



water from rock

## Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – November 21, 2023

The Lord be with you.

It's Thanksgiving week, one of my absolute favorite times of the year. This is a week that, that I really like to celebrate. I know that things are crazy in the world. But you know, we all need to take some time to celebrate, to celebrate God and the goodness of life. But even in the midst of trouble, it's important that you and I make the decision to celebrate.

There's a story that I want to tell you a story that was told by Leo Baala, one of the most popular speakers on PBS stations a few years ago as he tells of the day that his father comes home from work and he announces that his business partner has embezzled all their money. He's left the Baala family broke. But that evening, Mama, mama, as Leo likes to call her, that mama goes out and she, she sells her most expensive piece of jewelry and she uses the money to buy the ingredients for a big Italian feast. And when Mamma's family scolds her for such a foolish extravagance. Mamma says she says the time for joy is now the time for joy is now when we really need it, not next week. And Leah Ba Scalia said that Mama's big feast that night, well, they just lifted their spirits and helped carry them through some difficult days ahead.

Well, let me say that I'm, I'm all in with Mama. We really do need to celebrate. We, we really 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, but God commands that Israel throw seven feasts a year. That's four feasts in the springtime, three feasts in the fall as Israel's worship.

Well, it's centered on feast now, a family vacation to the big city of Jerusalem where, where, where some of those feasts said that they lasted as long as eight days. But in case you're wondering how a family would, would manage 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, I don't know how often we ministers talk about this tithe when we talk about stewardship, but, but God commanded three tithes. Let me list it for you. First, there's a tithe of 10% to go to the Levites and the worship in the temple. That's in Leviticus, 18 verse 26. 2nd, there was a tithe of 10% that was to go to the poor, the widows and orphans that's in Deuteronomy, 14 verses 28 and 29. And then there was this tithe, this tithe of 10% that was to be set aside for families to go to Jerusalem for the feast. That's in Deuteronomy 14 verse 22.

And, and that's what I want to read to you right now. So where the Lord commands quote, 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. And the place that He will choose as a dwelling for his name. You shall eat the tithe of your grain, your



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wine and your oil, as well as the flings of your herd and flock so that you may learn to reverence the Lord, your God always end of quote.

Notice that God says that it is by feasting and celebrating that they will learn to reverence the Lord, their God always OK. But let's, let's just suppose that a family lives way up north in Galilee, too far away from Jerusalem to carry 10% of their harvests there. Oh God provides for that as in the next verses, verses 25 and following God says, quote, you may then turn your tithe your 10% into money and with the money secure in hand, go to the place of 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 regarded by God as a tithe that was set apart as holy to the Lord 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 rejoice together. And later on in the same chapter, God commands that the feast was to be shared with the poor, the widows and the orphans. Just, just what many of you are going to be doing through thanksgiving and through the holidays as we open up our doors and we celebrate with others, the goodness of God, we see David doing something like this in second Samuel chapter six where when a very religious act, David brings up the ark of the covenant and David leads the people in singing and dancing and, and has a feast for everyone that says that it included a cake of bread, a portion of meat, a cake of raisins.

I mean, this is typical old Testament worship as they would come together with others who love God and they would sing and dance and they would tell stories about God's great acts and they would eat together. This was the completion. This was the crowning point of their worship.

You know, I'm, I'm not surprised. And when the psalmist says, I was glad when they said to me, let us go up to the house of the Lord. And why is King Solomon? I think he has a good word for us in Ecclesiastes five verse 18 as we head into Thanksgiving and then into advent. And Christmas Solomon says, this is what I have seen to be good. It is fitting to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun. The few days of the life God gives us for.

This is our lot, Mama, the Scalia. No, she couldn't have been more, right? This is the time for joy because as Nehemiah chapter eight verse 10 says, the joy of the Lord is your strength and I wish for you. I pray for you that you will find the joy of the Lord as your strength, a joyous celebration of God's goodness. I'll be with you again on Thanksgiving Day as I'll have some more thoughts to share about that very special day.

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