

Celebrate

Like There is a Tomorrow

The leader may wish to have a tiara (these are often found at Dollar stores in the children's party section or prepare a crown for cardboard bejewelled and brightly coloured). Also print off the appropriate copies of the last page for the opening and closing litany prayers. This Study maybe 30-60 minutes long.

We have seen quite a change over the past 30 years. Some of us do remember the formation of LWMLC in Edmonton in 1993. Some of us new to the organization or maybe just children at the time, don't know the excitement of that event. There was a thrilling anticipation of what God had instore for us but also worry about striking out on our own.

But God in His gracious will has seen us come this far, and with that it is time to celebrate – to party – and gather around His Word which has always been the cornerstone of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League - Canada.

Prayer: We use adapted excerpts of Psalm 4 for our opening Litany prayer. Please follow your handout.

Leader: Gracious Father

All: Answer us when we call, O God of our righteousness!

Leader: You have given us relief when we were in distress.

All: Be gracious to us and hear our prayer!

Leader: We know that the LORD has set apart the Godly for Himself;

All: the LORD hears when we call to Him.

Leader: May our world be moved

All: to offer right sacrifices and put trust in the LORD.

Leader: There are many who say,

All: "Who will show us some good?"

Leader: We plead,

All: lift up the light of Your face upon us, O LORD!

Leader: You have put more joy in our hearts

All: **than they who have when their grain and wine abound.**

Leader: And through this time,

All: **we do not despair for in peace we will lie down and sleep;**

Leader: for You alone, O LORD,

All: **make us dwell in safety.**

Leader: We know our joy is in You

All: **and may we celebrate as those who have hope. In Christ name
we pray. Amen.**

Let's celebrate! We have a number of great reasons to celebrate. We have a wonderful group of women who join in study of God's Word, we gather our mites to support grants, and we collect items for local charities. But even more importantly as redeemed children we celebrate because we are promised a great celebration when we are in the presence of the Lord, and that is why while here on earth we can "celebrate like there is a tomorrow".... an eternal tomorrow.

Let us delve into the scriptures to find a history of how God directed His people to party even in times of insecurity.

Read **Genesis 3:1-7**. Up until now life on earth was joyous and perfect.

Questions: *What changed that perfect joy? (Answer: **sin**).*

*Without knowing what is to come how does it seem at to this point that there is hope for a celebration? (Answer: **very bleak**).*

Read **Genesis 3:8-21**. There is no promise of a perfect world but there is a better promise.

Question: *What is the promise? (Answer: **A Saviour**).*

Adam and Eve, and the future generations, could celebrate because with this promise was a joyful tomorrow. So through the turmoil of the earthly life, they and all who would come after them could "celebrate like there is a tomorrow".... an eternal tomorrow.

Further in the scriptures Read **Deuteronomy 31:1-8**. This must have been a time of uncertainty for the Israelites. Moses was their normal. He was their constant. He shared the messages from the Almighty God and now after 40 years Moses was not going to be leading them into the Promised Land.

Questions: *What is Moses' message to calm the fears of the Israelites?* (Answer: **Do not fear – God is with you**).

How does Moses' message to the Israelites ring true for us right now? (Answer: **We have nothing to fear for God goes with us**.)

The Israelites story continues - Passover continued to be an important celebration to the Israelites. To find out how they celebrated their first Passover in the Promised Land we read **Joshua 5:10-12**.

Questions: *How had their celebration stayed the same?* (Answer: **They continued to celebrate the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month in the evening**.)

How did a change? (Answer: **They no longer ate manna but the produce of the land**). After many years of trudging through the wilderness, now they had a place to settle and could see a future of tomorrows in the land God has promised them.

Now we move into the New Testament.

For three years the disciples lived and learned at the side of the Master. They saw the miracles He preformed. They witnessed Christ's arrest, death, resurrection, and His final ascension to return to His Father in Heaven. To note their reaction to their final day with Jesus read **Luke 24:50-53**. Though one would think it was a time of sadness to watch their Friend and Teacher leave them behind,

Question: *How did the disciples react when Jesus was carried up into Heaven?* (Answer: **They worshiped and returned to Jerusalem with great joy and were continually in the temple blessing God**).

Amazingly, though they were separated from their Master, they did have the heart to celebrate and through the sharing of their worshiping and their expressions of great joy in the days to come many would come to faith.

Read **Matthew 28:18-20**

Questions: *Why could they celebrate even though they were physically separated from Jesus? (Answer: **He said He is with them to the end of the age**).*

Christ, through the Holy Spirit, would be with them to the end of the age and so they could “celebrate like there is a tomorrow” knowing He was with them always.

These are great examples from Scripture on how there was adversity and God revealed Himself and reminded His people they could “celebrate like there is a tomorrow” because He promised to make it so. And He did through His Son Jesus. And now through the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes we feel our time is different and we get distracted from this promise. The devil likes to say, “You have it so much more challenging than the Bible people – you have declining numbers in your churches and in LWMLC. You have family and friends who have gone away from the faith. You have wars and pandemics, and environmental issues. Your God is far away from you so don’t have a hope. Live for the here and now and don’t worry about tomorrow.”

