

TEXT: Nehemiah 12:27-47

TITLE: CELEBRATION OF SUCCESSFUL REVIVAL / REBUILDING –  
CELEBRATION OF MOTHER'S DAY

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE DEDICATION OF THE REBUILT WALL INVOLVED AN ELABORATE CELEBRATION BEFITTING THE CULMINATION OF SUCH A SUCCESSFUL REVIVAL**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Not many **Mother's Day messages** from our text today in Nehemiah 12. I am always amazed when preaching through a book of the Bible how we arrive at just the most appropriate text on various special days. So we can continue our progress in the book and still make application to the focus of the special day.

**Matt Day:** All of those examples of celebration were for a reason, in response to something significant, something good happening. Celebration is reactive, it's something that we want to do. It's human nature to want to mark special happenings and it's enjoyable, it benefits us, it feels like a 'right' response.

Dictionary – "holding of festivities to mark a happy event, public praising of something."

The bigger and better the event, the greater the celebration.

Fundamental to any celebration is 'thanks', giving 'thanks' to the person who has made the whole thing possible.

Reminds me of **2 Sam. 6** and the ark being brought into Jerusalem

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE PRESENCE OF GOD SHOULD EVOKE HOLY REVERENCE AND EXUBERANT CELEBRATION – 2 KEY EXPRESSIONS OF WORSHIP**

**4 ELEMENTS OF CELEBRATION:**

**I. (:27-30) SIGNIFICANCE OF DEDICATION – A CELEBRATION OF VICTORY**

[Most of emphasis on this first point]

Why are you holding the Celebration? What's the significance?

**A. (:27) The Special Occasion**

*"Now at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem"*

This was a big deal occasion; normally I am not much for elaborate celebrations;

Look at what God had accomplished for His people in such a short time --

We have baby dedication services – Why? Part of the celebration of motherhood – bringing new life into the world and nurturing it so that the life glorifies God

When men finish some great building project, they hold an impressive dedication ceremony to reflect on the enormity of the accomplishment and to look forward to the usefulness of the building – usually a big political event with everyone who thinks they are anybody there lined up with a shovel to get their picture taken; politicians are always looking to take the credit; here all of the credit goes to God

You might think that you have nothing to celebrate this morning .. Where is my great Victory?  
How does this apply to me? My walls of defense and protection don't seem to be built up?

- Wall was protecting the temple in God's holy city so that they could worship in safety
- Look at the tremendous access to free worship we all enjoy
  - o Worship in spirit and truth – not bound by specific locality
  - o Not tied to the ministry of the Levites and priests – we have been made a kingdom of priests; we have Christ as our great High Priest
  - o No longer bound to offer animal sacrifices continually – Christ sacrificed Himself once for all and has sat down at the right hand of God – talk about Victory to celebrate!
  - o Ministry of the indwelling Holy Spirit to guide us
  - o United with the very life of Jesus Christ who came as the fulfillment of OT types and shadows; we have the fulfillment; the substance

### **B. (:28-29) The Special Music – Lot of Planning and Preparation involved**

*“they sought out the Levites from all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem so that they might celebrate the dedication with gladness, with hymns of thanksgiving and with songs to the accompaniment of cymbals, harps and lyres. So the sons of the singers were assembled from the district around Jerusalem, and from the villages of the Netophathites, from Bethgilgal and from their fields in Geba and Azmazeth, for the singers had built themselves villages around Jerusalem.”*

1. Designated Singers – special talents – not just everybody participating equally  
Later we will see that the whole congregation participates in the offering of praise and the singing and the thanksgiving

Brings up the question: How professional an approach should we take towards our special music? Never forget that it is a ministry with an orientation towards worshiping God and not an entertainment performance oriented towards pleasing men.

Brings up the question: Is there a different standard of participation for special music in NT times than in OT worship that was centered around the temple? Centralized worship vs decentralized – makes a difference in how much money we put into the splendor of the building; does it make a difference in terms of our approach to special music? Probably can't afford to pay a professional orchestra to be dedicated to playing top level music  
Different contexts are going to call for a different level of quality control.

