



Feast of Tabernacles

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Introduction

We can celebrate Sukkot a million different ways. Think of Christmas, no two families celebrate Christmas exactly the same and Christmas is a relatively new idea compared to the ancient feast of Sukkot. In the same way Sukkot begs for variety. I designed this guide to provide you a launching point to the festival. I've tried to keep to the original laws of the festival, but I've substituted many traditional Jewish elements with fresh ideas. So much is written on this festival that those who are interested in other ways to celebrate the festival should do a google search. I hope this guide provides you a rich week and an introduction into a deeper faith in our Lord Jesus the Messiah Christ of all peoples and all nations. – Josh Flood

Why celebrate Jewish Holidays?



Many Christians have a distant view of Judaism as it relates to their own faith. They live in a New-Testament-only environment where they do not read or understand the Old Testament and many find themselves disconnected from the ancient faith. We find it hard to relate to the people and we have a tougher time reconciling their God to the image we perceive of our God. But Jesus' work is not only found in the New Testament (John 8:58). But the covenant work of God that culminates in the person of Jesus begins with Abraham. The 4000 years that God invested in the nation of Israel is worthy of study. Yet understanding the work of God through Israel goes beyond a Sunday School knowledge of the stories. We need an intimate identification with the people. We celebrate Jewish holidays to foster this intimacy. And this intimacy leads us to God. Consider Paul's words to the Corinthians

For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness.

Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, "THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO PLAY." Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. (1 Corinthians 1:1-11)

Jewish history illumines the Lord and sheds light on our very being. It is more than just an example for our instruction. Jewish history is our history.

Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

(Galatians 3: 7-9 NIV)

We also celebrate Jewish festivals because they hold immense theological value. God has been planning His actions since before the creation of the world. Even the most ancient Jewish history points to Christ and through Him ultimately to the Father. He is the Passover lamb and he is the living water of our harvest. He is the pure sacrifice; he is the fulfillment of the law. By celebrating these festivals we gain appreciation for the work of God throughout time. Let your heart delight in these traditions.

Our delight must go beyond a cerebral formal academic recognition. Our whole person and whole life must be transformed by the knowledge of God. We celebrate festivals because in these experiences we find a deeper connection to the truth than by knowledge alone. My hope is that as we celebrate the festivals of Israel we will echo the words of Moses song concerning this history that "it is not an idle word for you; indeed it is your life."
(Deuteronomy 32: 47)



Traditional Sukkah

What is Sukkot?

The word "Sukkot" means "booths," and refers to the temporary dwellings that the Israelites lived in during the years following the exodus from Egypt. The Hebrew pronunciation of Sukkot is "Sue COAT". The name of the holiday is frequently translated "Feast of Tabernacles," which, like many translations of Jewish terms, isn't very useful. This translation is particularly misleading, because the word "tabernacle" in the Bible refers to the portable Sanctuary in the desert, a precursor to the Temple, called in Hebrew "mishkan." The Hebrew word "sukkah" (plural: "sukkot") refers to the temporary booths that people lived in, not to the Tabernacle.

In biblical times, Sukkot was considered to be the most important festival. It was actually referred to as "the festival" in 1 Kings 12:32.

Read Leviticus 23:33-44

Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'On the fifteenth of this seventh month is the Feast of Booths for seven days to the LORD. 'On the first day is a holy convocation; you shall do no laborious work of any kind. 'For seven days you shall present an offering by fire to the LORD. On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation and present an offering by fire to the LORD; it is an assembly. You shall do no laborious work.

These are the appointed times of the LORD which you shall proclaim as holy convocations, to present offerings by fire to the LORD-- burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings, each day's matter on its own day-- besides those of the sabbaths of the LORD, and besides your gifts and besides all your votive and freewill offerings, which you give to the LORD.

