



## GOD'S KINGDOM BANQUET DEVOTIONAL *"Let's Celebrate Today"*

### SCRIPTURE

"This is the very day God acted— let's celebrate and be festive!" – Psalms 118:24 (MSG)

### INTRODUCTION

We are ready for a celebration! Because of the salvation we experience through Jesus Christ, today we can say, "This is the very day God acted— let's celebrate and be festive!" (Psalm 118:24 MSG)

If you have been with us for the past four weeks, you will have heard us speak about God's Kingdom Banquet and how we can participate in this great event. We have considered, "The Joy of Sharing the Good News," "The Promise to Support Fellow Believers," "The Preparations for Many to Come into the Kingdom" and finally, "The Kingdom Celebration." As we anticipate all that we will enjoy when we attend "God's Kingdom Banquet" in the future, the blessing we have from participating in God's preparation for the Banquet helps us to celebrate today.

As the Scripture says, "Let's celebrate and be festive" today!

In what ways have you participated with God today?

### "I ACCEPTED AN INVITATION."

Perhaps you accepted an invitation.

Are you a visitor, meeting people here for the first time? I trust that will be a positive experience and that in addition to the food and friendship, you will have sensed the presence of God's Spirit today. Our message is about the mission of Jesus Christ to the whole world, and that includes you. What about you? He offers a wonderful future that can start with a decision today to serve Jesus Christ as a forgiven person who wants to live for Him. That decision would give a reason for you to rejoice, and we would rejoice with you.

We want you to experience the Scripture that says, "This is the very day God acted— let's celebrate and be festive!" (Psalm 118:24 MSG)

### "I GAVE MONEY TO THE LORD'S WORK."

Did you participate with God today by giving money to World Services?

At the time of the building of the Temple in the Old Testament, something special is recorded in the Bible.

1 Chronicles 29:6-9 (MSG) says, "Ready and willing, the heads of families, leaders of the tribes of Israel, commanders and captains in the army, stewards of the king's affairs, stepped forward and gave willingly . . . And the people were full of a sense of celebration—all that giving! And all given willingly, freely!"

If you have made a special gift to World Services today, maybe you feel like those who gave to the building of the Temple in the Old Testament. Did you give willingly and freely to our World Services Ingathering? Has it given you a sense of celebration?

## **“I SENSED GOD’S DESIRE TO REACH THE WORLD WITH THE GOSPEL.”**

Did you participate with God today by listening to his Spirit? Has anyone sensed a challenge to reach out to the world today? How will you respond?

Just one example of those who accept such a challenge is the “Hands On” mission teams that are sent out each summer. It is said that team members will have the opportunity to express their love, commitment and passion for Jesus Christ while partnering with ministries in different cultures. The mission of the teams will be: evangelism, humanitarian aid and personal discipleship. Where will they go? Teams are headed to Brazil, Haiti, Puerto Rico, US Virgin Islands and locations here within the United States.

Have you sensed some kind of calling to serve today? Is the Holy Spirit guiding you to special service? Have you embraced “others” here or overseas by your giving and your prayer support?

## **“I PARTICIPATED WITH GOD TODAY AS I SHARED HIS LOVE AND MERCY WITH MY CHURCH FAMILY.”**

Did you participate by sharing love and mercy? There was a day in the life of Israel, during the time of Nehemiah and Ezra, when Jerusalem was secure, the walls and gates had been rebuilt, and the people were living in harmony. We read about it in Nehemiah 8. The people asked to have the word of Moses shared with them. I hope as we meet at The Salvation Army, our gatherings can provide just this kind of a safe place for us, a haven in this stormy world. I hope you will desire to have the word of God shared with you!

The people of Israel gathered willingly. It was said that all those who could understand came willingly to hear God’s word – men, women and even children. Could we describe our gathering in church today like this? Did people want to hear God’s word, from the youngest to the eldest?

Ezra and the priests read and explained the word. The people felt the conviction of sin that had been in their lives. They felt judged before the Lord and wept. They were so sincere that they didn’t want to do anything against their God. It was this honest attitude that put them in position to get right with the Lord. They did not want to wait for another day to consider what they should do. They wanted to be right with the Lord on that day. You see what was happening? Ezra and Nehemiah were helping the people come into a close and living fellowship with the Lord. Has this happened today in our corps/center?

Ezra guided the people to understand that with sorrow for sin, there is mercy. Mercy and grace lead to joy. You know, that is still true today. “Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered,” says Psalm 32:1. You don’t earn your way into God’s good standing. You acknowledge his gift of Jesus, of forgiveness and salvation. For the people of Israel, it became a day to remember. They were forgiven. And that’s what we are doing today, having a day to remember.

Now that they desired to serve God above all else, Ezra encouraged the people and said, “Don’t mourn or weep on such a day as this! For today is a sacred day before the Lord your God.” (Nehemiah 8:9 NLT)

And Nehemiah continued, “‘Go and celebrate with a feast of rich foods and sweet drinks, and share gifts of food with people who have nothing prepared. This is a sacred day before our Lord.’ So the people went away to eat and drink at a festive meal, to share gifts of food, and to celebrate with great joy because they had heard God’s words and understood them.” (Nehemiah 8: 10,12 NLT)

Have you understood God’s words today? Have you shared God’s love and mercy with this family of believers? If so, we can say, “This is the very day God acted– let’s celebrate and be festive!”

## **CONCLUSION**

I would say that God is at work in our lives and that it’s a great day to celebrate God’s Kingdom Banquet!

What about you?