

Good News Worth Celebrating: Deuteronomy 16:1-17**Caleb Collins****8/27/2023**

Worship the Lord joyfully by celebrating regularly for all he has done for you in Christ.

Opening Illustration

The gospel is “Good news of great joy...for all people” ([Luke 2:10](#)). As believers hear and embrace the good news of salvation by grace alone, the natural response is to rejoice. In the gospel, God gives us himself, and in his presence there is fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore ([Psalm 16:11](#)). Christians are commanded to “Rejoice in the Lord always” ([Philippians 4:4](#)) because the gospel is a source of joy that can’t be touched by any circumstance in life. Even in our suffering and sorrows we can rejoice, knowing “This light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison” ([2 Corinthians 4:17](#)). This kind of joy becomes contagious in local churches and is especially reflected in our corporate worship.

This is what we are discussing today as it relates to worship:

Defining Joy

Joyous celebration doesn't always look like being giddy or raising your hands in the service. Being joyful doesn't always correlate to the emotion of happiness. Happiness is determined by circumstances. Joy is a virtue and a fruit of the Spirit. Joy is a grace from God. For a Christian to be joyful, is not to be robotic, apathetic, or calloused response to the events of the moment. To be joyful is to, in that moment, recognize that the gospel you believe in is truly good news for every circumstance.

Transition to Text

For the people of Israel, they would worship the Lord three times of year by traveling to Jerusalem to celebrate three Pilgrimage feasts.

These three feasts occurred in spring, summer, and the last one would be at the close of fall. Everything that we've been studying together in Deuteronomy about proper and exclusive worship, what Quinn preached on in regard to tithing is related intimately with these three feasts.

Exclusivity of Worship

As we heard in the public reading of Scripture the repeated phrase of you will worship in the place that I choose. That speaks to God's exclusive manner in which he will be worshiped.

We don't choose what worship looks like, what our theology looks like.

Sacrificial Nature of Worship

These three feasts speak of three different types of sacrifice that the people of Israel were to give to the Lord: an animal, wheat and barley, grapes and olives along with the wine and oil they would produce. This should sound familiar because when Quin preached about giving the first of what you received from the Lord, we see in Deuteronomy 14:23 that what was given was animals, grain, wine and oil.

Summary

So our theology of worship is that God tells us how to worship him, and second, we see that worship is sacrificial, that true worship gives. We're generous, because God is the gift giver and everything that we have is from his hand.

Transition to Text

However, I want to tie those two ideas...

Moses makes clear that these feasts are celebratory, they're joyous, it is a thoroughly good time and celebration that impacts the community of God's people.

Teaching on exclusive worship and tithing were vertical and showed how man relates to God. These feasts of course still have a vertical axis to it. But, there is a rather robust horizontal and communal observation and command given.

To worship God as he prescribes and to do so generously and sacrificially is a communal act of joyous celebration. Let me say that again.

Moses at the end of this passage that we are studying says in verse 15 what I believe is a summary of all three feasts. He gives the purpose statement for all three of these feasts when he writes **"So that you will be altogether joyful."**

Obedying God as he prescribes + sacrificially giving to God = Joyous, communal celebration of God. Who would have put that answer on the test if that was the question?

Transition to Congregation

The question that is raised from this text for us at Kingsway is do we view our sacrificial and privileged worship of the Lord as celebratory, regular, communal?

The Need for this Text

These feasts inform the attitude and affection we ought to have for God in every season of our lives. They show the perspective we are to have in every season of our lives. The feasts also demonstrate the community and the nature of that community in every season of our lives.

Prescribed, sacrificial, and joyous worship are for the happy and joyful in Christ. Worship is for the downcast and heavy laden. Worship is for the overwhelmed and worried, the anxious Christian and the suffering. It is for the victim, the outlier, the doubting, the cynical and embittered in our midst. For the cold and apathetic, the burnt-out individual who feels like a lost Pilgrim on the way.

