual feast called the Feast of Booths or the Feast of Tabernacles.

And they were supposed to celebrate that in two weeks. That's on the annual calendar for Israel. So what is this Feast of Booths or Feast of Tabernacles, depending on your translation? Well, it was this kind of like mandatory, week-long, nationwide campout. But it didn't have the s'mores and the hiking. So it was just, it was, it was, it was this thing that you had to build these booths outside your home or on your roof or somewhere. And then during that time, you lived in those booths. Every day, the Word of God was taught. And then people celebrated. They feasted together. They ate good food. The produce of the land was brought in. So why, why is this feast? I mean, it sounds really weird. Why is, why is that so important?

[ 25 : 55 ] That God said, you need to do this every single year at the same time. Well, here's why. This festival reminded God's people how he had provided and protected them for 40 years in the wilderness at one point in time.

It was kind of like LARPing in a historic way. That's what Israel's doing here. See, before they were Israel in the Promised Land, they were Israel in Egypt. They had to be delivered. And then God brings them out of Egypt and they land themselves in the wilderness. So now they're Israel in the wilderness living in tents. They're a pilgrim people wandering through a barren wasteland, totally dependent on God for food and water and provision of every kind. It's in the wilderness where God's radical provision shows up to them in the form of manna from heaven and the rock flowing. They drink water from the rock. It was in the wilderness at Mount Sinai that God made them his people.

He officially covenanted with them like a husband and a wife on their wedding day. For better or for worse, I am yours. You are mine. I am committing to you.

[ 27 : 07 ] I am your God. You are my people. It's the language that happened there. It's in the wilderness that they become God's people and learned what that meant.

And the Feast of Booths is reminding them of that time. It's bringing them back. It's restoring them in the history of who God is and what he has done for them so they could remember that. So the name of God, the Lord, who he is, that would mean something more because of this. Consider how that might have spoken to the remnant in Nehemiah's day. Man, God's people have been in tough situations before. But they were well provided for in an inhospitable wilderness for 40 years under God's care and guidance.

And God saw them through it then, those 40 years. Surely he will do it again. And at first glance, you look at the festival like this and it's very strange. It can even seem pointless. But you know what? Sometimes God's word does that. It calls us to obey in ways that don't make sense yet. But it's in there. And if it's in there, we should trust it. Sometimes understanding comes after obedience.

[ 28 : 16 ] Think about Abraham and Isaac, right? Isaac is born to Abraham. He's the son of the promise. All the promises of Abraham are going to be carried through him. And then God comes and knocks.

He's like, Abraham. Abraham's like, yeah. He's like, that son? Yep. I need you to go sacrifice him on a mountain. Now, that doesn't make sense. But Abraham obeyed.

And his understanding of what God was up to came after his obedience. Not only did God spare his son. Not only did he get Isaac back. He learned something new of God's nature.

Because of this, we have Jehovah Jireh. We understand the name of the Lord is now even bigger. On the mountain of the Lord, God provides. God is our provider. In the most unexpected ways. In the most unexpected times. In the most impossible. In the face of such impossibility. And that is the revelation that Abraham. That's the revelation.

[ 29 : 10 ] He could rejoice in who God was. But it followed his obedience. And the people of Israel, they did that. They obeyed God's law here. They did the week long camp out. Without the s'mores and without the hiking.

In verse 17. All the assembly of those who had returned from captivity. Made booths and lived in the booths. So, for from the days of Jeshua, the son of Nun. To that day, the people of Israel had not done so.

And there was very great rejoicing. Very great rejoicing. I mean, who knew there could be so much fun. Mashing together, camping and Bible studies.

But sometimes the greatest joy comes through the most unexpected. And ordinary means. That feast of booths was like moving into austerity.

Those things were very, very unimpressive. And in verse 17, it says, day by day, the people did that. They lived in those booths. They read from the book of the law.

[ 30 : 09 ] They kept the feast. See, we tend to look for joy and seek joy from the spectacular. It calls us. We think like, that's where we're going to find it.

And the amazing, extraordinary things that God has done. Or the extraordinary things that we ask. I just don't need a vacation. I need the best vacation ever. I just don't need worship. I need like, man, if we could, if we could.

Our worship can be like a Brandon Lake concert. Then I can touch Jesus. I can experience him. But this story is telling us something very, very different.

There is rejoicing to be discovered through the simple ways of seeking God. In this chapter, you had God. You had his people. And you had his word.

And good food. And that was enough. It's that simple. And yet, it's that hard. The spectacular and the miraculous, they pull it.

[ 31 : 08 ] They look so enticing. They look so enjoyable. They look like the things that say like, man, that's where we need to live. We need to live in those places where it's never ending that. But when you look at the Bible and you look how God dealt with his people through different parts of their lives and their history, we do see these amazing moments.

