

4 February 2018: Preached by Preacher Clement Chew

**Topic: A Study of Ezra: A Joyful People**

Scripture text: Ezra 6:16-22

1. The Bible tells us to rejoice evermore (1 Thess 5:16) and we ought to be joyful regardless of our circumstances. The only way to experience true joy is by first placing our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. True joy does not mean an absence of trials and sorrows. Sorrow and joy can be experienced at the same time (1 Pet 1:6) because the source of joy is in Jesus alone.

2. We can receive joy by resting in Jesus' abiding presence and promises. The Jews offered sacrifices to God in the house of God, the very place where God dwelt among His people (v. 16). They offered the sacrifices with joy because they acknowledged that God dwelt among them and they were in His presence. Likewise, we can also receive joy from the Lord Jesus Christ when we are sensitive to His presence and meditate upon His glory and goodness. The joy of the Lord is our strength.

3. We can receive joy by pursuing a life of holiness. We must come before God's presence with purity of hearts and hands because He is holy and just. If we regard iniquity in our hearts, He will not hear our prayers. The Jews offered a sin offering to seek God's forgiveness for their sins (v. 17) and they were made pure (v. 20-21). Likewise, when we live a consecrated life for Christ alone, we can experience God's presence and receive the joy of communion with Him.

4. We can receive joy by trusting in God's hand working in our lives. The Jews rejoiced because they remembered how their sovereign God turned the king's heart to deliver them from their tribulations (v. 22). Likewise, God has been ordering our steps and will continue to deal bountifully with us because He is a faithful God. Let us count our blessings and rejoice in the Lord always.