

The JOY of Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread

(The Joy of His Salvation)

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Abstract: The Passover is a most solemn occasion, remembering the death of our Lord, but are you feeling the inexpressible JOY of His Salvation? Should Passover be a glum evening? Can we be too formal? How did Jesus and the disciples keep the Passover? What hymn(s) should be sung when we're finished? Are you feeling festive – as it IS a festival! Are you relishing His victory now?

Greetings everyone. How was your Passover? How did you feel **going** to the Passover, **during** the service, and on the way home **after** the service? How *should* we feel? And how have you felt during these days of Unleavened Bread? I trust you were prepared mentally and spiritually for the Passover and so it had deep meaning for you. My last two topics were designed to help us all prepare and appreciate the Passover.

Now the Passover is over, and I just wanted to know how you felt during and after it. I am giving this particular topic today because I feel some of us need to change the way we are feeling deep inside during and after Passover from what I can see at least. I can't read minds or see a person's heart – but I can see expressions, hear words and see body language.

I feel the way many of us keep the Passover is much too GLUM. So that's what I want to cover **today: the JOY, the inexpressible grateful JOY, we should have felt at Passover and should feel every day going forward if we really understand it!** If you felt that, a deep wonderful joy, then perhaps you don't need to hear all this message and go on to the next. But if deep down you felt worthless, dirty, sinful, and very sad – listen carefully.

On an aside, and I don't think anything I say will change anything, I feel some of our Passovers resemble a Catholic Eucharistic mass way more than it should! What do I mean by that? Theater style seating, one speaker in front, assigned ushers and everything formal – formal. Was Jesus' Passover like that? He's our example, after all. He *is* the Passover, after all.

Jesus' Passover was an interactive, conversational meal. They were relaxed, even laying down on the floor. The disciples felt relaxed enough to even *interrupt Jesus Himself*, as He was speaking. Imagine that! Peter told Christ "you'll never wash my feet". **Philip** interrupted to say "Show us the Father". **Thomas** asked about the "the way". At the end of John 16, **all the disciples** were chatting among themselves about what "a little while longer you won't see me" meant. **This is clearly different than the formal service in theater-style seating many of us do today.** A couple years ago my family and I, plus our in-laws and my son-in-law's relatives, got together for Passover and it was very different and much more meaningful. Similarly last year with Heather and Matt in Orlando. We got so much more out of those home-based Passovers.

If I could, I'd have more of the family-style atmosphere that Jesus had. The Corinthians had such a relaxed Passover service that it got out of control, too casual, too relaxed and some even got drunk and they obviously had a full meal going on. We have in the past interpreted Paul's statement in **1 Corinthians 11:20** to say we are not to have any meal, but I think in context Paul is more likely saying, "you can't call what *you're* doing 'the Lord's Supper'!?" No way!"

But the whole service was more a family – the family of God, the house of God – celebrating what our oldest brother had accomplished for the whole family! Or, our husband-to-be is remembered for what He has done for His Bride and the whole world! **The Corinthians' Passover was obviously with a meal.** I don't personally see that Paul is forbidding the meal so much as he is asking how they could be so cavalier as to get drunk at the Passover, to be eating without being sure everyone had something to eat, and so forth.

In fact, Paul ends the discussion of "the Lord's Supper" with **1 Corinthians 11:33-34** 33 Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. 34 But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come."

It also does seem that He is saying in the verses just before that, that we should be *emphasizing* the bread and wine and that the Passover should not be a big festive meal, but neither do I see him forbidding a meal altogether, if we read all the verses here in context. **He then summarizes in verses 33-34**, he seems to come back to say, "OK, a meal is OK, but don't pig out! This is the Passover! Remember to do things decently and in order."

I've had it with a meal – and I've had it most times without a meal. I'm just saying I think the Passover as we do it now is much too formal, and a far cry from what Jesus actually did – who *did* have a supper. The Corinthians had a supper. And these were family – the *church* family – gathering together and *solemnly remembering, even celebrating* what our big brother, what our Husband, did for us!

