

MCC Midweek Devotion

Thursday - June 11th - 2020

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Scripture Passage: Ezra 3:11-13 - "With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the Lord: 'He is good; His love to Israel endures forever.' And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the Lord because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. But many... who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy. No one could distinguish the sound of the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping because the people made so much noise. And the sound was heard far away." (NIV)

Devotional: I am writing this on Sunday, May 31st. This morning as I prepared my heart for worship this passage came to my mind as it had several times before when I thought about coming together today. A couple of months ago when the quarantine was new, I could hardly wait for the gathering of the family together again. I imagined worship flags waving, people hugging, laughing, and crying to be reunited. My heart resonated then with the time in I Chronicles 16:32-34 where these words were previously penned by David for Aseph when the ark of the covenant was brought to Jerusalem. "Let the sea resound, and all that is in it; let the fields be jubilant and everything in them! Then the trees of the forest will sing, they will sing for joy before the Lord ... Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His love endures forever." Yes! That is what it will be like, I had thought. There will be great rejoicing.

But time has passed, and life has changed us, hasn't it? And if life changes us, it changes the family. I sat at my dining room table and thought about the people a generation or so later who cried because they were glad to be together at the temple site but were sad that it would not be the same. And I thought about the morning ahead and cried for the kids not having Kids Town, no babies in the nursery, people not there in order to protect their health, people there not hugging. And while I knew I would take the worship flag Roxanne had made for me in quarantine I doubted I would get to use it. My mind went to the heartbreaking events of Friday, May 29th when people rioted, were injured, and property damaged. I was broken for a nation divided.

At service I heard about the May 30th riot. My heart broke a little more. Alex prayed & cried. I cried and passed tissues around. We sang. It was bitter-sweet. We acknowledged the people worshipping with us online as an extension of the family. It felt natural, a silver lining. Jeff preached. Then he led discussion with those present, Alex led the family on Zoom. More tears, voices raised in prayer. We closed reading Romans 5:1-5 together. People gathered in wide circles, shared life, began a new normal.

Our world is doing the same. We need to be The Church to a new world. Our message does not change, but our methodology may need to. How do we now practice Colossians 3:15-17? How do we exude peace, be a united body, be saturated with the Word, teach one another, worship together in the new normal that will reach the world? There are no rules except these: Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." And love God and your neighbor as Jesus commanded.