On exactly the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the crops of the land, you shall celebrate the feast of the LORD for seven days, with a rest on the first day and a rest on the eighth day. Now on the first day you shall take for yourselves the foliage of beautiful trees, palm branches and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the



LORD your God for seven days. You shall thus

celebrate it as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. It shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations; you shall celebrate it in the seventh month. You shall live in booths for seven days; all the native-born in Israel shall live in booths, so that your generations may know that I had the sons of Israel live in booths when I brought them out from the land of Egypt. I am the LORD your God." So Moses declared to the sons of Israel the appointed times of the LORD

A few points of insight: verse 41 calls this festival a "perpetual statute throughout your generations." Zechariah 14 prophesys that Sukkot will be celebrated after the end times. This is not just a temporary ritual. It is not just a festival for Israel. Verse 43 says "so that your generations may know that I had the sons of Israel live in booths." Why doesn't the text say, "So your generations may know that I had *you* dwell in booths?" This is written because the pilgrimage festivals were instituted for the whole world, not just the Jews. The difference is that we are not under this festival as a part of the law. We celebrate it with freedom. We celebrate it with greater meaning than Moses understood when he wrote it.

As believers in Christ we understand that God dwelt (literally tabernacled) among us. We also know that we are living away from our home, heaven.

"You shall celebrate the Feast of Booths seven days after you have gathered in from your threshing floor and your wine vat; and you shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter and your male and female servants and the Levite and the stranger and the orphan and the widow who are in your towns. Seven days you shall celebrate a feast to the LORD your God in the place which the LORD chooses, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you will be altogether joyful."

(Deuteronomy 16: 13-15)

We see that the end result of this festival is joy. This week is a time of celebrating God's faithfulness. Let us join together with the Psalmist and say, " Your name, O LORD, is everlasting, Your remembrance, O LORD, throughout all generations."

(Psalm 135: 13)

For further reading see:
(Ex 23: 14-19; Num 28: 16-29: 38)
(adapted from Jewish Facts www.jewfaq.org)



Building the Sukkah

You will dwell in booths for seven days; all natives of Israel shall dwell in booths. -Leviticus 23:42

The Sukkah is a temporary structure in which we eat, read, study and even sleep. It is a reminder of the tents that the Israelites lived in during their wandering in the wilderness. The commandment to "dwell" in a sukkah can be fulfilled by simply eating all of one's meals there; however, if the weather, climate, and one's health permit, one should spend as much time in the sukkah as possible, including sleeping in it. Here are some guidelines to help you build your own.

- It should be out in the open. It should not be built inside your house or garage.
- A sukkah must have at least two and a half walls covered with a material that will not blow away in the wind. A sukkah may be any size, so long as it is large enough for you to fulfill the commandment of dwelling in it.
- It must not have more than one permanent wall.
- Stars should be visible through the roof at night. Be prepared to cover your sukkah in case of rain.
- Decorate the sukkah with mementoes of God's faithfulness such as fruits and vegetables, pictures of loved ones, flowers, children's drawings, pay stubs, car keys... be creative. Have each person from the family bring a few things to celebrate how God has been faithful to them this year. You can also decorate with traditional American harvest décor. Just let the Sukkah reflect the faithfulness of God.
- Don't try to make it too comfortable. Let the cool breeze remind you of the changing of seasons and the continual work of God throughout generations. Let a little discomfort remind you that the Lord is building you a future home that will provide you with a whole new meaning of the word 'home'.

Building and decorating a sukkah is a fun family project, much like decorating the Christmas tree is for Christians. The sukkah is great fun for the children. Building the sukkah somehow satisfies the common childhood fantasy of building a fort, and dwelling in the sukkah satisfies a child's desire to camp out in the backyard.

Friday (sunset)– Saturday --- Our Traditional Sabbath

What Does Sabbath Mean?

Basically Sabbath means rest, but traditionally Sabbath is more complicated than rest. There are many Jewish traditions around Sabbath. Many of those traditions go back in time since before Jesus was born. These traditions are complicated and I think they will distract you away from the purpose of this day of rest. Today you are charged with taking a Sabbath. Today needs to be a day of rest. Sabbath rest is not just a day to relax. It is a time to celebrate that God is truly God and He does what He pleases. We work so hard every day trying to 'pay the bills' or 'get a degree' or 'raise our children' or whatever. But God is the one who sends the rain (Matt 5:45). He is the one who says He will not allow the righteous to go hungry (Proverbs 10:3). He cares more for our children than we do. Celebrating Sabbath means celebrating that God is in control and you do not need to pretend like everything depends on you. Take a break from the things that stress you out. Remind yourself that God is in control of these things. Do not work. Do not do the things that you feel like "you need to" instead let God reign and show His control over those things in your life. Order out for dinner. Take a break. By the way, if you were to break Sabbath under the Mosaic Law the result is death (Exodus 21:14) so take this charge seriously.