When I say "celebrating", I do NOT want to go to the other extreme however of a "party". This is a solemnly joyful evening, if that is not a contradiction of terms to you. We are commanded to *remember* that the Night to be Much Observed, the eve of the 15th (and some call that same night their Passover) – is a night of VIGIL, of watching, of *being* observant. **But neither can we deny that the Israelites left with "a HIGH hand", with boldness, with great joy (Numbers 33:3; Exodus 14:8).**

And the Passover *service* itself was never intended to be so glum!!! Not as glum as *we've* had it, anyway. *Most COG brethren* certainly don't claim to ever "celebrate" the Passover. We talk about how we "*took*" the Passover. **I think we have emphasized the horror of the death of Christ so much – that we've missed the *point* of His death:** our freedom, our liberty, our FORGIVENESS, our REDEMPTION, and our NEW LIFE in Christ and on and on. Those are the things we should be focused on as we take the Passover – and I'll show you by scripture as we proceed here today.

We have a tradition in the USA of celebrating **our 4th of July as "Independence day"**. It is a day of great celebration and festivities. Passover, to the Christian – whether Asian, Hispanic, black or white – is **OUR Independence Day!** It's the day God broke the back

of Satan! It's the day we were freed from our slavery to Satan's rule over us, to Satan's claim over us. We owed a debt to Satan, and Jesus came and paid it in full! Hallelujah!

When I say "Independence Day" – I mean we're independent from Satan and sin, but in a sense the Christian's "Independence Day" is **also "DEpendence day" on GOD** – we are the branches which must stay attached to the Vine or we die! (John 15:1-8). We can't do anything spiritually right apart from God! Nothing. Even Jesus said that -- "I can do nothing of my own self", so how much more should WE be feeling VERY dependent on God's providence, God's help, God's support and God's direction for every step of our lives.

So in all of this – Independence Day – we should be solemnly CELEBRATING our freedom and be SO thankful to our husband, our King, our leader, our inspiration and our Joy – Our very own Jesus Christ, the King of Kings – who has chosen *you* to be part of His bride. **HE -- is now our life. He -- is our Cup. He is our Joy. He is ours. We are His.** That's cause for celebration. Amen and amen.

And the **HYMN** we sing at the end: **is it the right hymn? Should there be only one hymn? What does the Greek actually say and mean?** At the end of Passover, we should be singing about the JOY we have, for being forgiven. Should we be singing "my sins I ever see" and how we've "done evil in Thy sight". Think about it, brethren! *Those are the words of a person before the Passover, and they're appropriate before the Passover.* But *after* we accept His cup, drink the Master's wine and eat of His Bread and wash away the dirt on our feet, *after* Passover our sins *are no longer there!* We certainly should not be "ever seeing" them! Our old sins are buried, washed away, covered in the blood of the lamb, forgiven, cast out *forever* as far as the east is from the west and now we are to sing of the joy we can now have. I'd much prefer to sing **Psalms 103, or Psalm 32** personally, instead of Psalm 51. I think those two psalms reflect more accurately what has actually happened after we've eaten the bread and sipped the red wine.

And yet, this joy at Passover is a muted joy because we are indeed also proclaiming the Lord's death (**1 Corinthians 11:26**) as we also celebrate what He has done for us. So don't think I'm being too calloused about all this. I've given careful thought to this through the **34 Passovers** I've participated in, including the dozen or so I've personally led over the years. I'VE been too emotional, too glum some years myself!

So let's analyze it and try to find the right balance in our hearts, at least – even if we can't change the actual service itself we can change what is happening in our hearts! I want to go back to the original Passover of Exodus 12 to learn some lessons of what it's supposed to be like, look at the New Testament Passovers, we'll evaluate the concept of feeling worthy or unworthy at the Passover, and then we'll talk about the closing hymn.

We'll have to also remind ourselves of the meaning of the days of UB while we're at it and the tremendous victory we can have, should have, with Christ.

The MOOD at the EXODUS 12 PASSOVER

Remembering the first Passover will help us get the balance between a solemnity and a great joy.

The first Passover was about these things:

- The final victory of God over all the gods of the Egyptians, as the firstborn of man and beast (representing all the gods of Egypt) died that night.

Exodus 12:12-13

'For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am YHVH (the LORD). 13 **Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you**; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt."

- The DEATH angel's terrible visit on those who had *not* brushed the lamb's blood on the door posts. Note the Death Angel was not the same as YHVH passing over.
- The Israelites' homes were Passed Over
- The **relief** they must have felt to find their firstborns still alive

Exodus 12:21-23

21 Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Pick out and take lambs for yourselves according to your families, and kill the Passover lamb. 22 And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. And none of you shall go out of the door of his house until morning. 23 For YHVH will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, YHVH will pass over the door and not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike you.