How can we remove ourselves from this sin-filled funk and properly prepare ourselves to get into a Christ-centred mood so we can celebrate like there is a tomorrow? Just like getting ready for any proper celebration there is preparation. If we were invited to a celebration, we cannot put on our party clothes and get in the groove over our grimy under clothes. To be comfortable, we clean ourselves up before putting on our party attire. This is also true in preparation of a Christ-centred celebration mood. We need to strip down. How do we do that? The Holy Spirit leads us through repentance. We have sinned in many areas and on many levels. To get rid of the grimy apparel of our sin, we go to our Lord. We remember our baptism and how we were washed in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. With repentant hearts we seek the forgiving cleansing that only He can

offer for transgressions of self-centredness and for all our sins where we have done wrong.

Read **Psalm 51:1-10**. Let us have time right now to meditate as we reach out to God and petition Him with the words *create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me*. Psalm 51:10 (15 seconds for meditation)

Put on tiara.

Now we reflect with the words in Isaiah 61:10 *I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.*

Read **Habakkak 3:17-19**. It would seem we are in the comparable times of what Habakkak is speaking of where we have no control on the downfall of our world. But still we rejoice, we take joy, because we, Easter-celebration people, are secure in the knowledge that the heart to celebration like there is a tomorrow comes through acknowledging the Lord is our salvation and strength. We are ready to wear our celebration clothes *for (we are) sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.* (Roman 8:38-39)

Read **1 Peter 4:12-16**. As it says in verse 12 we should not be surprised at the trials. Because of sin, we Christians know that there is suffering in this world but through this suffering God shows His loving forgiveness and strength to overcome hardship. So here are the issues, how do we reflect this in a society that may blame God for the trouble we are in? How do we tell them of a loving God who desires all to be saved, when

they are clouded with the query of why a loving God allows bad things to happen to good people as we remember these are their words not ours?

We know there was only 1 good person, ever, and His name was Jesus of Nazareth. And to this truth we must remain faithful, and we are certain that He is walking with us. In this certainty we can “celebrate like there is a tomorrow” Our calling is to invite others to this celebration.

Again, Scripture is our “go to” guide. Read **Philippians 4:4-7**

Questions: *When should we rejoice? (Answer: **Always**)*

Who should we display this rejoicing to - even in challenging times?

*(Answer: **Everyone**) Why should we rejoice? (Answer: **Because the Lord is at hand**)*

*And how should we rejoice? (Answer: **With prayer, supplication, and thanksgiving**)*

So, we get into our celebration clothes because our celebration is a party of thanksgiving and a realization of God’s love through Christ. Our Christ-centred celebration is focused on joyous thanksgiving, because through our Baptism we have received the party invitation. And this is not exclusive, but we are called to invite all to the celebration. God wants all to know that they too can experience that celebration groove and the invitation is far more than just a “plus one”, but we are encouraged to invite all who are in our relationships. We need to spread the invitation to put on celebration attire - The Lord is at hand! When He returns social distancing will cease and there will be no isolation. There is a promised grand gathering of the saints. But until that day let us “celebrate like there is a tomorrow” for we are redeemed children of God. In closing we recite Psalm 150 responsively

Leader: Praise the Lord,

All: Praise God in His sanctuary,

Leader: Praise Him in His mighty heavens,

All: Praise Him for His mighty deeds,

Leader: Praise Him according to His excellent greatness,

All: Praise Him with trumpet sound,

Leader: Praise Him with lute and harp,

All: Praise Him with tambourine and dance,

Leader: Praise Him with strings, and pipe,

All: Praise Him with sounding cymbals,

Leader: Praise him with loud clashing cymbals

All: Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD. Amen.

Let us go into the world equipped to “celebrate like there is a tomorrow.”

Celebrate - Like There is a Tomorrow

Opening litany prayer

Leader: Gracious Father
All: Answer us when we call, O God of our righteousness!
Leader: You have given us relief when we were in distress.
All: Be gracious to us and hear our prayer!
Leader: We know that the LORD has set apart the Godly for Himself;
All: the LORD hears when we call to Him.
Leader: May our world be moved
All: to offer right sacrifices and put trust in the LORD.
Leader: There are many who say,
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All: lift up the light of Your face upon us, O LORD!
Leader: You have put more joy in our hearts
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Leader: And through this time,
All: we do not despair for in peace we will lie down and sleep;
Leader: for You alone, O LORD,
All: make us dwell in safety.
Leader: We know our joy is in You
All: and may we celebrate as those who have hope. In Christ name we pray. Amen.

Closing litany prayer

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All: Praise God in His sanctuary,
Leader: Praise Him in His mighty heavens,
All: Praise Him for His mighty deeds,
Leader: Praise Him according to His excellent greatness,
All: Praise Him with trumpet sound,
Leader: Praise Him with lute and harp,
All: Praise Him with tambourine and dance,
Leader: Praise Him with strings, and pipe,
All: Praise Him with sounding cymbals,
Leader: Praise him with loud clashing cymbals
All: Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD. Amen.

Prepared by the Christian Growth Committee in celebration of the 30th anniversary of LWMLC.