

In the name of all that is holy, Good Morning,

SCRIPTURE:

Nehemiah 8:10 (MSG) – Larger reading: Nehemiah 8:1-12

“He continued, ‘Go home and prepare a feast, holiday food and drink; and share it with those who don’t have anything: This day is holy to God. Don’t feel bad. The joy of God is your strength!’”

STORY:

The old man placed order for one hamburger, French fries and a drink.

He unwrapped the plain hamburger and carefully cut it in half, placing one half in front of his wife.

He then carefully counted out the French fries, dividing them into two piles and neatly placed one pile in front of his wife.

He took a sip of the drink, his wife took a sip and then set the cup down between them. As he began to eat his few bites of hamburger, the people around them were looking over and whispering.

Obviously they were thinking, 'That poor old couple - all they can afford is one meal for the two of them.'

As the man began to eat his fries a young man came to the table and politely offered to buy another meal for the old couple. The old man said, they were just fine - they were used to sharing everything.

People closer to the table noticed the little old lady hadn't eaten a bite. She sat there watching her husband eat and occasionally taking turns sipping the drink.

Again, the young man came over and begged them to let him buy another meal for them. This time the old woman said 'No, thank you, we are used to sharing everything.'

Finally, as the old man finished and was wiping his face neatly with the napkin, the young man again came over to the little old lady who had yet to eat a single bite of food and asked 'What is it you are waiting for?'

She answered ... 'THE TEETH.'

OBSERVATION:

It is hard to miss the anger, mistrust and general unhappiness within our society. It's everywhere you look. It's the mainstay of the news reports. Ever wonder why? Well, one conclusion is that there is not enough laughter. Laughter has almost gotten lost among the general population. We don't laugh enough. We take ourselves far too

seriously. Even the “funny papers” (comics) are not as funny as they use to be ... cute, yes ... funny? Not so much.

When this is combined with the decline in average attendance at our centers of worship the reason becomes clear. We’ve lost the reality that, “The joy of the Lord is my strength.” (Nehemiah 8:10). When our hearts rely on the Lord then joy fills our spirit and laughter erupts from our being. Laughter returns because we discover that when the Lord is with us nothing can destroy us. We discover that with God all things are possible. We are victorious not defeated. We embrace the morning as the dawning of a new day. We are embraced by the love of the eternal, the hope of tomorrow, the joy of internal peace and the grace that things will get better. Laughter returns. We can even love the unlovable and undeserving. Laughter dispels the darkness, the gloom, the sadness and the hopelessness of a world gone mad.

Enjoy being loved. Stand there and feel the hug of God ... and allow your soul to sing and your voice to lift in laughter.

QUOTE:

“Joy is the byproduct of obedience.” - Traditional

PRAYER:

We get so wrapped up in ourselves that we lose sight of your presence which surrounds us. We become tone deaf to your voice. We are dragged down by the sadness and bitterness that hems us in on every front. Assist us in rediscovering your joy and the laughter that fills light at its best. In the name of the Lord of Laughter, Jesus Christ himself. Amen

And the faith journey continues, Pastor Jim
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***Worship this Sunday at 10:30 in the sanctuary
OR via FaceBook at Manatee United Methodist Church
OR via YouTube where NO Facebook account is needed:***

<https://youtu.be/TJv7W2St3gg>

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