Exodus 12:29-30

And it came to pass at midnight that YHVH struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of livestock. 30 So Pharaoh rose in the night, he, all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead."

The NLT in the end of verse 30 says, "**and loud wailing was heard** throughout the land of Egypt. There was not a single house where someone had not died."

God had said earlier that it would be a wail such as never was, nor would be again (**Exodus 11:6**). Imagine what it was like to be an Israelite that night. We can read a psalm of MOSES that actually describes this night and how they felt.

If you turn to Psalm 90, you'll clearly see it marked as a psalm of MOSES. Then Psalm 91 follows, and most of the rabbis and commentaries say it clearly was also a psalm of Moses, and most likely had reference to that first Passover night. Let's read it – and you'll sense the RELIEF, the PEACE, the RELIEF – and the solemnity – all in one evening.

Psalm 91

He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. 2 I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust."

3 Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler And from the perilous pestilence. 4 He shall cover you with His feathers, And under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler. 5 You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, Nor of the arrow that flies by day, 6 Nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, Nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday.

7 A thousand may fall at your side, And ten thousand at your right hand; But it shall not come near you. 8 Only with your eyes shall you look, And see the reward of the wicked.

9 Because you have made the LORD, who is my refuge, Even the Most High, your dwelling place, 10 No evil shall befall you, Nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; 11 For He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you in all your ways. 12 In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone...."

This plague rocked Egypt to its feet. All the leaders of the Egyptian society primarily came from the ranks of firstborn. It's just the way it was (**Psalm 78:51; 105:36**). Plus, when all the firstborns of the cattle, oxen, horses, dogs, cats – everything – were dying, it was clear that those people and animals had no power whatsoever over the God of Israel!!!

Think how solemn you would feel to hear the wail or hear about the total devastation in every home in the land. ***Think how grateful you would feel as you went to your firstborn's bed – and realized he was still breathing. Perhaps your husband was a firstborn – and as the Death Angel went over, how relieved you were that your house was passed over too! We should bring gratefulness, feelings of joy and relief, into the Passover with us.***

When you realize you are not going to die – but are destined to live – because of the blood of the Lamb, your life was spared! WOW! What JOY you'd feel. You'd be celebrating solemnly and some would be celebrating with tears of joy and gratefulness.

That's the JOY of the Passover too!

Then of course it was followed by the bold march out of Egypt – carrying with them a tremendous SPOILS and booty – lots of gold and silver! Yes, they were happy and rejoicing.

As they marched, they could see their God above them in the cloud by day and the nightlight warmth by night. And then for the finale – God parts the Red Sea as He keeps the enemy at bay.

But it wasn't just a parting of the sea, the psalms tell us, and Josephus tells us, that God really put on a SHOW, a grand display of His awesome power! There were ***earthquakes***, lightning, hail, tornadoes, and some say even a comet in the sky! The Egyptians and the

rest of the people nearby knew something awesome, something very unusual and unearthly, was going on that day!

And when we have spiritual battles going on, nothing has changed. Our God is still there. The real battle is spirit, unseen! But a battle is being waged and you are the prize. And God is not going to lose you. He's started something beautiful in you – and will finish what He started.

Psalm 114 (part of the traditional hymns sung at Passover – Psalms 113-118)

When Israel went out of Egypt, The house of Jacob from a people of strange language,

2 Judah became His sanctuary, And Israel His dominion.

3 The sea saw it and fled; Jordan turned back.

4 The mountains skipped like rams, The little hills like lambs.

5 What ails you, O sea, that you fled? O Jordan, that you turned back?

6 O mountains, that you skipped like rams? O little hills, like lambs?

7 Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, At the presence of the God of Jacob,

8 Who turned the rock into a pool of water, The flint into a fountain of waters.”

YOU BET there was JOY in this holyday season as they saw all this going on!

PASSOVER MUST BE INTENSELY PERSONAL

For you and me to receive the maximum blessing out of the Passover service, we need to come with the realization that this is not just a commanded service or meeting – but is all about what God is doing for me, for you, very personally. It's about what GOD is doing and has done for me – is the way I have to look at it. Most of you hearing this will be familiar with the examples I'm about to give. If you're not intimately familiar with them, take the time to study the passages and pray on your knees about them until you see yourself in these stories.