Devotional Reading

Take special time with Leviticus 23:33-44. You read this once, but take time to meditate on the eternal significance of these words spoken to our great prophet Moses long before Christ—long before FOPC—long before the day of His final return to Earth.^a

At the Meal

○ Recite the Kiddush as a blessing over the meal. The host is to raise his drink and say the following:

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'olam borei p'ri hagafen

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the World, Who creates the fruit of the vine.

Sunday --- Feast of Family ---

Feast of Family

Tonight we celebrate heritage. Invite your immediate family to a meal. Don't prepare a big feast. The food should not be extravagant tonight; instead our family is the bounty we celebrate. Invite your close family over for a meal traditional to your family. Prepare the kind of meal you've eaten a hundred times together. Choose a favorite meal of your families and eat together. This meal is to celebrate the faithfulness of God as it relates to our past. Tonight we will be celebrating our families and our heritage. Do not only limit yourself to your biological family invite those who you consider close like family to the feast.

Devotional Reading

Often we think of the faithfulness of God in terms of blessing. But God's faithfulness is seen so much clearer in times of suffering. As we celebrate family do not simply recap the good times. Think through hard parts of your life and discover how God's hand was working then.

Begin reading Exodus 15-19 and then Numbers 11-14. Take time to consider the downfall of Israel. Make a note when Israel does something that reminds you of yourself or your family. These passages tell a story from the time when Israel lived in tents (Sukkot). Consider God's faithfulness to them as they wandered in the dessert. You will have time tomorrow to finish these chapters so don't rush.

At the meal:

- Invite friends and family. Remember to explain to them what Sukkot means to you. They may want a copy of this guide so they understand fully.
- Before the meal-- read Psalm 117 aloud
- Each person should bring a decoration for the Sukkah. Take time after the meal to discuss God's faithfulness. One by one each member should add their decoration to the Sukkah as they tell the story of God's faithfulness to them. For suggestions what to bring see the section on decorating the sukkah.

Monday ---

Devotional Reading

Continue reading Exodus 15-19 and then Numbers 11-14. Let your imagination go wild as you read. It is important that we identify with the people in these stories. These stories were not written so that we could scorn Israel over her unfaithfulness. They were written because we are very similar to them. Even though we cannot imagine ourselves bowing down to a golden calf we can clearly see how easy it is to serve the golden dollar. Take time to connect our cultures and understand the people of Israel.

Worship the Lord through the Psalm of Asaph: Psalm 78. Read through this story of God's faithfulness to Israel and highlight all that the Lord does for the people.

How does Psalm 78 affect your view of God's faithfulness?

At the meal:

- Before the meal-- read Psalm 117 aloud
Praise the LORD, all nations;
Laud Him, all peoples!
For His lovingkindness is great toward us,
And the truth of the LORD is everlasting.
Praise the LORD!
- For the meal: Eat a bland meal that is healthy. Be creative with your dishes. Choose meals to remind you of others who have suffered.
- After the meal-- read Hebrews 13:3 and then recall those in prison and pray for all who are suffering.
Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering. (Hebrews 13:3)

Tuesday --- Fast from Meat ---

Devotional Reading

Deuteronomy 16:14 commands us to “be joyful at your feast.” People often get the wrong idea about the Old Testament sacrificial worship of God. We can feel guilty and obligated to do things that we do not understand. Even today many people see tithing as an obligation and not a privilege. Until you connect to God’s faithfulness, you’re giving or serving will be disjointed. Consider God’s plan for those who could not make the travel to the feasts.

“If the distance is so great for you that you are not able to bring the tithe, since the place where the LORD your God chooses to set His name is too far away from you when the LORD your God blesses you, then you shall exchange it for money, and bind the money in your hand and go to the place which the LORD your God chooses. You may spend the money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen, or sheep, or wine, or strong drink, or whatever your heart desires; and there you shall eat in the presence of the LORD your God and rejoice, you and your household.” (Deuteronomy 14:22-27)