But we forget. It's like, if you just take the life of Abraham, he has these cool moments of meeting with God. But that was over the span of years upon years upon years upon years. So what happened between this amazing moment and this amazing moment?

And all those years in between then? There is great rejoicing to be found in the everyday, simple, ordinary means of grace.

We can look at prayer. We can look at being in the Bible. We can look at community. Being with God's people. And we can be like, not very spectacular. Do we know what we're talking about then? Do you know what prayer is? The audience you have? Do you understand the word of God? And what is written in that? And what comes into you when you read that?

[ 32 : 15 ] The very life of God, the very truth of God? It gets written into you. It's alive. And it looks ordinary, but actually God does that.

He uses the ordinary for extraordinary reasons. And when we join in that kind of ordinary day-to-day participation in doing those things, actually what we do is we participate in a kind of fellowship with Jesus.

Ordinary, stripped down, simple, steady obedience. What it does, it connects us with the way of Jesus and to the person of Jesus. John 1:14, it says this about Jesus.

It says, man, he's the eternal word, the living word. And you know what he did? He came down and he put on our flesh and dwelt among us. Jesus, put on our flesh means he came and he, the Greek here is he came and he tabernacled amongst us.

Jesus did the feast of booths. He did the unimpressive thing and put on our unimpressive skin. And he walked around. And you know what? He became God's provision for us.

[ 33 : 15 ] Our salvation is through him. And he sustains us in this wilderness of life and brings us all the way home. And many contemporaries of Jesus looked at him and they weren't convinced.

They saw someone simple and ordinary and unimpressive, poor from the wrong place. And they said, that can't be it. He cannot be it. And you know what?

They missed out big time. They missed the meals and the miracles, the teachings, the healings, the forgiveness of sins. They missed out on the fellowship with him and being with him.

They missed out on the significance of his death on the cross. They wrote off the resurrection. And so they missed out on the joy of Jesus being their strength. They missed the truly spectacular.

Why? Because it was packaged in the ordinary. Be careful. As followers of Jesus, be very careful not to write off what seems ordinary and simple.

[ 34 : 15 ] There is very great rejoicing to be discovered in the ordinary, simple, day-by-day disciplines engaging in those means of grace that God has given us.

Because that is precisely where you find the hidden power of God at work. It doesn't seem spectacular at the time. It doesn't seem extraordinary.

But little by little, amazing things begin to happen. And just think about this. You and I, are we not the walking, talking testimony proof of that?

His resurrection power at work in jars of clay, cracked clay pots, very unimpressive. And yet we know that in these jars, his surpassing power is at work for the display of his glory.

As the band comes up and we respond, I want to say to you, if you're here, not yet a follower of Jesus, man, Jesus is anything but ordinary.

[ 35 : 13 ] When you consider who he is, and as you consider who he is, on paper, he may seem very unimpressive. But when you come to him and you meet him and you experience him, he is anything but ordinary.

He is the almighty. He is all powerful, but he is full of grace and he is full of truth. And you can come to him right now and you can meet with him. And you know what? He is beckoning you to come and put your faith.

And he wants you to know that he died for your sin so that you could be saved and you could enter into a relationship with him and eternal life. In a moment, there's going to be an opportunity for, to you respond.

A prayer up on the screen of, if I'm speaking to you today and you're feeling it, man, pray that prayer. Believe in him. You will be saved. And after the service, come and introduce yourself.

I would love to meet you. If you're here already or follower of Jesus, in a moment, we are going to take communion. As followers of Jesus, that's what we do in response to this. But first, let's let God and allow him to discern our hearts and speak to us.

[ 36 : 18 ] How is he calling you and me to respond? I'm going to pray over our time and bless our time of communion. But after I end my prayer, take a moment, just you and God in your seat.

Examine your heart with him. Respond to how he is leading you. And when you're ready, go to the table for communion. Pray with me. Lord, we don't need to celebrate a feast of booze.

We have this meal. That is better than that. It's a reminder that you are our greatest provision. You came and you saved. And you not only saved, you sustain us.

You're going to bring us all the way home. And we can look at this meal and it's unimpressive. It looks very ordinary. But as we come and you bless this meal and we partake it in faith, it can have extraordinary effects upon us, upon our hearts.

So do that today. On the night that Jesus was betrayed, he took bread and he broke it and he gave it to his disciples and he said, this is my body broken for you.

[ 37 : 20 ] Take and eat. And likewise, he took the cup and he said to his disciples, this cup is the blood of my covenant. My blood shed for you.

Take and drink in remembrance of me. His body broken for you. His blood shed for you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.