**Sermon Date:** December 12, 2021

**Series:** Nehemiah

**Scripture:**  Nehemiah 12

*27And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites in all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with gladness, with thanksgivings and with singing, with cymbals, harps, and lyres. 28And the sons of the singers gathered together from the district surrounding Jerusalem; for the singers had built for themselves villages around Jerusalem. 30And the priests and the Levites purified themselves, and they purified the people and the gates and the wall. 31Then I brought the leaders of Judah up onto the wall and appointed two great choirs that gave thanks. One went to the south on the wall to the Dung Gate.*

*And Ezra the scribe went before them. 37At the Fountain Gate they went up straight before them by the stairs of the city of David, at the ascent of the wall, above the house of David, to the Water Gate on the east. 38The other choir of those who gave thanks went to the north, and I followed them with half of the people, on the wall, above the Tower of the Ovens, to the Broad Wall, 39and above the Gate of Ephraim, and by the Gate of Yeshanah, and by the Fish Gate and the Tower of Hananel and the Tower of the Hundred, to the Sheep Gate; and they came to a halt at the Gate of the Guard. 40So both choirs of those who gave thanks stood in the house of God….*

*43And they offered great sacrifices that day and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and children also rejoiced. And the joy of Jerusalem was heard far away. (Nehemiah 12:27-28; 30-31; 37-40; 43)*

**Big Idea:**  There is no stronger joy than the joy of God in Christ.

**Summary:**

Randy recounts how—after the walls of Jerusalem and the city began to throb with life again—Nehemiah and the Israelites intentionally celebrated all God had accomplished in bringing the dead city to life again. He particularly describes the two great choirs of praise singers Nehemiah assembled in procession on top of the 9-ft thick city walls, singing out the praises of God—and how ALL the men, women, and children rejoiced greatly, so that the “joy of Jerusalem was heard far away” (Nehemiah 12:43). Randy describes worldly, fleshly “cotton candy joy”—that is, joy found in material goods or happy circumstances, which constitute quick hits and equally quick crashes. And he contrasts this worldly joy with the wide, high, long, and “supreme joy” found in a relationship with Jesus. In fact, Randy notes it is “sin” is seeking **supreme** happiness in anything other than Jesus. (Notice he said “supreme happiness”; of course, humans do and should find pleasure in God’s good gifts to us from simply provisions like good food, shelter, to enjoyable activities like our work or hobbies or, best of all, relationships like family. However, **none** of these can be the supreme source of our Joy; only Jesus is big enough to occupy that spot). This Joy in Jesus requires knowing who God is (so that we can know who we are), trusting God will do what he says he will do, and intentionally reflecting on all he has done. True JOY has a name, Jesus!

**Questions:**

1. It’s Christmas, and, from a worldly perspective, ironically, it’s very tempting to root our joy in something OTHER than Jesus. Where does the world tempt us to root our joy during this time of year?
2. Why is it a challenge sometimes to look to Jesus as the source of our supreme JOY?
3. Can you think of a time in your life where you learned (perhaps the hard way, as many of us do!) that even good things in life (good food, family, work, hobbies, etc.) CANNOT produce life-fulfilling joy?
4. Why does Randy call worldly joy “cotton-candy” joy and Christ-centered joy “high protein joy?” What’s he getting at?
5. Of course, God created good things for our pleasure. What are some good things God has created and given to you for which you are thankful?
6. However, nothing in creation was meant compose the SUPREME source of joy in our lives. What are some practical steps a person can take to keep Jesus as the supreme source of Joy in our lives? (For example, Randy said, “When trouble comes, you need a Psalm to sing! You need to speak the Word of God. You need to remember that God is God.” How can you personally and practically apply his advice?)