Rejoicing in God's Favor

It's Time to Finish #4 - Pastor Gary Combs - November 22, 2026 - Zechariah 8:18-23

INTRO: Did you know that the people of Israel were at the halfway point of rebuilding their temple when God gave Zechariah the prophecy we're studying today?

It was 518 BC. Two years earlier, the people had responded to the preaching of Haggai and Zechariah and resumed rebuilding the temple. And two years later, in 516 BC, they would finish the work.

They were two years into a four-year rebuilding project. They were at the halfway point! Sound familiar?

But here's what's interesting. Even though they were rebuilding the temple, they were still observing the annual fasts that commemorated its destruction nearly seventy years earlier.

In fact, in Zechariah chapter 7, a delegation had come to ask the priests and prophets whether they should continue fasting and mourning as they had done for so many years.

After all, the temple wasn't finished yet. But they were making progress. God was at work among them. So was it still a time for fasting and mourning? Or was it becoming a time for feasting and rejoicing?

Need: I wonder if we sometimes struggle with a similar question. We know God has been faithful in the past. We can see evidence that He's at work in the present. But we also know that the work isn't finished and there are still challenges ahead.

So how should we respond? Do we focus on what we've lost, what we lack, and what remains unfinished? Or can we already rejoice in what God has promised to do?

Here's what we can start to understand: We don't have to wait until the work is finished to rejoice in God's favor. We can rejoice right now because His promises are sure!

Trans: That's exactly what God wanted His people to understand through Zechariah. He was about to give them a glorious promise of a future filled with joy, blessing, and His abiding presence. And as we'll see, that promise ultimately points us to Jesus Christ.

BODY: In Zechariah chapter 8, the LORD promised His people a glorious future of favor that would extend beyond themselves to all the nations of the world through the coming Messiah. We can rejoice in God's promise of favor in Christ. Why can we rejoice in God's promise of favor in Christ? The text gives three reasons we can rejoice in God's promise of favor in Christ.

Read text: Zechariah 8:18-23 (ESV) 18 And the word of the Lord of hosts came to me, saying, 19 "Thus says the Lord of hosts: The fast of the fourth month and the fast of the fifth and the fast of the seventh and the fast of the tenth shall be to the house of Judah seasons of joy and gladness and cheerful feasts. Therefore love truth and peace. 20 "Thus says the Lord of hosts: Peoples shall yet come, even the inhabitants of many cities. 21 The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, 'Let us go at once to entreat the favor of the Lord and to seek the Lord of hosts; I myself am going.' 22 Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the Lord. 23 Thus says the Lord of hosts: In those days ten men from the nations of every tongue shall take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'"

WE CAN REJOICE IN GOD'S PROMISE OF FAVOR IN CHRIST JESUS:

1. Because He turns our sorrow into gladness.

EXP: (18-19) Circle the words "fast" and the "feasts." This is God's transforming favor and grace: He turns sorrow into joy. He turns our fasting into feasting! Favor in the OT is a close synonym of grace in the NT.

"**Word of the LORD**" (18) (דָּבָר, *dāḇār*) - speech, word. Zechariah announced a 3-part revelation given to him, introduced by **"Thus says"** (19, 20, 23). The 1st word is in response to a question in ch.7:

> Zechariah 7:3 (NKJV) "Should I weep in the fifth month and fast as I have done for so many years?"

"**LORD of hosts**" (18, 6x) (יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת, *Yahweh Tseva'ót*) - I AM, LORD of Heaven's Armies.

"**Fast**" (19, 4x) (צוֹם, *ṣôm*) - fast, fasting. "**4th, 5th, 7th, 10th months**" (19) - "When Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed, it became traditional for the Jewish people to fast four times during the year. There was only one fast God commanded His people to observe, the fast on *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement (Lev 23:16-32). No other fast was mandated or commanded by the Lord. But when Jerusalem was destroyed, the people began to fast at four other times of the year" (Stephen Rummage, *Exalting Jesus in Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*, 140).



- **Fourth month** (*Tammuz*, June–July) — Babylonian forces breached Jerusalem's walls.
- **Fifth month** (*Ab*, July–Aug) — The Babylonians burned Solomon's temple.
- **Seventh month** (*Tishri*, Sept–Oct) — Governor Gedaliah was assassinated.
- **Tenth month** (*Tebeth*, Dec–Jan) — Nebuchadnezzar began his siege of Jerusalem.

