**“The Joy of the Lord”**

Going deeper in Nehemiah 8:9-12

**INTRODUCTION** The Israelites have returned to Jerusalem after they have been freed from Babylonian captivity. The wall protecting the city and the city itself have decimated. Under Nehemiah the wall and the city have been rebuilt. The people have been listening to Ezra, Nehemiah, and the Levites teach about God’s call on their lives. As they have been listening there has been a sense of collective grief because they are aware of the ways they have fallen short. It is also the time of year when they would have celebrated the Feast of Booths which was a reminder of God sustaining them for 40 years in the wilderness.

**READ** – *Read (passage) aloud. Read it several times. Listen for what the Spirit of God is saying, don’t just think about it.* 9 Then Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra, the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were teaching the people said to them all, “This is a holy day to the LORD your God do not mourn or weep.” They said this because all the people wept as they heard the words of the law being read. 10 He continued, “Go home and prepare excellent food and sweet drinks. Share it with those who don’t have anything; for this day is holy to our God. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your refuge. 11 The Levites calmed all the people, “Be still now. This is a holy day. Don’t mourn or weep.” 12 So all the people went off to feast, eating and drinking and making sure the poor were included in the celebration of joy. Now they understood the words that had been given to them.

**ENGAGE** – *Questions for going deeper. God is speaking… to you.*

1. Why do you think the people were weeping?

2. Why do you think the Ezra, Nehemiah, and the Levites tell them to stop mourning and weeping?

3. In what way was the joy of the Lord to be their refuge? How has the joy of the Lord been your refuge?

4. How was sharing with the poor related to this being a holy day to our God?

5. In Nehemiah 8:1-18 what spiritual practices can you discern? How are these incorporated into your spiritual journey?

**PRAY** – *God has spoken. So, reply.*

\*Ask the Spirit of God to show you the ways you have been walking with Him and ways that you have not.

\*Ask the Lord for forgiveness in the ways you have wandered. Thank Him for His grace to you.

\*Ask the Lord to make His joy your strength for today.

**LIVE** – *This is where the rubber hits the road.*

The people of God must be honest with themselves about how they fallen short of God’s will for them. Those actions have stolen their joy. Will you be honest with the Lord in the same way? Will His joy be your strength this week? Will others see that in you?