- **“the stories of Luke 15 are about me”** – I, you, we, are the **Prodigal son** who has come to his senses and come back home to father. We are the valuable lost coin or lost sheep that has been found and we are each causing tremendous joy in heaven when we repent and as we come to Christ. You and I were the wasteful, prodigal son who finally has come to his senses. Who squandered so much time, so much of what God has given us, and finally realizes it's time to start over! You bet, that was you, that was me.
- **John 8:1-11**, the story of the woman caught in the act of adultery is my story, and your story. You bet! We are the woman of God who has had to be forgiven of much spiritual adultery here and there as we have dabbled with the world, as we have from time to time consumed the cup of someone other than our Master's. And yes, we have stirred Him to jealousy (1 Corinthians 10:22). Anytime we have put more faith in another master, another solution other than what God offers, we have engaged in

spiritual harlotry and adultery. Is that too strong for some of you? I don't apologize. Email me and I'll explain it further if that's not clear. GOD is the source of our confidence and if we put confidence in money, in a job, in a person, in anything but God, we are not being totally faithful to God. But when we repent, we – like the woman – DO hear Him say **“neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more”** (v. 11)

- **The story of the man forgiven the huge debt** is my story, and is your story (**Matthew 18:22-27**). If you don't see that, you will be condemning others of their sins – just as the man in the parable demanded repayment from someone who owed him so little! If you do see how much we've each been forgiven, we will be much more forgiving.
- I am **Zacchaeus** in the tree, and so are you (**Luke 19:1-8**). I am the **publican** repenting his heart out in the temple, who goes away forgiven and justified before God (**Luke 18:10-14**).
- I am **Israel of God**, who was found in the mire (**Ezekiel 16**), and whom God took as His own, cleaned up, clothed, adorned and eventually married. And yes, we were at times unfaithful to Him. And yes, He has forgiven us, so our sins are now white as snow, though they were as crimson.
- I am Mr. self-righteous **Pharisee** who eventually became converted members of God's body (**Acts 15:5**); I am the **finger pointing priests** who finally came to see the light of God (**Acts 6:7**) **I am every sinner, every man, every woman – and so are you – no better than anyone. Not a single one** – but one who has come to see the need for a Savior.
- The story of **the woman of ill repute** who washed Jesus' feet with her tears is my story. I was that woman. You were that woman. Or do you not recognize yourself in that story. It's not just a cute story about the love of God for that woman, but the story of God's forgiving love for His woman, you and me! I am the sinner who has been forgiven so much, that once I see it, I have to love much as well (**Luke 7:36-50**).
- If you aren't 'GETTING IT' – then be sure to ask for my tape on “repenting of what you are”. Also, the sermon of it is available on the website.
- **And yes, I'm the Syro-Phoenician woman, as well as the Ethiopian eunuch converted in Acts. I am the Roman centurion, the Samaritans converted, the Greeks, the barbarians..... and so are YOU!** What am I saying? *I'm saying we have to see every story as our story;* every human as part of the potential family of God, every man, woman and child is as dearly loved as you and I are. God so loved the world that He gave.... **He loved the whole WORLD, every single person in the world, every single one! God died for the people He's calling now, and He died for people still lost in their sins. He died for Buddhists, Hindus, Catholics, Protestants, Jews, agnostics, atheists – everyone. He even died for me. And you. He even died for those claiming a new birth experience! He died for Laodiceans and even for those who proudly call themselves Philadelphians. He died for us all.**

We just have to call out now to Him and claim His free gift and accept it – for there is no salvation in any other name (Acts 4:12).

- **Jesus came as the “son of MAN” – not just the son of Judah! He came for ALL people.** If any of you are surfing the net in India or Ghana or South America – as some of you have contacted me have come from those places – if any of you are in JAIL – if any of you are feeling forlorn and deserted by all – **HEAR me: you too were made in the image of the Creator. You too were born for a reason!** Passover is about you too! Don't give up on yourself, when God hasn't! You were not born to rot forever in jail! With God working *with* you and *in* you, you still have a lot to contribute and God in you can confound the self-righteous judgmental people who have given up on us!

Maybe your “jail” is a depression you just can't seem to shake! Get some help. But understand this: Jesus can free you from that jail of depression and despair. Your life can become new. Listen to my sermon titled “New Creation in Christ”. PASSOVER IS ABOUT HOPE, AND **JOY**, AND THE WONDERS OF GOD, for YOU.