"**Shall be … seasons of joy and gladness**" (19) (שָׂשׂוֹן, *śāśôn*) - gladness, joy, exultation, rejoicing

"**Cheerful feasts**" (19) (מוֹעֵד, *mô ʿēḏ*) - appointed time; sacred season, set feast, appointed season

"Therefore love truth and peace" (19) (אָהַב, *ʾāhaḇ*) - Hebrew imperative, to love. The word "therefore" connects God's promised blessing to their responsibility to live faithfully before Him.

ARG: **David composed this psalm for a future temple dedication that God promised his son would build.**

Psalm 30:11 (ESV) You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness, that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever!

ILL: **After 19 years being portable, we moved into our current church home in May 2011.** We were ecstatic! Yet, a key moment took place years earlier in 2006. After grieving over the failure to move into a previous property that we had a lease/purchase contract on, that we spent thousands of dollars remodeling, furnishings bought for, we failed to close. Dozens of people left our church. It was hard. We had a church meeting and I asked if those present wanted to leave to? "No!" They said. "This is our church and you're our pastor." So we hit the restart button and started renting CCS in January 2007. From that day forward, we started learning to rejoice in what God had given us and trusting in His promises for our future.

APP: What sorrow are you carrying today? Perhaps it's the loss of someone you love, a broken relationship, a disappointment, or an uncertain future. God doesn't promise that believers will never experience sorrow. But He promises that sorrow will not have the final word for those who belong to Christ. Our joy doesn't depend on everything going according to our plans. It rests on what Jesus has already accomplished and what God has promised to complete.

2. Because He draws the nations to Himself

2nd reason we can rejoice in God's promise of favor in Christ Jesus.

EXP: (20-22) The first promise concerned the house of Judah. But now God's favor extends to "many cities," "many peoples," and "strong nations." This is saving grace: He draws people to Himself.

"**Peoples shall yet come**" (20) (בּוֹא, *bôʾ*) - to bring in, cause to come in, gather, cause to come, bring near

"**Let us go at once**" (21) (נֵלְכָה הָלוֹךְ, *nelchah haloch*) - these words have the same root which essentially means "let us go go" or "let us go a-going." The repetition implies urgency. God promises a day when people will actively encourage one another to seek Him. They're not being forced to come. They're eager to come! They are inviting their neighbors to join them. And what are they seeking? The favor of the LORD!

"**Entreat**" (21, 2x) (חָלָה, *ḥālâ*) - Lit., "to be or become weak." To humble oneself before the Lord in beseeching, praying or entreating Him.

"Favor" (21, 2x) (פָּנִים, pānîm) – Lit., "face." Fig., "to seek the face or favor of." The expression to entreat the face of the LORD means to seek His favorable attention, presence, and blessing.

"**Seek the Lord**" (21, 2x) (בָּקַשׁ, *bāqaš*) - to seek, require, desire, exact, request

"**Many peoples and strong nations shall come**" (22) (גּוֹי, *gôy*) - nation, people, usually non-Hebrew people. In fact, the word *Goyim* means non-Jews which some still use today.

ARG: **Jesus was speaking of His coming crucifixion and how He would draw "all people" to Himself.**

John 12:32 (ESV) And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.

ILL: **The invitation that multiplies.** Think about the way the gospel spreads. Someone hears the Good News, comes to faith in Christ, and then wants someone else to know Him too. A friend invites a friend. A parent leads a child. A neighbor reaches a neighbor. That's precisely the picture in Zechariah. One calls to another, "Let's go seek the LORD!" Notice the personal testimony: "I myself am going." They're not merely telling others where to go. They're inviting others to come with them!

APP: This is why our IT'S TIME initiative includes a commitment to saturating Wilson and Rocky Mount with the gospel. We're not simply trying to fill buildings. We're praying that God will fill hearts with faith in Jesus Christ. We're not trying to make Eastgate famous. We want to make Jesus famous!

And we're called to participate in His mission. Who is God putting on your heart to invite? Who needs to hear your testimony? Who needs someone to say, "Come with me. Let me introduce you to Jesus"?

Church, God's favor was never intended to stop with us. We are blessed in Christ to be a blessing to others!

3. Because He abides with us to reach the nations. 3rd reason we can rejoice in God's promise of favor in Christ.

EXP: (23) Look at that final phrase: "'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'" This is abiding grace: He is with us. This is the heart of the promise. The nations are drawn not merely to Israel's restored temple, nor to her prosperity, but to the presence of God among His people.

