



LOCKINGCASTLECHURCH

Life Group Notes – 12th September 2021

Coming back to the heart: Ezra 3:8-13

Please visit the LCC website to listen to the talk or read the transcript if available.

Ezra 3

⁸ In the second month of the second year after their arrival at the house of God in Jerusalem, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Joshua son of Jozadak and the rest of the people (the priests and the Levites and all who had returned from the captivity to Jerusalem) began the work. They appointed Levites twenty years old and older to supervise the building of the house of the LORD. ⁹ Joshua and his sons and brothers and Kadmiel and his sons (descendants of Hodaviah) and the sons of Henadad and their sons and brothers – all Levites – joined together in supervising those working on the house of God.

¹⁰ When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests in their vestments and with trumpets, and the Levites (the sons of Asaph) with cymbals, took their places to praise the LORD, as prescribed by David king of Israel. ¹¹ With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the LORD:

‘He is good;

his love towards Israel endures for ever.’

And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. ¹² But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy. ¹³ 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.

Note this is the NIV2011 version of the text. It would be helpful to compare it with other translations.

Comment:

Ezra 1-6 narrates the story of the return of the Jewish people to Jerusalem and their initial attempts to start rebuilding the temple after 70 years in exile in Babylon. It took them 14 months to start the project after their arrival and it would take a further 20 years before the temple was complete. However the laying of the foundation stone was an important step forward and an emotional occasion filled with both joy and pain. It was a joy to finally worship again after such a long time away, but it was also painful because it brought home all they had missed and the loss of loved ones, families and homes during many long years of oppression. Truly authentic communal worship will consist of joyful praise coupled with tears of pain. Some people tend to exclude themselves from worship if they are not feeling joyful because they don't want to expose others to their pain. However authentic worship brings together the whole community of young and old, those experiencing good times and also those who are struggling. The world takes note of authenticity: Godly people who manage to combine faith for the future with an acknowledgement of the harsh realities of life. The exiles had experienced really tough years away from their homeland and had returned to rubble, ruins and opposition, however they nevertheless chose to declare in faith that 'God is good, and his love endures forever'. Whatever we are going through it is good to declare the faithfulness of God as both a statement of faith and a focal point of hope for the future.

Questions:

1. Why are ceremonial occasions so important sometimes?
2. Why else do you think the older people wept as the younger people shouted for joy (v12)?
3. How and why can we worship when we feel sad, lonely or in pain?
4. How can we ensure LCC is a place for both young and old together?
5. How can we make sure our worship is authentic and relevant in our day?