- ***The story of the Passover lamb who had to die so that its blood could protect a household, is the story of me, and my household, who had to take the innocent Life of the Lamb of God, so that I could be protected and pardoned from certain death.***

THE WHOLE BIBLE IS ABOUT WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR YOU, AND FOR ME, PERSONALLY.

That's why I've said before – and it bears repeating: I see Jesus on the cross as having to be there because of me – just me. If nobody in the whole wide world had ever sinned but me, I believe my Lord would have come to live and die – for me. That's how I take the Passover personally.

And what JOY I feel that He has been resurrected and now lives for me, fights for me, protects me, watches over me, cares about me, guides every step of my life now – and when I'm thinking right, there can be tremendous joy and peace in that.

***As I eat the UNLEAVENED BREAD each day – I'm reminded, Jesus is IN me, and I am in Him.
I am HIS, and my Beloved - is mine.***

THE AWESOME JOY OF THE FOOTWASHING

We've talked about the footwashing off and on. Let me just say one more thing, one more time: I cannot believe, that we would not be moved to tears, if we could truly see our God, our King, our MASTER, our HUSBAND Jesus Christ – the SON OF GOD – taking off His robe or jacket, rolling up His sleeves, getting down on His hands and feet like a lowly servant – to wash His Bride's feet.

You know what? I personally witnessed Jesus washing feet. How and when? I saw Jesus wash my feet through my brother, who is a part of the body of Christ. **Yes, Jesus is still washing feet.** Every Passover.

When Jesus washed the feet of the 12, we too, are disciples of Jesus Christ, and He in spirit washed your feet, my feet, too. We are the bride. We are the “woman of God”. And this was the day the SON of God, served His bride, cleaned her off, made her comfortable, and knelt before her in humble service and cleansing. The day God washed my feet. The day God washed your feet. **The day God looked up to each of us, as He washed one at a time – and said, “I forgive, I cleanse you, I see you as washed. All your sins are washed away. You’re clean. And I love you, SO much!”**

I’m so proud of Him. What a husband! What a Master. What an example. He fills me with desire to be just like Him! And I want to learn how to love Him more because of His example. And every single day, I pray, “Jesus, help me to be a better husband – like you.”

WE - are the body of Christ. And when we re-enacted the footwashing at Passover, the person washing your feet at Passover – you should have seen as Jesus himself.

THE JOY OF BEING FORGIVEN our SPIRITUAL DEBT and FREED from SIN

You know the spiritual meaning of Exodus 12. Pharaoh is a type of Satan; Egypt is a type of sin.

The Exodus is our release from spiritual slavery – and forgiveness of our sins, and the payment of our spiritual DEBT.

How would you feel if you had had a \$500,000 debt – suddenly cancelled, and paid in full by Someone else?

The way we would feel about THAT is the way we should feel as we come to Passover. NOT FEELING DOWN ABOUT HOW BAD WE’VE BEEN – **BUT FEELING JOYFUL THAT THE BAD HAS BEEN ERASED!**

As you picked the vial of wine from the tray – and pondered it deeply for a few more seconds before drinking it – as you looked on the redness of the contents, you thought of the blood poured out for you, and for me. And with deep gratitude, we accepted in faith what He did for us... and we drank.

And we remembered, we are forgiven. Forever. By the One who counts.
Oh what
JOY!

Psalm 32:1-2 NKJV

“Blessed [“blessed” means “happy”] is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

2 Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no guile”

Psalm 32:1-2 NLT

“Oh, what joy for those whose rebellion is forgiven, *whose sin is put out of sight!*
2 Yes, what joy for those *whose record the LORD has cleared of sin*, whose lives
are lived in complete honesty!”

Even the hymn some of us sing at the end of our Passovers – **Psalm 5:** how does David
end that psalm? (YHVH where it says “the LORD” in your Bibles.)

Psalm 51:7-8

7 “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than
snow.

**8 Make me hear joy and gladness, That the bones You have broken may
rejoice.”**

Psalm 51:12-15

12 Restore to me the JOY of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous
Spirit.

13 Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners shall be converted to You.

14 Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, The God of my salvation,

And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.

15 YHVH, open my lips, **And my mouth shall show forth Your praise.”**

Isaiah 49:13

**13 SING, O heavens! Be joyful, O earth! And break out in singing, O
mountains!**

For YHVH has comforted His people, And will have mercy on His afflicted.”

Have you felt like singing during these days of Unleavened Bread, or as you took the
Passover?