This is God giving a blank check for those who cannot make it to the major feasts. And you didn’t read it wrong, it even encourages the faithful to purchase wine and strong drink. God is telling them. “Throw a party... a HUGE ‘over-the-top’ party.” How often we forget that God came not just to give us some solution to death. Jesus came that we “may have life, and have it abundantly!” (John 10:10) God’s plan is wonderful, but we are often too distracted to listen. It is easy to get caught up in the trappings of life. We wonder why the guy next door has the brand new Lexus and we’re still driving a car bought in 1987. We are easily consumed by envy when we base our lives around comparison and on temporary success. Consider the words of C.S.Lewis from the first chapter of “The Weight of Glory”

If you asked twenty good men to-day what they thought the highest of the virtues, nineteen of them would reply, Unselfishness. But if you asked almost any of the great Christians of old he would have replied, Love. You see what has happened? A negative term has been substituted for a positive, and this is of more than philological importance. The negative ideal of Unselfishness carries with it the suggestion not primarily of securing good things for others, but of going without them ourselves, as if our abstinence and not their happiness was the important point. I do not

think this is the Christian virtue of Love. The New Testament has lots to say about self-denial, but not about self-denial as an end in itself. We are told to deny ourselves and to take up our crosses in order that we may follow Christ; and nearly every description of what we shall ultimately find if we do so contains an appeal to desire. If there lurks in most modern minds the notion that to desire our own good and earnestly to hope for the enjoyment of it is a bad thing, I submit that this notion has crept in from Kant and the Stoics and is no part of the Christian faith. Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.

Today we celebrate God's goodness by drinking only water and not eating meat. All over the world children die and families suffer from the lack of clean water and decent nutrition. Today we identify with them and celebrate God's faithfulness to us by eating a meal that is more typical for our fellow brothers and sisters. Throughout the day we must not eat any meat or drink any drink that is not water. Yet today is a day of delight. These two things are combined together in order to remind us that God's faithfulness to us is not requisite on our status as a first world country. Even if all of these things were stripped away, God's faithfulness would still shine brightly. Away from the trappings of an American lifestyle we celebrate that we have life and breath.



Take an inventory:

List everything that you spent more than one dollar for today.

Include things like electricity, air conditioning, water, etc.

List them here:

Why \$1? Well, one dollar is more than the average daily income for the average working adult alive today. If your list has two things on it, you are very blessed. I imagine your list has more than a dozen items on it. Take a moment and realize how rich you are compared to everyone else in this world. Do not let your heart tell you that you need more money. You are rich. Take time to focus your heart on it's true desire: Jesus Christ.

At The Meal:

o Read Psalm 37: 3-11

Trust in the LORD and do good; Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness. Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, and He will do it. He will bring forth your righteousness as the light And your judgment as the noonday. Rest in the LORD and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who carries out wicked schemes. Cease from anger and forsake wrath; Do not fret; *it leads* only to evildoing. For evildoers will be cut off, But those who wait for the LORD, they will inherit the land. Yet a little while and the wicked man will be no more; And you will look carefully for his place and he will not be *there*. But the humble will inherit the land And will delight themselves in abundant prosperity. (Psalm 37: 3-11)

Wednesday --- Feast of Friends ---

Devotional Reading

Moses inaugurated Sukkot while Israel was still in the wilderness. Moses celebrated the festival in a tent and when it was over... well, we went back to his tent. As a matter of fact Moses never set foot in the Promise Land. This is no small observation. Moses was not at the finish line when he celebrated God's faithfulness. He celebrated God's faithfulness out of faith in God. We find ourselves in a similar situation. We celebrate God faithfulness to us even though we have not yet entered our eternal rest. It is this fact: that we are not home yet—that makes this celebration so poignant. So we embrace God's faithfulness by faith in Christ. The greatest element of Sukkot for the New Testament believer is faith.

We believe that we are sojourners in a land that is not our home. We believe that God will deliver us to a better place. We believe that we are aliens and strangers whose citizenship is not on earth. (1 Peter 2: 11) Our citizenship is in heaven. Consider Jesus words:

"In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also." (John 14:2-3)

Because we are citizens of heaven we are to view this life entirely different than those who believe this is their home.

Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear. (1 Peter 1:17-18)

This simple reality redefines all of our existence. We should not cling to riches—they cannot save us. We should not cling to what we can see—it is a fading reality. We must cling to God by faith. We must remember that we now dwell in a temporary dwelling. This body and this earth will soon be destroyed.