Note these feasts are for the priest, men and women, the families, the widows, bond servants, the needy from your town. These feasts cover the literal seasons of Israel's life and the quality of their life, no one is excluded from the invitation to celebrate.

These feasts, which represent the regular cadence of God's people to recount the gospel with joy, are not there to stir up your self-righteousness, but to grant us a holy, divine perspective of all of life.

To grant us a thorough grip on the true nature of reality, and a thorough grip on how we are to live in that reality as the blood-bought people of God in Christ.

Worship the Lord by celebrating regularly for all he has done for you in Christ.

Outline

1. Celebrate Salvation
2. Celebrate God's Provision
3. Celebrate God's Steadfast Love and Faithfulness

1. CELEBRATE SALVATION (15:19-16:8)

Out of the three feasts that we're studying, The Passover feast is the one we are most likely to be familiar with. It was a feast that celebrated the Passover meal for Israel when they were slaves in Egypt.

The Passover feast remembered the Passover meal. The Passover meal in Egypt was the night of the last plague in Egypt where God promised to kill every firstborn in the land but provided a means of salvation for the people of God. The Hebrew people were to take a lamb and to kill it and to put the blood of that lamb on the doorposts, to cover the household. Thus, the people of God were saved that night from death.

The feast of Passover is to be celebrated during the month of Abib, which for us would be in springtime, in March-April.

So in springtime, given that it was an agrarian culture, they would start their new year with a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to celebrate and remember the Passover meal that took place in Egypt.

Along with that, you might be noticing that Moses is combining a second feast with Passover. The feast of unleavened bread which required you to eat unleavened bread for six days.

It makes sense that Moses combined these feasts because for Passover you were required to eat that Passover sacrifice along with unleavened bread for a week. So, the first day would be Passover, and then for the next several days you were celebrating the feast of unleavened bread.

What Was Expected?

So what was expected during this feast, in this first paragraph of the passage we're looking at?

Israel was to do three things during this Spring Feast: travel to the place God had chosen, kill an animal from their herd and prepare unleavened bread, and celebrate.

Purpose of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread

Significance

The significance of this feast could easily be a sermon in itself but going to give a broad overview through two categories for its significance to the people of God.

Tactile Significance

First, there is a very ordinary and tactile purpose for having this feast, but this goes for all three feasts: to cause Israel to pause as they started the new year. The gospel wasn't assumed in the nation of Israel.

The correlation for us today at Kingsway is clear, we are not to assume the gospel. We preach it every week because one of the shared values of sovereign grace churches is that we are a gospel-centered assembly of believers. It is at the center of every moment on a Sunday morning, it informs every leadership decision that our elder team makes and so on.

And secondly, note that God prescribes three times a year to worship him, but that they were three times to celebrate. Worship is tied to joyous celebration.

Spiritual Significance

The second category for the Passover feast is its theological significance.

The worship, celebration, and perspective of the Passover feast was tied to the fact that all the joys or problems that the new year would create are informed by who the people of Israel were before God.

They were slaves in Egypt, they did not own the land which they worked. Israel had not yet seen the miraculous wonders of the Red Sea being parted the pillar of fire and smoke that led them to the deliverance from the Canaanites and so on.

God's people during this feast not only thought about who they were but of who God was and of his salvation. The exodus from Egypt which happened because of the Passover is the most significant moment for Old Testament Israel.

Israel was in desperate need of a savior. God chose them in love not because of anything that they brought to the table, in fact they had a lot going against them.

But God being rich in mercy saved his people, displaying wondrous works, testimonies and keeping his promise to Abraham to give him a people a land and to make this nation a blessing to the world.

Furthermore, this feast was to remind them of where they are now.

As they walked to Jerusalem, the soil that they walked on was the fulfillment of God's promise to them. The animal that they brought to Jerusalem to be sacrificed represented their need and inability to save themselves, the unleavened bread that they would eat reminded them of the haste in which they left slavery and of those tough wilderness years looking forward to God fulfilling his promises to them to give them the land.