2. Devoted Spirit – No question that same spirit of love and devotion and passion still applies

With gladness – Heart of Joy

With hymns of thanksgiving – Heart of Thanksgiving

With songs to musical accompaniment – Heart of Devotion

This is the essential aspect of worship – must be genuine, heart-felt; not just going through the motions

You definitely want someone who knows the Lord and can sing with conviction from the heart. God is never pleased with just an external show; He always looks at the heart.

Why do Christians get the reputation of being so glum – look at the exuberance that should be expressed in our worship. If our hearts are truly glad, we should do more than mumble the words of a song. Look at how excited we get when singing our college fight song at the football game. The triumph and victory of what Christ has accomplished for us should be reflected in our singing.

### 3. Diverse Musical Instruments – cymbals, harps and lyres

Why no mention of musical instruments in the NT??

Some church groups would argue that musical instruments should not be used for accompaniment in this church age; that Christ advocated a very simple style of worship; that the content of our singing should focus mainly on the Book of Psalms. Seems that the Holy Spirit has given us a lot of freedom in this regard.

Certainly God is still giving out musical gifts and talents and abilities – these should be used to the glory of God

**Ephes 5:19** *singing and making melody* – 2 different words used

Does instrumental music and accompaniment of our singing enhance our worship experience?

Raises the question of what type of musical instruments would be appropriate? Why not drums?

As long as you follow certain principles of worship:

- Should be truth-based, not something where you check your intellect at the door
- Should be consistent with peace and harmony and orderly worship rather than some chaotic dissonance

Could say a lot more about principles of music related to worship – in this context, God is looking for the type of music that supports and encourage the celebration of this momentous occasion

Should we have different congregations oriented around different styles of music?? Traditional vs contemporary?? Our worship should be uniting us, not dividing us into different styles – but this seems inevitable

Maybe some of you have written a special Mother's Day song that you plan to surprise Mom with later today!

**Kidner:** Elaborate festivities can be hollow, but where the occasion is great, the demanding business of planning, proclaiming, assembling and rehearsing makes good kindling material for the emotions; not a substitute for the more searching preparations seen in verse 30 (where nobody and nothing was left unpurified), but not by any means to be despised. If the New Testament emphasizes what is inward and spiritual in worship, it has a place too for the natural means of encouraging and stirring us. Our Lord went to Gethsemane fortified not only by prayer but by a ceremonial meal and corporate singing, matters which engage not only the spirit but the body and the senses.

**C. (:30) The Special Purification Rites** – 4 areas of concentration

Purification is essential to Dedication and Celebration – Once again leaders must lead

*“The priests and the Levites purified themselves; they also purified the people, the gates and the wall.”*

Different types of celebrations require different types of preparation. A spiritual celebration of God’s activity in granting us victory requires spiritual preparation of the heart.

*Gates / Wall* -- Possibly involved the sprinkling of the blood of sacrificed animals on the gates and walls

Our Moms are coming over after church so we can celebrate and honor them with a nice cookout. We won’t be setting the table with dirty dishes from last night – I’m sure they will be pleased to see that we will be eating off clean plates = purified plates

It is impossible to offer God praise and thanksgiving without first purifying our hearts and making sure we are confessing any sins and seeking to be pleasing to Him in how we live. Otherwise God says forget the charade – He does not want us to draw near with our lips if our hearts are far from Him.

**Breneman:** included fasting, abstaining from marital intercourse, making sacrifices, and perhaps bathing and using clean garments

**Swindoll:** In order to enjoy the city upon completion of the wall, their hearts had to be pure. By consecrating the wall, they consecrated themselves to the Lord. We, too, need to remember that to lead other people in a godly manner – whether in ministry, politics, the military, or business – our hearts must be clean before God. Holiness precedes happiness. Never forget that the firststep to a happy countenance is a clean heart.

So we have learned first of all that we celebrate when we have something significant that is worth celebrating.

