

## **PARTICIPATION MAKES DREAMS POSSIBLE**

*Ezra 2:2... This is the number of the men of the people of the sons of Israel: 36 The priests: The sons of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred and seventy-three. 40 The Levites: The sons of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the sons of Hodaviah seventy-four. 41 The singers: The sons of Asaph, a hundred and twenty-eight. 42 The sons of the gatekeepers: The sons of Shallum, the sons of Ater, the sons of Talmon, the sons of Akkub, the sons of Hatita, the sons of Shobai, a hundred and thirty-nine....58 All the temple-slaves, and the sons of Solomon's servants three hundred and ninety-two.*

If this is your first time in our church, you will find us in the middle of a series titled **FROM RUBBLE TO RADIANCE PRT 8**. This is a message of hope, reminding us of God's faithfulness to His people. Last week, the Lord reminded us that He sees you and that you are treasured.

- If you have been involved in a team sport, you will appreciate the importance of teamwork.
- Each player plays a certain position, and they are trusted to bring their best when it is game time.
- A team is as strong as its weakest player; a chain is as strong as its weakest link. When you have a team that works together, with everyone bringing their best to the table, you have a winning team.
- When you are part of a team, you need to understand that you have a responsibility to play your part.
- As part of this series, this morning I want to talk to you on a subject matter: **PARTICIPATION MAKES DREAMS POSSIBLE**.
- Participation is what dreams are made of. When you find a group of people who all get involved, you will find that very few things will be impossible for them. Think of the tower of Babel in Genesis 11 though the people were being rebellious, yet God said, nothing was going to be impossible for them.
- Where we read, we discover that the group of people who left Babylon knew that they were not going on a joy ride but that there was work to be done.
- They were on a mission to go and re-establish temple worship. We see Ezra showing a list of several classes of people and each of them had a specific duty in restoring the temple worship. Duties necessary to restore temple worship:
- On the list there were priests (Ezra 2:36-39) – without the priests, the second temple could not legally function as they were the only ones ordained to handle sacred items.
- The list had Levites (Ezra 2:40) – they assisted the priests in handling, transporting and guarding sacred temple articles. They were responsible for overseeing the construction and maintenance of the holy sites

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- The list had singers (Ezra 2:41) – singing was a key element of worship. They re-established covenantal worship, which was as important as the building itself. Singers ushered in the glory of God
- The list had porters or gatekeepers (Ezra 2:42) – they guarded the sanctity of the temple by preventing unclean people from entering the temple. They protected the temple treasures. They guarded the temple day and night to ensure order and safety.
- The list had Nethinim and servants (Ezra 2:43-58) – they were responsible for menial and yet crucial tasks (gathering wood, carrying water for sacrifices, and cleaning). Their labor freed the Levites to focus on liturgy and teaching.
- It was important for everyone to know their role and to be willing and available to fulfill that role to the best of their ability.
- The restoration of temple worship needed each one of them to take full ownership of their role.
- What does this mean for us today? True worship occurs when everyone knows and operates in their area of gifting.
- True and complete worship happens when the church functions the way it should.
- 6 Expressions of true worship:
  - God's people have a place to worship
  - God's people experience the presence of God during times of gathering. Jeremiah 29: 13
  - The word of God is taught, resulting in transformed lives.
  - Functional community (fellowship)
  - The entire family is ministered to (parents and children) - Joshua 24:15. Deuteronomy 31:12 Assemble the people—men, women and children, and the foreigners residing in your towns—so they can listen and learn to fear the Lord your God and follow carefully all the words of this law.
  - Felt needs are met
- Each of these aspects requires the active participation of someone among us. When God plants a church, He brings together people with diverse abilities to usher in true worship.
- A community of believers that lacks these expressions of true worship reflects individuals not taking up their roles.
- This can be because of not knowing what their role is or a case of being unwilling to play their part.
- Every believer was endowed with a special ability to facilitate true worship.

*1 Corinthians 12:7 (NLT) A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other. 8 To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another the same Spirit gives a*

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*message of special knowledge. 9 The same Spirit gives great faith to another, and to someone else the one Spirit gives the gift of healing. 10 He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit. Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages, while another is given the ability to interpret what is being said. 11 It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.*

- When you were born again, the Holy Spirit gave you a special ability; in other words, these abilities are not your decision but rather your discovery.
- These abilities will lead the church to have pastors, preachers, evangelists, conductors of prayer meetings, Sunday-school teachers, tract distributors, visitors of the sick and sorrowful, worship team members, and managers of its financial and other business arrangements.
- It is called upon every child of God to play their role and to play it well. Every time a team member does not play their role, the team limps along and loses games.
- As we have seen, among the people who went back, there were Priests, Levites, singers, ushers, and general workers.
- Each of them had to be satisfied with their role – there would be a problem if ushers decided they needed to also burn sacrifices like the Priests, and this is part of the problem we have.
- People are not faithful in their calling because they think other callings are more glorious than others – remember that it is the Spirit who decides what you have.

*1 Corinthians 12:14 For the body is not one member, but many. 15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 17 If all the body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If all hearing, where would be the smelling?*

- There is ground that we have lost as a church because someone did not pitch up. There is also a lot of ground we have gained because someone brought their “A” game, so to speak. *Colossians 3:23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.*
- Back to my analogy of a team sport – you have a position allocated to you, and it is important that you carry your weight.

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- Your participation makes the team win, and your participation helps the team to gain ground in the community.
- What has your contribution to this church been since you joined us? You are not here as a placeholder; you have a role to play.
- There are things that the church will never accomplish if you are not involved. The dream for true worship is possible, and it is in our hands - what are we going to do about it?