This wasn't just a casual celebration; the people of God existing in the land and being saved from Egypt would be impossible apart from the mercy and grace of God. That divine perspective is worship, it's prescribed, but it is celebratory. It is a celebration in the context of every neighbor who has the same testimony. "Once I was a slave but now I am free and in the land that God promised."

Application: New Exodus

So how do we as Christians relate to the Passover feast and the feast of unleavened bread? Should we have a seder meal? Should we get Quinn to take a group of people with some cows over to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices? Absolutely not.



Under the new covenant, there is no authority in these feasts in our lives. These feasts point to a greater reality of new wine skins that we enjoy in the New Testament. It would be foolish of us as it said in the New Testament to put new wine in old wine skins.

The reality of this feast for us today is that the Passover lamb that died in the place of the firstborn of the Hebrew people is seen to a greater extent and a greater glory in the person of Christ on the cross for his people.

Jesus died for his church and we are here regularly meeting and remembering and celebrating because of God's grace in the person and work of Jesus Christ the Lamb of God.

Worship is prescribed by God that if we are to be saved, if we want to see God, we must be beholden to Christ.

Worship is sacrificial, Romans 12 now therefore in view of the mercies of God present yourself a living sacrifice. That is also true.

But the glorious truth that we get to excavate from this text is that: all that Jesus did for you in dying in your place and paying for your sin declaring you righteous before God, adopting you through the Holy Spirit and sanctifying you until that great day to come **is reason for joy today in your season of life.**

There is joy on the table to be grabbed, had, feasted upon, and enjoyed regardless of how you feel, regardless of what is hitting you this week. **Christ died for you.** God's mercy and grace are the greatest gravities that should captivate our lives today.

And the reason why we need regular remembering moments is because if we don't we let other things start to have larger gravities on our perspective of what is true and glorious in this life.

Let us be intentional to lean in and ponder and meditate on the goodness of God in the face of Christ.

There is no greater state that we could be in, there's nothing that is missing from my life that could make it more blessed because the Passover lamb was sacrificed that I might live. I have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

For every Christian in this room, we ground in light of this text every year and every season and every event, every happy moment, every trial that we face, every grief that we bear in light of a joyous reality of Jesus saving us from our sins. We use regular gatherings, and intentional moments, to teach our souls again and again of the good news of the gospel.

That is what Passover teaches us: Remember first your salvation.

Let us turn now to the second feast: the feast of weeks.

2. CELEBRATE GOD'S PROVISION (v.9-12)

The second annual Pilgrim feast of Israel is referred to by Moses as the feast of weeks. Elsewhere you'll see it referred to as the feast of harvest, feast of first fruits, or Pentecost. Lots of names, same feast.

What Was Expected?

So what could we expect from the Feast of Weeks? It gets its title after the waiting period described in this text, look at **verse 9**:

“Begin to count the seven weeks from the time the sickle is first put to the standing grain.”

So after 7 weeks which would count up to 49 days, you would have the feast on the next day, on day fifty. In the LXX this feast is referred to as Pentecost, meaning “fifties” because the feast comes 50 days from the first sickle hitting grain.

Where Passover gave a blood sacrifice in the Spring; the feast of First Fruits was a grain sacrifice. Israel was commanded to take the grain from their harvest, the first fruits of their harvest and go to Jerusalem to again celebrate.

Purpose of Feast of Weeks/Pentecost/Harvest

The purpose of this feast is seen in verse 10, where Moses writes,

“Then you shall keep the Feast of Weeks to the Lord your God with the tribute of a freewill offering from your hand, which you shall give **as the Lord your God blesses you.**”

This feast was another intentional moment of worship and celebration for all the ways the Lord has provided and blessed the people of God. Regardless of the year they had, regardless of how the trip was from their town to Jerusalem, there was a bedrock reality that God had blessed them.

Moses also gives us another reason Israel was to observe this feast which is not said in other accounts regarding the feast of Pentecost. Look with me at verse 12:

“You shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt”

So the blessings that they have currently are to be viewed in light of their salvation from slavery in Egypt. Just like how the grain has new life, Israel has new life. However, that new life is possible only because of the salvation they received from Egypt.