As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years,
Or if due to strength, eighty years,
Yet their pride is *but* labor and sorrow;
For soon it is gone and we fly away.
Who understands the power of Your anger
And Your fury, according to the fear that is due You?
So teach us to number our days,
That we may present to You a heart of wisdom.

(Psalm 90:10-12)

We must understand our citizenship if we hope to understand the faithfulness of God. Sukkot is a festival of anticipation. We look back to the Israelite exodus and we look forward to our own exodus from this world and the sin that has been destroyed in Christ's flesh. This is the essence of our faith in Christ. Consider the example of the people who came before us.

Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old gained approval.

By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.

By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; AND HE WAS NOT FOUND BECAUSE GOD TOOK HIM UP; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God. And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

By faith Noah, being warned *by God* about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign *land*, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised. Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, *as many descendants AS THE STARS OF HEAVEN IN NUMBER, AND INNUMERABLE AS THE SAND WHICH IS BY THE SEASHORE.*

All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that *country* from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better *country*, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore

God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten *son*; *it was he* to whom it was said, "IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED." He considered that God is able to raise *people* even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.

By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come.

By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, *leaning* on the top of his staff.

By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones.

By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen. By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that he who destroyed the firstborn would not touch them.

By faith they passed through the Red Sea as though *they were passing* through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned.

By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.

By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace.

And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed *acts of righteousness*, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received *back* their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (*men* of whom the world was not

worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.

And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect. (Hebrews 11)

Look back (at these examples)

Look forward (at our heavenly home)

Look around and ask, "Is what you believe in causing you to live like these great men and women, or have you sold short the promises of God because you are looking only in the here and now?"

Feast of Friends

Tonight we celebrate that we are sojourning, as aliens we treasure the presence of others who are like us. Invite friends to eat a meal together. This is not a feast in food the feasting is the fellowship of fellow aliens. Don't prepare anything fancy the food is not important. Tonight we celebrate our dependency on each other and our expectancy in Christ.

At the meal

- o Before you eat read Hebrews 12: 1-3 aloud

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

- o After the meal read Psalm 118



Thursday --- Fast from Possessions ---

Devotional Reading

God's faithfulness is not rightly celebrated only in rejoicing. If we truly are recipients of such a great gift it should affect the very core of our being. It will make us generous people.

Generosity is what happens when faith meets faithfulness. Only by believing that God meets our needs do we find the freedom to give. Do not let your current prosperity cause you to think that you have earned what God has given you.

When you later have prosperity, be careful that you not say to yourself, It was my own strength and personal power that brought me all this. You must remember that it is God your Lord who gives you the power to become prosperous.

(Deuteronomy 8:17-18)

In order to celebrate God's faithfulness let us not merely offer words, but let us worship in deeds also. God's faithfulness is celebrated in generosity. Today we fast from our possessions, but more than just taking a day away from our toys. Consider all of your possessions and ask the Lord what His desire is for each. Thomas Aquinas wrote "Man should not consider his outward possessions as his own, but as common to all, so as to share them without hesitation when others are in need."

Many of us miss the blessing of giving because we don't actually believe that God will take care of us. We horde the goodness of God. Consider Jesus words:

"Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not *even* when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions."

And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man was very productive. And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years *to come*; take your ease, eat, drink *and* be merry." But God said to him, 'You fool! This *very* night your soul is required of you; and *now* who will own what you have prepared?'

So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

And He said to His disciples, "For this reason I say to you, do not worry about *your* life, *as to* what you will eat; nor for your body, *as to* what you will put on. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; they have no storeroom nor

barn, and *yet* God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds! And which of you by worrying can add a *single* hour to his life's span? If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why do you worry about other matters?

Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass in the field, which is *alive* today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more *will He clothe* you? You men of little faith! And do not seek what you will eat and what you will drink, and do not keep worrying. For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things. But seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you.

Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Luke 12:15-34)

Today we tell God that we love Him by clearly giving him our heart. Our fast today is to give away our possessions. Make a big gift to the church or go buy a new TV and give it to your neighbor. Do something fantastic to demonstrate to God, to yourself, and to the world that you are abundantly blessed by God and you believe in His faithful provision for you. Give away as much as you can today. Consider all of your possessions and ask the Lord to reveal who needs this.