Romans 5:6-11

For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7
For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone
would even dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that
while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, having now been
justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. 10 For if when we
were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more,
having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. **11 And not only that, but
we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we
have now received the reconciliation.”**

**In fact, have you stopped to consider this: Jesus was able to endure the shame
and horror of the cross for this one thing: “for the JOY that was set before
Him” (Hebrews 12:2).**

THE JOY OF ENGAGEMENT

Have you EVER seen a young woman who has just been proposed to, by someone
she adores and loves dearly, EVER be glum? We’ve just accepted His offer to belong
to Him, to be part of Him, to share His life, to become one with Him! What Joy!

- **We've also just been proposed to!** We've been given the Master's cup – offering us the invitation to be His Fiancée, His bride someday. We drank of the cup, signifying our acceptance of that offer. I have discussed that off and on in several sermons.

But THIS is the point: can we really be aware we're getting married – and not be excited, joyful?

And ministers: yes, we have to prepare the body of Christ for the wedding. But can we not pray God help us INSPIRE His Bride to be ready – rather than browbeat His bride? I've been in church groups here and there over the past 30 years where I wonder where the JOY has gone!? *How CAN a bride get excited about her wedding if she's constantly being chewed out?*

We can't get a bride ready for her wedding – and expect her to look forward to it – if we spend Sabbaths sticking her in a broom closet and beating the stuffing out of her, and hoping she's learning time is short and that she better get ready for the wedding! Think about that, you who speak!

YES, we have much to repent of. But also realize that inspiring and motivating will get us much further than constant picking, correcting, cajoling and lording it over – will ever do!

And one more thing: those of us who speak – let's remember to speak to the children and teenagers here and there in every sermon also. Let's use examples they can understand. Let's use stories that will speak to *their* hearts.

So Bride – yes, time is short. Be looking up. Be counting the days. Be checking on your wedding gown – the righteous acts of the saints. And be thinking about your soon coming wedding and what we have to do so we're not caught sleeping when our Master comes for us! Time IS short.

BUT LET'S NOT LOSE THE **JOY** OF LOOKING FORWARD to the wedding – as we get ready for it!

PASSOVER AND THE DAYS OF UNLEAVENED BREAD ARE, AFTER ALL, FEASTS!

In the western world we know little about true Feasts. We need to almost go to other countries to see how they celebrate at weddings, bar mitzvahs, just even ordinary get-togethers. There is dancing in the street, accordions, guitars, singing – we don't do that here as much. This is a festival. Where's our festivities in our festivals? Where's our rejoicing in our feasts?

Where's our praising, and our lifting up of our hands in praise and joy – or, are we afraid we'll be criticized for being a bit too emotional or something?

Even in unconverted Old Testament Israel, they knew how to celebrate their Days of Unleavened Bread with great joy. Let's read a few:

2 Chronicles 30:21-24 (King Hezekiah's day)

21 So the children of Israel who were present at Jerusalem kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with great gladness; and the Levites and the **priests praised YHVH day by day, singing to YHVH, accompanied by loud instruments.** 22 And Hezekiah gave encouragement to all the Levites who taught the good knowledge of YHVH; and they ate throughout the feast seven days, offering peace offerings and making confession to the LORD God of their fathers. 23 *Then the whole assembly agreed to keep the feast another seven days,* and they kept it another seven days **with gladness.**"

Even their song services had LOUD instruments (verse 21) – and David talks about praising God with psaltery, and harp, and lyre, and stringed instruments and more and more. Are we READY for THAT kind of worship and praise!? Or would that seem somehow “charismatic” and you’d shy away from it? How about bringing in some loud **cymbals** to our next song service? How far would you get? You know good and well, we’re not ready – YET – to praise God the way KING DAVID routinely did!

I can hardly wait until one day King David gets up to lead songs. He’ll have the orchestra, the band, the cymbals, the singers and maybe even more – and we better get ready because there’s going to be some major rejoicing going on when David, a man after GOD’s own heart – gets up to lead songs. Then you’ll understand where I’m coming from in this sermon. (Be sure to hear and read the sermon about “the Tabernacle of David” to get more understanding of how he worshipped.)

Psalm 150 – can we be THIS happy as we praise God and sing to Him?

“Praise the LORD! Praise God in His sanctuary; Praise Him in His mighty firmament!