This new life and this blessing according to Deuteronomy is because they were exclusively worshipping the Lord. Late in the book of Deuteronomy we find that if they disobey the covenant they will not incur blessing but rather curses.

So the grain offerings of wheat and barley showed God's provision, it also was a tell of Israel's faithfulness to God...and not to ruin the story for Israel but they lacked faithfulness.

Joel 2

In the book of Joel found within the minor prophets, Joel is writing to the people of the southern Kingdom Judah. This is right before Judah is taken into captivity to Babylon. The reason for the letter is because of two events that are not at all disconnected: Judah's unfaithfulness and an ongoing drought combined with a devastating swarm of locusts.

Joel is writing to them to say that the drought that has incurred in the land and the locusts that have eaten their grain, their grapes and their olives is a result of their unfaithfulness to God.

Joel 's message is fascinating because it is the blessings and curses that we find in Deuteronomy coming to play. Their unfaithfulness has led to this drought and swarm of locust. Rather than blessings, they've incurred curses.

Furthermore, because of this drought and locust swarm they are unable to worship God in the feast of Pentecost and of booths because they require grain and barley, and grapes and olives.

So Judah is caught in a vicious cycle where they aren't worshipping God properly and now are unable to worship God properly because of this drought and these locusts. Quite the situation.

The feast of harvest was a physical picture of what was to be the case of their lives. That as there is new life that is sprouting from the ground so the people of God have a new life distinct from the nations.

And here is faithless Judah who has forgotten God, incurred judgment, and suffered the consequences of sin.

Yet, turn with me to **Joel 2:24-27**. After calling Judah to repent, God says this to his people:

²⁴ *"The threshing floors shall be full of grain;*

the vats shall overflow with wine and oil.

- ²⁵ I will restore to you the years
that the swarming locust has eaten,
the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter,
my great army, which I sent among you.
- ²⁶ “You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied,
and praise the name of the LORD your God,
who has dealt wondrously with you.
And my people shall never again be put to shame.
- ²⁷ You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel,
and that I am the LORD your God and there is none else.
And my people shall never again be put to shame.

So God promises to bless and to restore and that his people will not be put to shame. This text isn't just pointing to sometime closely following this locust plague, but Joel is speaking of the day when God will redeem, when he will be in the midst of Israel.

And so there are two times where we see this take place: first, God makes his presence known in the midst of Israel when he came, taking upon himself humanity to die in our place. When Christ took our shame on the cross that is when the people of God no longer needed to fear the shame and guilt of sin because Christ took it for you.

But Joel is also talking of another day, the great and awesome day of the Lord, to which he will judge the wicked and vindicate the righteous.

So the feast of harvest is meant to be a time of celebration for the exclusivity and blessing and communion with God that our salvation affords us. Of new life, of abundant life. But what does that look like for us as the New Testament people of God?

Let's keep looking at **Joel 2:28-29**

- ²⁸ “And it shall come to pass afterward,
that **I will pour out my Spirit** on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions.
- ²⁹ Even on the male and female servants
in those days **I will pour out my Spirit.**



For the New Testament people of God the new life that we have is not represented in grain and in barley but in the sign of the new covenant which is the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit, the giver of life, he who seals us in our salvation and is the guarantee of our inheritance. It is by the Holy Spirit that we are as John 3 says born again unto new life.

Joel 2 is quoted at Pentecost by Peter as being fulfilled on that glorious day when the church was born.

Application: New Life in the HS because of Jesus

Just like God promised rain in Judah so that they could grow what was necessary for the feasts, God poured out like rain on his people. He blessed his people with something grander than rain. God gave us himself.

As the Church, we thank God for the new life we have having been indwelt by the Spirit of God. We are born again, we have God's law written on our hearts. We can say no to sin, we can delight in God in our inner being. We are sealed in God's love by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit comforts us, guides us, makes Christ all glorious to us. The harvest we have spiritually, is by grace and grace alone.