At the Meal:

- o Everyone bring one or two things to can give away. Discuss your plans with those gathered and celebrate the abundance that God allows us to live in every day.
- o Pray for the poor, neglected, overlooked, and abused.
- o After the meal recite this traditional Jewish blessing:
*Baruch Atah Adonoi Eloheinu Melech ha'olam
Shehecheyanu, v'kiy'manu, v'higianu, lazman hazeh*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the World, Who has kept us alive and well so that we can celebrate this special time.



Friday --- The Feast of Sukkot ---

Devotional for the Feast of Sukkot

This feast is the celebratory culmination of the festival. This is a different type of worship than you may be accustomed. We usually use the word worship to describe our singing. But worship is more than singing. Tonight we will worship God by ascribing abundance and kindness to His name. Tonight we declare the goodness of God. We do this by preparing an awesome feast. As we eat our feast and celebrate the kind intention of His will, we celebrate how spoiled we are. In this feast we will use our words to ascribe God's faithfulness, but the main tool of our declaration will be our food. Purchase food that screams to the whole world that we are spoiled by the God whose generosity is immeasurable. God's goodness is celebrated even in food. We know that "every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow." (James 1:17) But don't get caught up in food. The goodness of God is so much more.

Tonight you will be sleeping in your own bed. You will be returning to what you call your home, but you will not be going home. In reality you are only moving from one temporary structure to another temporary structure. We are vapors on this globe. James writes "you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away." (James 4:14) We often forget the eternal and the profound affect that the here-and-now has upon us. Tonight we remember how easily we are entangled by sin and the desires of this world.

Imagine the story of a man who wanted to watch his favorite football game during Sukkot. This man brings his TV, surround sound and favorite chair outside into his Sukkah despite the drizzling rain. Soon the weather turns on him and it pours rain. The man does not want to miss the end of the game so he sits in the rain with his new flat panel TV as the rain waters rise until they reach the electric cord and in an instant he loses his TV, his sound system and possibly his life. What a fool that man is. Who would compromise something so important for something so temporary? Consider this and consider the words of Jim Elliot (missionary martyred for the sake of the gospel) "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

We are that man when we cling to this world and her possessions instead of clinging to the cross. Mark records Jesus words saying,

“For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? For what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”

(Mark 8 35)

Let tonight's celebration spill over the rest of the year. Let it restore a right thinking about your mortality, this world and our fleeting passions. Celebrate God's abundance no matter what your situation brings to you. Soon your life will be over and when your life is required of you and you sit at the footsteps of your eternal home enjoying a feast incomparable to anything you've eaten before in that moment you will treasure all that you have given to the Lord. Do not let the temporary dictate your life. Consider these things as we celebrate the faithfulness of God.

Before the meal:

oRead 1 Chronicles 29: 10-19 (this is the blessing of David on his son Solomon concerning the building of the temple of God. Remember that temple and the temple (the church) of today.

So David blessed the LORD in the sight of all the assembly; and David said,
"Blessed are You, O LORD God of Israel our father,
forever and ever.

Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth;
Yours is the dominion, O LORD, and You exalt Yourself as head over all.

Both riches and honor *come* from You, and You rule over all, and in Your hand is power and might; and it lies in Your hand to make great and to strengthen everyone.

Now therefore, our God, we thank You, and praise Your glorious name.

But who am I and who are my people that we should be able to offer as generously as this? For all things come from You, and from Your hand we have given You.

For we are sojourners before You, and tenants, as all our fathers were; our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no hope.

O LORD our God, all this abundance that we have provided to build You a house for Your holy name, it is from Your hand, and all is Yours.

Since I know, O my God, that You try the heart and delight in uprightness, I, in the integrity of my heart, have willingly offered all these *things*; so now with joy I have seen Your people, who are present here, make *their* offerings willingly to You.

O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, our fathers, preserve this forever in the intentions of the heart of Your people, and direct their heart to You; and give to my son Solomon a perfect heart to keep Your commandments, Your testimonies and Your statutes, and to do *them* all, and to build the temple, for which I have made provision."

- o Spend time meditating on this passage together and before you eat, each person at the feast must repeat a phrase or verse of this passage aloud.
- o Eat the meal together
- o After the meal the host will lead us in reciting Psalm 117
Praise the LORD, all nations; Laud Him, all peoples!
For His lovingkindness is great toward us,
And the truth of the LORD is everlasting.
Praise the LORD!