"**In those days**" (23) (בַּיָּמִים הָהֵמָּה, *bayyāmîm hāhēmmāh*) - The expression is a common prophetic time reference. (see Jer 3, Joel 3, Ez 38) Three interpretive possibilities, Immediate > Ongoing > Ultimate:

- **Historical**: The nations would increasingly recognize God's presence among His people after the exile.
- **Messianic**: The promise finds fulfillment through Jesus, through whom the Gospel goes to all nations.
- **Eschatological**: The promise anticipates the ultimate gathering of the nations to worship God. "The 'day' to which Zechariah referred is the 'Day of the Lord,' the day in which God will bring his eschatological promises to fruition" (George Klein, *NAC: Zechariah*, 348).

"**Ten men**" (23) (עֲשָׂר, *ʿeśer*) - ten. "A Hebrew expression that implies "many, many men," would come to Jerusalem from the nations of every tongue, from every direction, and of every nationality" (Rummage, 141).

"**Nations of every tongue**" (23) (לָשׁוֹן, *lāšôn*) - tongues (of men), of languages.

"**Take hold of the robe**" (23) (חָזַק, *ḥāzaq*) - to seize, grasp firmly, or take hold of something.

"**Jew**" (23) (יְהוּדִי, *yᵉhûḏî*) - a Jehudite or descendant of Judah. Jerome (early Christian theologian known for translating the Bible into Latin) interprets the Jewish man as a reference to the Messiah. KJV: "shall take hold of the skirt of **him** that is a Jew." This gesture communicates…

- **Supplication**: An appeal for help or assistance.
- **Submission**: Recognizing the other person's authority or superior position.
- **Identification**: A desire to associate oneself with the person and share in what they represent.

"**We have heard**" (23) (שָׁמַע, *šāmaʿ*) - to hear, listen to. The news was being spread.

"**God is with you**" (23) (אֱלֹהִים עִמָּכֶם, *ĕlōhîm immachem*) - God is with you. Immanuel, God with us.

ARG: **Remember the word of the angel quoting Isaiah 7:14 to Joseph concerning the birth of Jesus?**

Matthew 1:23 (ESV) "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).

What's the promise of Christ's Great Commission? That He is with us always!

Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV) 18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

ILL: **The woman who touched the hem of Jesus' robe**. Mark 5:25-34 (ESV) 25 And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, 26 and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. 27 She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. 28 For she said, "If I touch even his garments, I will be made well." 29 And immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. 30 And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my garments?" 31 And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, 'Who touched me?'" 32 And he looked around to see who had done it. 33 But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth. 34 And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

APP: Like the woman who reached out to touch Jesus' garment, have you reached out to Him in faith? She had heard about Jesus, but hearing wasn't enough. She acted on what she believed. And when she reached out to Him, she experienced His healing power and heard Him say, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."

Have you personally placed your faith in Jesus Christ? Have you experienced His saving grace and received the promise of His abiding presence?

And for those of us who belong to Christ, here's the challenge: Are we living in such a way that others can see that God is with us?

Church, as we look toward the future of Eastgate, our greatest need isn't a bigger building, a larger budget, or even more people. Our greatest need is the presence and power of Jesus Christ!

CONCLUSION: Two years into rebuilding the temple, the people of Israel were still observing fasts that remembered their painful past. They were only halfway through the work, and they wondered whether it was time to stop mourning.

But God gave them something far greater than an answer about fasting. He gave them a promise of His favor!

He promised to (1) turn their sorrow into gladness, (2) to draw the nations to Himself, and (3) to make His presence known among His people.

Church, we're at the midpoint of our IT'S TIME journey. The work isn't finished. There are still challenges ahead. But today, we have every reason to rejoice!

For 35 years, God has been faithful to us. And the same God who brought us this far has promised never to leave us or forsake us.

So let's be strong! Let's do the work! Let's be fearless! And let's finish the work God has called us to do!

But remember, our greatest reason to celebrate isn't what we've committed to God. It's what God has committed to us in Jesus Christ!

Have you received His gift of eternal life? Have you turned from your sin and placed your faith in Jesus Christ? Today, you can experience the greatest favor God has ever offered: forgiveness of sin, peace with God, and the promise of His presence forever.

And for those of us who have trusted Christ, let's rejoice in His favor and recommit ourselves to His mission.

We don't have to wait until the work is finished to rejoice in God's favor. We can rejoice right now because His promises are sure!

Let's pray.