## **II. (:31-39) SONGS OF THANKSGIVING – 2 GREAT MUSICAL PROCESSIONALS**

Word for “songs” should be translated “choirs”

A. **(:31-37) First Great Choir**– led by Ezra the scribe

You thank all the people who made this great day possible; cf. Award ceremonies; Dedication of a new hospital wing – thank the donors – here all the thanks goes to God

I think God must like marching bands. I know Karen enjoyed her experience in high school back in San Antonio. Then when she got to Princeton she discovered that the football halftime show was just an excuse to exhibit irreverent behavior rather than musical class and precision.

Remember the march around the walls of Jericho in Joshua 6:1-5. Music has often been part of God’s divine instructions to His people. He seems to especially like trumpets. If I had chosen to play anything when I was growing up, it would have been a trumpet. I loved that cavalry call on Rin Tin Tin that announced the troops arriving on the scene to save the day.

Most elaborate celebrations have some type of fancy processional involved:

- Weddings – as the bride comes down the aisle
- Graduation ceremonies – time of the year for those

You are drawing attention to the significance of the event and making a statement – It is also a

way for people to participate physically; get them out of just the spectator role; engage them

Here the purpose of the processional is explicitly stated to be the giving of thanks

**Breneman:** According to Kenyon's excavations, Nehemiah's wall was nearly nine feet wide.

**Wiersbe:** The enemy had said that the walls would be so weak that a fox could knock them down (4:3), but here were the people marching on the walls! What a testimony to the unbelieving Gentiles of the power of God and the reality of faith. . . It was a symbolic act by which they "*stepped out by faith*" to claim God's blessing. In that day, to walk on a piece of property meant to claim it as your own.

**Getz:** The choirs began near the Valley Gate, which interestingly is the place where Nehemiah began and ended his nighttime inspection of the ruined walls months earlier (2:13-15).

We have come full cycle – Enjoying the completion of the project

**B. (:38-39) Second Great Choir** – led by Nehemiah himself

**Breneman:** These villages were not all in the same area. Netopha was southeast of Bethlehem; Gilgal was near Jericho; Geba and Azmaveth were northeast of Jerusalem in the Benjamite area.

**Whitcomb:** For both groups the order of procession seems to have consisted first of Levitical singers "*that gave thanks*" (v. 31), followed by princes (vv. 32,33), then the priests with trumpets (v. 35; cf. 41), and finally Levites with stringed instruments (v. 36).

**Psalm 48:12-14** "*Walk about Zion and go around her; count her towers; consider her ramparts; go through her palaces, that you may tell it to the next generation. For such is God, Our God forever and ever; He will guide us until death.*"

**Heb. 13:15** "*Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.*"

That is one of the main reasons not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together; but it is not enough just to come; did we come with thankful hearts? Are we actively expressing our thanksgiving?

### **III. (:40-43) SACRIFICES OF JOY – EMOTIONAL EXTENSION OF OUR THANKSGIVING**

**A. (:40) United Worship in the House of God**

*"Then the two choirs took their stand in the house of God. So did I and half of the officials with me"*

Worship should bring God's people together – because the focus is on God; in our sinfulness we have much more in common than we might think; where the great gulf exists is between our sin and God's holiness

**Kidner:** Every inch of these ramparts had its special memory for one group or another. Nevertheless, the destination was *the house of God* (40), for the walls were, appropriately, the circumference not the focal point of the celebrations, and it was the choirs, not the officials, who led the way.

## **B. (:41-42) Worship Leaders -- Priests with Trumpets and Leading Singers**

Key individuals singled out

## **C. (:43) Universal Rejoicing on the Part of all the People of God**

*“and on that day they offered great sacrifices and rejoiced because God had given them great joy, even the women and children rejoiced, so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard from afar.”*

2 Main activities described on this day of celebration

I would have expected feasting – while that was probably included, it was not the emphasis here

- 1) offered great sacrifices – came at a cost to the people – but a happy price to pay
- 2) rejoiced – Set aside inhibitions

Our joy must come to us as a gift from God in association with the victory over sin that He provides; the deliverance from bondage and futility; the enjoyment of our redemption and of our fellowship with Him through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

Note how the entire community fully participated – including the women and children

Note the testimony that extended to both saved and unsaved who might have been afar off, but still impacted by this celebration of joy

To what extent is your life characterized by joy ... not just joy, but great joy that has been given to you by God?

