



**KING'S
CHURCH** (<http://kingschurchedinburgh.org/>)
EDINBURGH

6. Tents, olive branches, and living waters

Nehemiah 8:14-18

The rebuilding of Jerusalem was not primarily physical, despite the importance of the wall. Nehemiah was as committed to God being worshiped as He had commanded. Rediscovering the law of God led to the reinstatement of the Feast of Booths (Leviticus 23:39-43, Deuteronomy 16:13-15). This was a celebration of harvest and a remembrance of Israel's time in the desert after escaping Egypt and how God had miraculously provided for them throughout their travelling. They were to rejoice and worship together, making temporary tents to live in once again, give generously to any who were needy among them, and there was a lot of water poured out (probably in reference to Exodus 17:1-7). It's important that we remember and rejoice in God's goodness and faithfulness.

This is good in itself but in the gospels Jesus does something radical with this feast (John 7:1-3, 37-39). He declares that it's all about Him and the giving of the Holy Spirit! Jesus commands us to come to Him. He doesn't suggest a five-step plan for dealing with thirst but says that He is the solution. Coming to Him is defined by faith in Him and there's an amazing promise for those who do: rivers of flowing water will come from their innermost being. The only thing preventing this happening was that Jesus had not yet returned to His Father having died and risen again for us (John 7:39).

Like a lightning bolt He breaks into their feast and disrupts the whole thing: "It's good to remember those things but I'm here right now. I am that provision for you." No other teacher would do this! Anyone else would say "The solution to this problem is over

there / doing this or that,” but Jesus declares Himself to be the solution, whatever your problem.

This would be amazing enough but He doesn't leave it there. He promises that we will receive living water, the Spirit of God. Jesus always intended to leave His Spirit with His believers - this is the ultimate provision! Don't just remember when God was good, experience His goodness right now. When you're thirsty, empty, stale, lonely, (or fine!) God wants to give you His all-sufficient Spirit.

Questions:

- Does celebrating God's goodness and faithfulness come naturally to you?
- What patterns can we put into our lives to help us keep celebrating and love thankfully?
- Why is it insufficient for Christians only to remember God's past goodness? Matthew encouraged us not just to be thankful but to acknowledge your present need, your thirst.
- The invitation is to live in a present experience of God – what has this looked like for you? What would you like the Holy Spirit to do in you?
- Often people think they don't deserve the Holy Spirit, but what qualifications/preconditions do Jesus and John give to receiving Him in John 7:37-39?
- How can you as a group together welcome the Spirit?



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