We can live exclusive and holy lives unto God because of the presence of God through his Spirit. And we celebrate this. There is joy in new life without shame or guilt. And all because of Christ.

We are the first fruits of the life to come in heaven.

Furthermore, this text teaches us that there is a time between the Christ event of Jesus dying on the cross and the awesome day of the Lord which is the close of time. Joel prophecies that that period of time as seen in this text is marked by the gifts of the spirit. There is no reason according to Joel or Acts 2 to say that these gifts were limited to the age of the apostles in the book of Acts. Joel describes a continuation of these gifts for what we would say in the classroom "The Church Age."

As the New Testament people of God, we celebrate and we thank God for his physical provisions of course.

But, moreso, we thank God for the new life that we have which is distinctly and qualitatively different than the lives we had under slavery to sin and death.

I'm telling you this text is tough to preach because there is so much here to ponder on that has much application for us today. But for the sake of time we need to move on to point 3: Celebrate God's Steadfast Love and Faithfulness.

3. CELEBRATE GOD'S STEADFAST LOVE AND FAITHFULNESS (v.13-17)

The feast of booths was the last pilgrimage feast to Jerusalem for the people of God. If I could give a broad-brush stroke of what this feast was like: I would say Thanksgiving. It was after you had stored what was left over from harvest and stored your wine and olive oil at the end of the year.

So for the feast of tabernacles or booths, it had a twofold focus. It was thanking the Lord and a celebration for how he had so faithfully provided that year given what you are storing, and it was also a hopeful anticipation of what was to come in the next year because you had an abundance of provisions to get you through winter.

Unlike the first two feasts, the feast of booths was to be observed to simply accomplish what we stated earlier "So that you will be all together joyful."

The point of this feast was to go and to have a good time and to include everyone that you could find. Look at verse 14:

"You shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are within your towns."

Celebration within the people of God includes more than just people within your clicks or your season of life. It includes various people from various places and various seasons.

However, the celebrations that are happening three times a year for Israel, have a common denominator which is God's mercy and grace. **The unity and glory of the church is the cornerstone of Christ Jesus and his gospel of life!**

Application: A state of joy because of God's steadfast love and faithfulness

For the people of God we look back at all the ways that God has been kind in his providential care for all of life. We look back and think about all the ways that the gospel has blessed us. How Christ was our advocate this year. How we enjoy sweet grace rather than wrathful condemnation because of what Jesus has done. We can look and see our lives being sanctified in the new life that we've been given in the Holy Spirit.



You can't preach this section without thinking about KingsWay's Thanksgiving service. I don't know if I'm the only one here thinking that. What we do during that service of giving thanks is very much in the same vein as the feast of booths.

But secondly church for us as Christians we look forward to a future day to that awesome day of the Lord where God will vindicate his people and judge his enemies.

We look forward to that great feast, the marriage supper of the lamb. We get to taste what we've only known in part in full with Christ at the head of the table surrounded by the people of God represented from every tribe, tongue, nation and people.

Brothers and sisters, our hope this morning is grounded in God's mighty acts in the past displayed powerfully in the cross of Christ. His steadfast love and faithfulness is what got us through this year, and it is his steadfast love and faithfulness that will get us to heaven.

Conclusion

Kingsway, one of the realities of this text that I need to highlight is that they were commanded to be celebrated every year regardless of the year that they had.

Christian, as you regularly and intentionally worship God

do not forget the new exodus where Christ died that you might be saved

don't forget the first fruits that you are enjoying of new life in the Holy Spirit,

don't neglect the storehouse he has filled with his kindness and steadfast love towards you,

and **do not forget his promises** to you of that future day.

Hold fast to the Lord, cling with all your life to the gospel of Jesus Christ for there is no other hope nor glory that can compare.

Moses told the people that they are to celebrate these feasts in the place that the Lord commanded.

And in light of his full revelation given in the person of Jesus Christ we know that that place is Calvary. To celebrate and worship God in truth and sacrificially and with fullness of joy is to worship God in light of what he has done for you in the person and work of Jesus Christ.