



water from rock

## Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – November 24, 2020

The Lord be with you.

I am really excited that it's Thanksgiving this week, and our kids and grandkids are gonna be coming in, and then it's gonna be advent and Christmas, and it all can come any too soon for me. 2020 has been such a crazy year, and it's like one train wreck after another, and so it's gonna be really good to have some days to celebrate. And in all of this, I'm reminded of a story told by Leo Busgalia, one of the most popular speakers on PBS stations a few years ago, as he tells of the day that his father comes home and announces his business partner has imbezzled money and he's left the Busgalia family, broke. But that evening, Mama, as a Leo likes to call her, Mama, goes out and sells her most expensive piece of jewelry and she uses the money to buy the ingredients for a big Italian feast. And when Mama's family scolds her for her foolish extravagance, Mama says, the time for joy is now when we really need it, N=not next week. Busgalis says that Mama's big feast that night just lifted their spirits and helped carry them through some difficult days ahead.

Well, let me say that I'm with Mama, we really do need a feast. And did you know that God is all in for his people feasting and celebrating? In fact, God commands, God did not suggest God commands that Israel throw 7 feasts a year, that's four feasts in the Spring, three feasts in the fall as Israel's worship centered on Feast. A family vacation to the big city of Jerusalem, where some of those feasts lasted as long as eight days. But in case you are wondering how a family manages to pay for all of this, well, they paid for it with a tithe, with a 10% offering that was holy to God. By the way, we ministers don't usually talk about this tithe when we talk about stewardship, but God commands three tithes... Let me list them for you. First, there's a tithing of 10% to go to the Levites, that's in Leviticus 18:26. Second, there was a tithe of 10% to go to the poor, the widows and orphans, that's in Deuteronomy 14:28 and 29, and then and there was this tithe of 10% to be set aside for families to go to Jerusalem for the feast that's in Deuteronomy 14:22, and following that I wanna read to you now. Where the Lord commands "set apart a tithe of all the yield of your seed that is brought in yearly from the field in the presence of the Lord your God, in the place that he will choose as a dwelling for his name, you shall eat the tithe of your grain, your wine and your oil, as well as the firstlings of your herd and flock. So that you may learn to fear the Lord your God always."

Notice that God says that it is by this feasting and celebration that they will learn to reverence God always, but let's suppose that a family lives the lives way up north and Galilee too far away from Jerusalem to carry 10% of their harvest there. And so God provides for that in the next verses, in verses 25 and following, he says, You may then turn your 10% tied into money with the money



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secure in hand, go into the place that the Lord your God will choose. Spend the money for whatever you wish... Let me read that again. Spend the money for whatever you wish, oxen, sheep, wine, strong drink, or whatever you desire, and you shall eat there in the presence of the Lord your God, you and your household rejoicing together. So this was to be regarded as a tithe set aside as holy to God as belonging to God to use for whatever you wish to have a good time, as in the presence of the Lord your God, you and your household rejoicing together.

Later on, this chapter, God commands that the feast that would be shared with the poor, the widows and orphans, just what many of you will be doing this Thanksgiving and throughout the holidays. As we open up doors and we celebrate with others, the goodness and greatness of God. We see David doing something like this in Second Samuel 6, when in a very religious act, David brings up the Ark of the Covenant, and David leads the people in singing and dancing, and a feast for everyone, it says that included a cake of bread, the portion of meat, cake of raisins, this is a typical Old Testament worship, as they would come together with others who love God, and they would sing and dance and tell stories about God's great acts, and they would eat together. This was the completion, this was the crowning point of worship. So I'm not surprised when the psalmist says, I was glad when they said to me, Let us go up to the house of the Lord.

And I can't help but wonder if we would have held on to more of our youth in the church, if they knew something of this joy and celebration of God and life. I think this could be the vaccine. I think this could be the vaccine that would protect us against the despair and nihilism that is infecting our culture. Solomon, the wise, has a good word for us in Ecclesiastes 5:18, as we head into Thanksgiving in Advent, Solomon says, this is what I have seen to be good, it is fitting to eat and drink and to find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toil under the sun, a few days of the life, God gives us for this is our blood. Busgalia's Mama could have been more roped, this is the time for joy when we really need it. I wish you a joyous celebration of God's goodness, and yes, I will be with you when Thanksgiving Day, with some thoughts about the very special day.

I am Tim Smith, a fellow traveler. Thanks for listening. Until next time.



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