What other lives are you impacting by the joy of your testimony regarding what God has done for you that has been so special?

Review: Significance of the celebration / Thanksgiving and Joy Involved

Now we are going to address some practical matters that ensure the ongoing support for future worship; how are we going to sustain this worship?

## **IV. (:44-47) SUPPORT FOR LEADERS – SUPPORT FOR MINISTRY**

3 Key areas of Administration: ( just touching on this section – then we want to move to our application today of Celebrating Mother’s Day)

### **A. (:44) Administration of Gathering and Distributing the Contributions**

*“On that day men were also appointed over the chambers for the stores, the contributions, the first fruits and the tithes, to gather into them from the fields of the cities the portions required by the law for the priests and Levites; for Judah rejoiced over the priests and Levites who served.”*

Spiritual leaders give themselves to ministry; to service  
The People express their appreciating and rejoice in supporting these essential efforts

Giving in the context of privilege and joy – not grudgingly or of necessity  
It was not a burden to support their spiritual leaders

**Getz:** The storerooms to which the people were to bring their contributions, firstfruits, and tithes that were required by the Law were side rooms on the temple (cf. 1 Kings 6:5; 1 Chron. 28:11; 2 Chron. 31:11; Neh. 10:37-39; 12:25; 13:4, 12-13).

**B. (:45-46) Administration of Worship Leaders – Praise and Thanksgiving to God**

*“For they performed the worship of their God and the service of purification, together with the singers and the gatekeepers in accordance with the command of David and of his son Solomon. For in the days of David and Asaph, in ancient times, there were leaders of the singers, songs of praise and hymns of thanksgiving to God.”*

Many details of worship to take care of; elaborate sacrificial system  
Importance of the Book of Psalms in worship – role of Asaph

**C. (:47) Summary: Overall Administration of Giving**

*“So all Israel in the days of Zerubbabel and Nehemiah gave the portions due the singers and the gatekeepers as each day required, and set apart the consecrated portion for the Levites, and the Levites set apart the consecrated portion for the sons of Aaron.”*

We come now to our special day of celebration = Mother’s Day

**APPLICATION TO MOTHER’S DAY: 5 AREAS OF FOCUS:**

- **Time to Express Appreciation and Support to Mom** – Day of Great Celebration
  - o How are you going to do that today with your family?
  - o Have you considered how much Moms need your encouragement? Consider how unselfishly they labor for such long hours at repetitive tasks where there is very little intrinsic satisfaction in order to provide for your needs
  - o Don’t lose sight of the significance of this special day
  - o Maybe we should have our own procession from room to room in our house as we relive the memories of all of the good things we have experienced at the hand of our Mom
- **Tradition of Family Unity** – drawing everybody together for time of celebration; in our culture it is so easy for the family to get split up and move away to far geographic corners; at least on Mother’s Day we make an effort to come together and celebrate the family unit
- **Teaching Moment for Ourselves** – Reminding us of the Goodness of God  
All the ways in which God has provided for us; think of how helpless we were as infants; how little encouragement we gave our Mom when we were young; time to make up for that
- **Thanksgiving to God**
  - o Do you think of your Mom as a gift to you from God? I can assure you that they

- consider each child to be a gift to them from God
- You don't get to choose your Mom; God sovereignly placed you in the home of His choosing for His divine purposes

- **Testimony to Others** – of the Power and Majesty of God – what He can accomplish  
Many homes where Mom is not appreciated and honored and respected

### **CONCLUSION:**

Are you whole-heartedly participating in celebration today?  
Enjoy this special Mother's Day with a genuine spirit of Celebration!

