

Celebrate Our Savior

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Pastor Matthew Ude

Romans 5:8-11 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.

We celebrate our Savior the free gift from God.

There is a story of a man who went as a missionary to the far east. Shortly after his arrival he was given a very expensive gift from a wealthy local. Unaware of the local customs he accepted the gift. Later he found out that he was expected to return the favor and give a gift of equal value. Not having nearly enough money he borrowed it from the mission board.

The kids VBS journey this week began with such an exchange of gifts. They heard about the Magi from the east who traveled a long distance in order both to receive a gift and to give gifts.

The gift they received was the gift of God the Father who sent his son to be our redeemer and our savior. It was impossible for them to return to God any gift which comes close to equaling in value what they received, nevertheless they gave their treasures, gold, frankincense and myrrh, in celebration of what God had done for them. They understood that nothing they had could come close to the value of what they had received. Therefore, they gladly gave their greatest treasures counting them as paltry things not worth holding on to compared to the Child which God had given them.

Psalm 116 asks the very pertinent question:

Psalm 116:12 What shall I render to the LORD For all His benefits toward me?

Unlike that missionary in the far east neither the Magi nor we are expected to repay the Lord with equal gifts. Paul reminds us that Jesus is the "free gift," which God gave to all people demanding nothing in return.

Like the Magi we rejoice with exceedingly great joy to receive such a gift. We "celebrate the savior" who is the free gift from God.

We celebrate the Savior who heals all our diseases.

Even though we know that we ought to rejoice and celebrate our Savior each day, still we often want to add a little something more. It's great that my sins are forgiven but . . . But couldn't you please give me a better marriage Lord. But it would be easy to rejoice if I had just a little more money.

We have all kinds of needs and desires that we think are more pressing, more important, more essential than the spiritual gifts God is offering.

On Day two of our VBS program we met a man who had what he thought was a very essential and pressing need. So important did it seem to him and his friends that they removed the roof of the house so they could lower the man down through it to see Jesus.

When Jesus saw the man, he immediately addressed his greatest need. Jesus knew the man's true need was not to walk but the forgiveness of sins.

"Son, be of good cheer your sins are forgiven."

And then in order to prove that he had the power to forgive sins Jesus told the man to rise up and walk, and he did.

Jesus knows our every need and heals all our diseases. He knows our greatest need is not the healing of our bodies but the healing of our souls. He proved to us that our sins are

forgiven not only when the man rose and walked but when he also rose from the dead.

We celebrate the Savior because he heals all our sins.

We celebrate a Savior who provides all that we need.

In Africa it is not unusual for officials such as police and immigration officers to "expect something."

Dave Koenig once was going through immigration when the officer asked him, "do you have something for me?"

Dave handed over a small bible. At the sight of it the officers face fell. Seeing her look Dave told her to open the bible. Inside was a \$10 bill. When the officer saw it, she laughed.

We all know we ought to be more excited for God and his word than for money and the riches of this life. Yet we all know also that most of us would rather have the money.

On Wednesday we heard how Jesus found himself surrounded by a large crowd of very hungry people. This was not a problem for Jesus. With five loaves of bread and two fish Jesus fed over 5,000 people.

We celebrate Jesus because he is able to provide all that we need for our body and life. He gave his people manna in the wilderness, and he gave them bread and fish on the hilltop.

Once again Jesus made it clear that what is truly important and worth celebrating is not the bread of this world but the spiritual bread which he gave them that day.

After the feeding of the 5,000 Jesus told the people:

John 6:27 Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.

John 6:33 For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.

Eating food is usually a large part of any celebration. What would a fair be without cheese curds and ice cream and cotton candy? The kids had many good things to eat this week, rice Krispie bars, chocolate chip cookies, cupcakes, crackers, sausage, cheese, and many other things. More importantly they also received God's word which strengthens our faith and nourishes our souls.

We celebrate a savior who can and does provide all that we need for this life but also provides strength to our soul through his word.

We celebrate a savior who died and rose again.

The true worth of a gift is often revealed over time. After 20, 30, or 50 years of marriage that engagement and or wedding ring have far more value then they day you bought them.

On Thursday and Friday, we found out what God's gift was truly worth. We heard the crowds mock Jesus and Jesus remined on the cross. We heard how God forsook Jesus on the cross, so that he would not ever have to forsake us.

With the woman we saw the empty tomb, and heard the angel's word, "Do not look for Jesus among the dead. He is not here, for he is arisen as he said."

With his death he paid the price of our sins. With his resurrection he proved that he is the Son of God, that our sins are forgiven, and that we too will rise.

The Emmaus disciples were sad and discouraged because they thought that Jesus was dead. Then their eyes were opened, and they knew that he was risen and living. With great joy they celebrated their Savior, returning with haste to tell the other disciples.

Do not be sad and discouraged as those who believe that Jesus is dead. Rejoice and celebrate your savior for he lives. He provides all that you need for body and soul. He heals all your diseases even your sin. He is the free gift which God has given to us and through whom you are saved. Amen