2 Praise Him for His mighty acts; Praise Him according to His excellent greatness!

3 Praise Him with the sound of the **trumpet**; Praise Him with the lute and **harp**!

4 Praise Him with the **timbrel** and **dance**; Praise Him with **stringed instruments** and **flutes**!

5 **Praise Him with LOUD CYMBALS; Praise Him with CLASHING cymbals!**

6 Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!”

DAVID’S SONG SERVICES were FESTIVE, LOUD, POWERFUL, HAPPY AND JOYOUS!

2 Chronicles 35 – Josiah’s days of UB were also very powerfully joyful.

Ezra 6:19-22

And the descendants of the captivity **kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month.** 20 For the priests and the Levites had purified themselves; all of them were ritually clean. And they slaughtered the Passover lambs for all the descendants of the captivity, for their brethren the priests, and for themselves. 21 **Then the children of Israel who had returned from the captivity ate together with all who had separated themselves from the filth of the nations of the land in order to seek the LORD God of Israel.** 22 **And they kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with JOY, for the LORD made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria toward**

them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel."

When Jesus returns, He says to the sheep on His right hand, "WELL DONE, good and faithful servant, enter into the JOY of your Lord." (**Matthew 25:21, 23**).

Why not? **For David tells us in Psalm 16:11:** "You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore."

We're told to – at times – LEAP for joy (**Luke 6:23**).

There are 65 references to JOY in the New Testament alone. **GOD IS A HAPPY GOD.** You and I are going to be bowled over by His joy, His smiles, His warmth, ***His booming laughter that peels across the sea of glass!*** **Get ready for it, because ABBA is going to be one very happy dear father when all His children come in to visit Him!** Do you see Abba – our great magnificent Holy Father – that way? Perhaps you should listen to my sermon about "God – the Ultimate Father".

Here are a few more, from the New Testament. At Jesus' Passover – John 14-17, He spoke often of Love and JOY.

John 15:11 "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, **and that your joy may be FULL**"

John 16:24 "Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your **joy may be FULL**".

Romans 14:17 "for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and **joy** in the Holy Spirit."

The FINAL HYMN(s) AFTER PASSOVER SERVICE

Matthew 26:30 "And **when they had sung a hymn**, they went out to the Mount of Olives."

Also note that it was after the supper, after the Passover bread and wine, that Jesus took His disciples out into the country, into the big broad hillside called Mount of Olives. At its base are some old olive tree groves and it is here that Jesus goes to pray, ponder, meditate after the Passover dinner. It would most likely be around midnight by now. They had a full moon to give them light as they walked up the same mount that David went up to in his sorrow in escaping from Absalom.

Back to Matthew 26:30 – they sang a hymn.

Which hymn? What would be the point of the hymn?

Here's what BARNES NOTES says:

"Verse 30. [And when they had sung a hymn] The Passover was observed by the Jews by singing or "chanting" **Psalm 113-118**. These they divided into two parts. **They sung**

Psalm 113-114 during the observance of the Passover, and the others at the close. There can be no doubt that our Savior, and the apostles also, used the same psalms in their observance of the Passover. **The word rendered "sung a hymn" is a participle, literally meaning "hymning"- not confined to a single hymn, but admitting many."**

So Barnes Notes says "when they had sung a hymn" – properly translated would be more like "after **they hymned**" – and that would be Psalms 115 -118, being the end of the Passover.

Here's what Adam Clarke's Commentary says:

"Matthew 26:30 And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

[And when they had sung a hymn] **Humneentes (NT:5214) means, probably, no more than a kind of recitative reading or chanting. As to the hymn itself, we know, from the universal consent of Jewish antiquity, that it was composed of Psalms 113-114-115-116-117, and 118, termed by the Jews hallel (OT:1984), from hall^{al}uw (OT:1984) Yah (OT:3050), the first word in Psalm 113. These six Psalms were always sung at every paschal solemnity. They sung this great hillel on account of the five great benefits referred to in it" –** And then Clarke goes on to show the major themes of Psalms 114-118 including the Exodus, the law being given, the resurrection of the dead (Psalm 116:9) and the passion of the Messiah – and then how it ends with tremendous joyful praising!

When you understand the EXACT HYMNS that have been traditionally sung for thousands of years, including in Jesus' day – when you read those Psalms, you read psalms that are upbeat, joyful, thankful, grateful – not glum.

When we FIRST come into the presence of Holy God – sure, we feel dirty in comparison to His supreme holiness. Peter, in Christ's presence once He recognized Jesus was the son of God, said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man".