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### **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) How can we make sure that our special days of celebration don't lose sight of the significance of what we are celebrating?
- 2) How do we express our thanksgiving and joy to God?
- 3) How can we enhance our celebration of Mother's Day?
- 4) What type of issues relating to music in worship do you find controversial?

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### **QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**

#### **Matt Day: Towards a Celebration Lifestyle**

##### **1. Significance of celebrating God**

It's our chief end

v.43 *"and on that day they offered great sacrifices, rejoicing because God had given them great joy"* Here are a people wrapped up in God. They've left their homes to work on this thing, they've witnessed God's work in their lives, helping them accomplish this massive feat in an incredible 52 days.

This wasn't party emotion turned on just for the day and forgotten about the next.

Celebrating God means living our lives in worship of him. It's more than singing songs on a Sunday. It is the total submission of all that we have and are, to everything that we know of God.

William Temple described adoration as 'the most selfless emotion of which our nature is capable, and therefore the chief remedy for that self-centredness which is our original sin, and the source of all actual sin' (William Temple, Readings in St. John's gospel, 1950)

We are made to be beings that celebrate God that enjoy God, that thank God, and when we do, we're fortified, like those walls.

*"Be joyful always, pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus"* 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-18

We celebrate, thank and praise God because it's our chief end!



### It's required

Levites were the teachers of the time, they were busy people.

And yet, not only was this an all inclusive act of thanksgiving, but they brought people in from the surrounding countryside too!

v27 *"..the Levites were sought out from where they lived and were brought to Jerusalem to celebrate joyfully the dedication"*

## **2. Process for celebrating God**

### Planned

The Levites were brought to Jerusalem from the surrounding region for this day, the singers were brought in from the villages, the people the gates and the wall are purified before the two choirs march in opposite directions around the walls.

This celebration of God was very well planned.

### Confession

v.30 *'When the priests and Levites had purified themselves ceremonially, they purified the people, the gates and the wall'.*

Before anyone sang a word in thanks, there was purification.

The people were cleansed first, then the project was cleansed.

This would have been through a sacrifice where a sacred animal suffered death in the place of the people. Remember how we see the leper? That's how God sees our heart when we come before him, sin is vile, and it's the thing that God wants to deal with.

Before these believers could stand before a holy God, they had to have a clean heart.

It's important to start from that place of forgiveness, as it focuses our thanks on God when we celebrate, not on us. When God has done a work in our lives, or if we're thanking him simply for who he is, there is a temptation to celebrate ourselves as if we had a bigger part to play than our simple obedience. *'Apart from me (says God) you can do nothing'* John 15 v 5.

The Psalmist wrote – *'you do not delight in sacrifice or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart.'* Psalm 51 v16-17'

External ritual achieves nothing when un-confessed sin lurks in the heart.

Someone said that 'holiness precedes happiness'.

It's hard to celebrate even God when our sin hasn't been dealt with first.

And yet when we confess our sins they're removed *'as far as the East is from the West'* (Psalm 103 v 12)

What a glorious starting point ! Makes you want to praise God doesn't it?

Confession first

### From the heart

v43 *'on that day they offered great sacrifices, rejoicing because God had given them great joy'*

It's superlative, these people were giving their best to God, and I don't thin

## **3. Fruits of Celebrating God**

God is always seeking to do good things in us.

When we are obedient, because of his graciousness, he heaps blessings back on us. When we thank him, we benefit!

There are lots of benefits to celebrating God's work – I've picked up on just a few.

### There's Unity

Giving praise to God is a profoundly unifying experience.

In Jerusalem the priests, Levites, leaders singers and masses join together in worship of God, there's no distinction as to which ones are rejoicing with great joy – they all are!

When we come together before God, we become aware of our equally deep need for God's forgiveness, and stuff that might divide us can only fade into insignificance compared to the wonder of what Jesus has done for us all.

It's very hard to hold on to a sinful thought or habit, when we expose ourselves to God in humble adoration.

