

Preparation: Take a moment to celebrate. Name a colleague's or child's achievement, a gift you have received, a surprising joy, a recent birthday, a good health report, etc.

Ecclesiastes 5:18-20: A Hearty Celebration

¹⁸ This is what I have seen to be good: it is fitting to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of the life God gives us; for this is our lot. ¹⁹ Likewise all to whom God gives wealth and possessions and whom he enables to enjoy them, and to accept their lot and find enjoyment in their toil—this is the gift of God. ²⁰ For they will scarcely brood over the days of their lives, because God keeps them occupied with the joy of their hearts.

This is the Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

The late Dallas Willard wrote in *The Spiritual Disciplines*, reflecting on this passage, "Celebration heartily done makes our depravations and sorrow seem small, and we find in it great strength to do the will of our God because his goodness becomes so real to us" (180).

God of celebration,
you welcome the poor, the depressed,
the weary, and stressed
into the well-being of your company and kingdom.
In your presence is feasting and dancing,
singing and storytelling.
But how hard it is to celebrate
when we are discouraged, worn-out, and bent out-of-shape.
We long for the joy, lightness, and freedom
that comes from the smile of a job well-done,
the high-five in accomplishing a shared task,
and the sideline cheers of our fellow colleagues.
Give us heart, therefore, to name what is good,
and voice what is praiseworthy
so that your concrete goodness is undeniable,
and may we find in celebration
the strength we need
to accomplish the work that you have set before.
In the name of Jesus and the power of the Spirit we pray.

Amen.