But once we've been reconciled, and once we've been forgiven and justified, and cleared, and forgiven - are we to remain feeling glum, sinful, unworthy, and dirty? No, brethren!

Any of you parents understands this! If your child has done something filthy, something wicked, you SEEK their repentance and change! Sure – you're angry. Sure you're even heart broken. I've been there – on both sides of the ledger. I've been the teen causing pain and I've been the parent feeling the pain.

But AS our children do repent, do WE not melt – ourselves, in our hearts? Of course we do! We are eager to help the child move on! To help them realize they have a new beginning, a new start, a fresh chance, and we are eager to approve them, affirming our love for them and doing everything we can to help them see they are still part of the family!

So I wonder if it's most appropriate for us to sing a psalm whose words include "my sin I ever see". Just a thought, to make us all think.

After the Passover service, after we've taken the blood and body of Christ in the cup and bread, after we've washed each other's feet – we are cleansed! Our sins are gone, no longer

to *ever* be seen in front of us! We've been RECONCILED, HUGGED, ACCEPTED, FORGIVEN – and we can hear God's words: "their sins I will remember no more" – and I feel we could pick a more appropriate hymn that reflects the JOY we feel after forgiveness.

Psalms 32 might be better – "what JOY whose record the Lord has cleared of all sin...." (v.1)
Or Psalm 103 – "he has cast as far as the east is from the west..."

In some of the COG groups, it is **page 25 of the old hymnal**: "**They are blest (happy) who are forgiven, to whom God imputes no sin.**" ... and our hymn ends with "so be glad all you upright, all you righteous – shout for joy". Isn't that more the message of how we should feel AFTER the bread and wine?

Romans 8:1 says "there is now NO *condemnation* for those who are in Christ..."
What JOY!

I'll end with a couple passages from "the Great Hallel" -- what was traditionally "hymned" at the Jewish Passovers – and most likely also hymned by Jesus and His disciples – Psalms 113 – 118.

Psalm 113 – is all about praising God for his wondrous works.

Psalm 114 – we have already read it all – about the mountains and hills skipping like lambs.

Psalm 116:12-13

12 What shall I render unto YHVH for all his benefits toward me?

13 **I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD."**

Psalm 118:1-6

Oh, **give thanks** to YHVH, for He is good
For His mercy endures forever.

2 Let Israel now say, "His mercy endures forever."

3 Let the house of Aaron [all the priests] now say, "His mercy endures forever."

4 Let those who fear YHVH now say, "His mercy endures forever."

5 I called on YHVH in distress; YHVH answered me and set me in a broad place.

6 YHVH is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?

Ps 118, continuing in verse 14:

14 YHVH is my strength AND SONG, And He has become my salvation.

15 The voice of rejoicing and salvation Is in the tents of the righteous; The right hand of YHVH does valiantly. **16 The right hand of YHVH is exalted;** The right hand of YHVH does valiantly. [WHO is HE who is on the right hand of Majesty?]

17 I shall NOT DIE, BUT LIVE, And declare the works of YHVH.

[Isn't that the message of the Passover, after all?]

18 YHVH has chastened me severely, But He has not given me over to death.

19 Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go through them, And I will praise YHVH. **20** This is the gate of YHVH, Through which the righteous shall enter.

[God says to us all Prodigals – “Come on home! I’ve opened the gates of my heavenly mansions for you! I want you home, in your own room, your own bed, with your own Abba!”]

21 I will praise You, For You have answered me, And have become my salvation.

22 The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. **23** This was YHVH's doing; It is marvelous in our eyes. **24** This is the day YHVH has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it. **25** Save now, I pray, O LORD; O LORD, I pray, send now prosperity. **26** Blessed is he who comes in the name of YHVH! We have blessed you from the house of YHVH. **27** God is YHVH, And He has given us light; Bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar. **28** You are my God, and I will praise You; **You are my God, I will exalt You.**”

AND THE FINAL WORDS THEY WOULD TRADITIONALLY SING?

29 *“Oh, give thanks to YHVH, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.”*

How appropriate!

Brethren, we could go on and on... but my point is simple: We want to keep the Passover, and the days of Unleavened bread, with solemn JOY. Solemn because we ARE remembering the death of our Lord for us – but JOY because He did it so completely, so well, so fully, so perfectly – and so *personally* -- for me, for you, for *all* mankind.

That’s all for now. Go in the joy of your Lord. Til next time....

*Philip W.
Shields*