### There's empowerment for future works

This celebration we read about was not only marking the end of the building project, but the start of a new era for the Jews, through the celebration, they were dedicating themselves to future works.

v. 44 *'At that time men were appointed to be in charge of the storerooms for the contributions, firstfruits and tithes'*, v. 47 *'..all Israel contributed the daily portions for the singers and the gatekeepers'*

As we celebrate what God has done in our lives, it's inevitable that we dedicate ourselves to future works. By looking back at what God has done, we're encouraged at what he's going to do.

Whether that's celebrating a key event, celebrating the daily working of God in our lives, or simply celebrating who God is.

A lifestyle that celebrates God, equips us wonderfully for the trials of life.

We are empowered.

### Brings us Life

Hebrews 13 v 15 *"Let us continually offer a sacrifice of Praise – the fruit of lips that confess his name"*

It's only plants that are alive and healthy that bear fruit. Praise is the fruit of a heart that knows Jesus.

As we glorify God, so life in all fullness is released in us, even if we don't start off feeling very alive on a Sunday morning.

The spirit of God is a spirit of life.

### **Scott Hippler: The Joy of Celebration**

The latter part of Chapter 12 that we will be using as our focal passage this morning, tells the story of the dedication of the wall around Jerusalem. It describes a wonderful event which was evidently postponed for a while until the city had been repopulated. Over the past four weeks we have been looking at the book of Nehemiah and his works for God in the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem.

In today's portion we find that the wall is built. The gates are hung. The city is well defended and it is filled with people. There is an air of excitement and great joy seems to be bursting forth from every person regardless of age. There is a great celebration taking place and I think that we can learn a great deal about our God, about His desires for our joy and enjoyment, and learn much about ourselves along the way.

Celebration of and celebration before our God should be something that is well planned and well carried out. Most of the time when we get together to celebrate we simply allow what ever happens to happen. We don't give the celebration much thought or planning and don't stop to consider that in the book of Colossians 3:23-24 we are directed to, *"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Jesus Christ that you are serving."* You see even when we celebrate we are to honor God with our best effort.

The workers of Nehemiah had reason to celebrate and they had reason to do so with great joy. God had provided strength with which to complete the wall. He had afforded them protection from the opposition that we learned about a few weeks. God brought them back to their ancestral city, one that had not been inhabited for 160 years. And most importantly, God had provided a means by which a great spiritual awakening could and did happen for the people of Israel.

#### **Four Directives as to How to Celebrate:**

##### **1. Set aside time, calendar your celebration!**

##### **2. Set aside time, get clean!**

It is interesting to look at what order they cleansed and purified. The priests and the Levites first cleansed themselves. They knew that in order to anything great for God or to truly celebrate before His throne that they must be cleansed. This cleansing is what we would call today a "sin offering". They sacrificed sacred animals and washed themselves both with water and also had ceremonies with the animals blood and prayed and beseeched God through the confession of what they had done wrong or the sin that they had in their lives. We cannot come before the throne of God and truly celebrate until we get rid of the sin and get rid of the filth and cleanse the stench that is within us!

Next, they purified the people. They purified the others around them. And finally they purified the gates and the walls, they purified the project or today what we would call the ministry that we are attempting for God!

##### **3. Set aside inhibitions, get joyful!**

In Nehemiah 12:43 we read, *"Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and children also rejoiced, so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard afar off."*

How can you, How can I tell when and if we truly invest in the things of God? I think that we can ask ourselves some honest questions like:

1. What do I truly treasure?
2. What do I do that makes my heart beat faster?

3. What event would I sacrifice everything just to be there?
4. What is it that grabs my allegiance in uncontrollable ways? Is it Jesus Christ? Or is it something else?

#### **4. Set aside self, get thankful!**

Who made everything possible? Who created the heavens and the earth? Who created you and who created me?

#### **Ray Stedman: The Sound of Rejoicing**

The two divisions of this chapter are **the great procession** and **the great offering**.

The Holy Spirit has been careful to include in this account the three aspects that make up true celebration. I hope you caught them as I read the verses to you. The first one is in Verse 27, *"The Levites were ... brought to Jerusalem to celebrate joyfully."* One of the primary elements of true celebration is the expression of joy. A general attitude of joy ought to characterize all Christians.

There is another clue hidden in this paragraph that tells us what celebration should be based on. Verse 30, *"When the priests and Levites had purified themselves ceremonially, they purified the people, the gates and the wall."* Purification is necessary to celebrate. You cannot do it with a hypocritical heart. You cannot celebrate with your life in ruin. It becomes a festival of empty words. There is a need for purification.

There is still a third element in this that is found in Verse 31: *"I had the leaders of Judah go up on top of the wall. I also assigned two large choirs to give thanks."* {Neh 12:31 NIV} Thankfulness is always part of true celebration. These people were thankful. You can well imagine what they were thankful for. They must have been grateful indeed for the godly leadership of Nehemiah. They were thankful for God's moving of the king of Persia's heart that permitted this whole project to come into being. They were grateful for angelic protection that watched over them as the wall was being rebuilt. They were grateful for the wisdom of God that allowed them to overcome their enemies, for the spirit of unity and cooperation that prevailed, for strength to labor, and for the supply of food and shelter. I think primarily they were thankful for the will to work, which enabled the project to be carried through to completion. This raises the question: Are we properly thankful?

#### **Dr. Drew Conley: Serving God in Song**

Songs of praise should naturally come from our hearts; Culmination of Nehemiah's ministry in his first term; repeated reference to singing and thanksgiving; we need to be able to biblically define the role of music in worship

##### **1. The Mandate for Music in Worship –**

- a. music being a part of worship is God's idea, not man's; God had appointed and commanded for musicians to take part in worship services; false dichotomy of traditional vs contemporary music in worship – not that one is less holy than the other;
- b. God has jurisdiction over music in worship – look up every reference to music in the Bible
- c. Music is not an unimportant component in worship; we don't have music just to warm you up so you are prepared to listen to the message; false distinction sometimes made: that OT worship is external and NT worship is internal; God has always looked on the heart

**2. The Scope of Music in Worship** – what kinds of music are appropriate?

- a. Both vocal and instrumental
- b. includes both trained participants and untrained
- c. both choirs and congregation

Reference to Asaph = wrote a number of the psalms; 1 Chron. 15:12-17; 16:4 – played the cymbals; Ps. 33:2; 98:5-6; 1 Chron. 25:1 prophesying with instruments; movement that emphasized simplicity in worship: in NT our worship is to be in spirit and truth, nothing elaborate, no instruments; Ephes. 5:19 – *singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord*; two different words; second word going beyond just singing with the voice = play on musical stringed instrument or singing with instrumental accompaniment; We are commanded to sing songs; Psalms is a model of what praise to God is supposed to be;

**3. The Character of Music in Worship** – what is its purpose, main theme, how does it function

a. Association of music with the prophet (the Word) = one who hears message from God and delivers it to men; music involved in delivering the Word of God and inculcating it in our heart; very powerful when truth is married to a tune; 2 Chron. 5:12ff; 35:15; Col. 3:16; today we see so much music that fails in terms of having any connection with doctrine; too fuzzy; too distorted; must have doctrinal clarity; don't sing man-concocted ideas

b. association of music with priests and service of worship (from us to God) --  
Idea of Holiness; purification was essential; an expression of what is true on the inside; our worship must come from our life; otherwise God does not even want to hear from us; Ephes. 5:18-20; danger of music being driven by man-centered entertainment and popularity rather than directed towards God; Amos 5:23-24; only a godly person should be doing the singing

**4. The Message or Content of Music in Worship** – 3 key words used

- a. Thanksgiving – to confess and affirm what is true about God – Who He is and what He has done
- b. Praise – to exalt in God; builds on that affirming; the emotional response to that; when I know what God is like and see what He has done, I must be moved by that in my heart; leaping for joy in God; need to use the Book of Psalms more
- c. Rejoicing – gladness; joy – was heard afar off; not a mumbling bunch of worshipers; jubilant heart-felt singing to God