

10/24/21

**“It Takes Everyone to Build the Church”  
Pastor David Pranga, Brewster Baptist Church**

*Nehemiah 3:1-5*

Today, we continue our series called, “The Bible – A Story of Love, Belonging, Redemption, and Hope.” Each week, we go through a different book of the Bible by hearing about one story from that book. We are going to cover all 66 books of the Bible. Today, we are going to cover book of Nehemiah.

This week at BBC, we had our own building project. If you happened to come by the church this week, we had a team consisting of 4 women and 16 men from Cape Cod Improvements working on our roof. First, they tore off the shingles above the sanctuary, fellowship hall, office area and portico, and then the team installed new 50-year shingles in each of these areas. This team worked extremely hard on this project. We were told it was going to take two weeks to complete; our team finished in four and half days. I cannot say enough good things about Cape Cod Home Improvements and the job they did here.

If you were here last week, Pastor Doug discussed the book of Ezra. This week, I am sharing from the book of Nehemiah. These two books were at one time, just one large book. The focus with each of these books is similar: “rebuilding.”

During this time in history, the Persian King was in command. The Jewish people were in exile. The Jewish people were given the opportunity to return home to Jerusalem which allowed the Jewish people to rebuild their lives, both spiritually and physically.

Pastor Doug discussed Ezra and the rebuilding of the temple. Ezra’s focus was upon the spiritual condition of the people and getting their hearts right with God which leads us to the book of Nehemiah.

Nehemiah was an exceptional visionary leader, a planner, an organizer, influencer, and he brought people together towards a goal. God raised up Nehemiah to “rebuild the wall” and “gates” around Jerusalem to meet the “physical needs” of the people. The problem was that the city was in shambles in Jerusalem. The people were content and just lived with it.

Nehemiah served the King in the Persian Empire. Nehemiah was a cupbearer to the king, a very prominent position. He had access to the king. Nehemiah cared very much for his Jewish people. Nehemiah asked one of his associates how the Jewish people were doing: *“Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in **great trouble and disgrace**. The **wall** of Jerusalem is **broken down**, and its **gates** have been **burned with fire**.”* Nehemiah 1:3 (NIV)

We see there is a problem. The wall is broken down and the gates have been burned. Why is this so important to Nehemiah? Because the wall and gates provided protection and security.

How did Nehemiah respond after hearing the news? *“When I heard these things, I **sat down** and **wept**. For some **days I mourned and fasted and prayed** before the God of heaven.”* Nehemiah 1:4

This report really bothered Nehemiah. The people Nehemiah cared about were in trouble. Nehemiah did not know what to do, so he sat down and wept. What did Nehemiah do next? What should we do next when we are facing a difficult decision or circumstances? Nehemiah “fasted” and “prayed” to God about the situation. God raised up Nehemiah to lead the charge of rebuilding.

We see in Chapter 1 that Nehemiah had a vision of what to do next. He came up with a plan of how to help the Jewish people. It still needed to be executed. First, Nehemiah had the courage to ask the king of Persia for help. This was a courageous act. Second, we find out that the King of Persia granted Nehemiah three things: (1) time away to lead the process of rebuilding; (2) all the resources to rebuild the wall and gates; and (3) safe passageway for the materials to get to Jerusalem.

Nehemiah still had to convince the people of Jerusalem that they needed to rebuild the wall. It seemed like the Jewish people were very content in their living arrangement. The city was in shambles. No one quite seemed to care. Nehemiah met with the leaders and people.

*Then I said to them, “You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. **Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace.**” I also told them about the gracious hand of my God on me and what the king had said to me. They replied, **“Let us start rebuilding.”** So they began this good work. Nehemiah 2:17-18*

Nehemiah shared his plans with the Israelites, and they bought into his vision, agreeing that it was important to rebuild the wall. They no longer wanted to be a disgrace to other people. Their enemies made fun of Jerusalem, and now the Israelites were motivated to get going on the wall. Nehemiah had a plan to fix the walls and it involved everyone:

*Eliashi the high priest and his fellow priests went to work and rebuilt the Sheep Gate. They dedicated it and set its doors in place, building as far as the Tower of the Hundred, which they dedicated, and as far as the Tower of Hananel. The men of Jericho built the adjoining section, and Zakkur son of Imri built next to them.*

*The Fish Gate was rebuilt by the sons of Hassenaah. They laid its beams and put its doors and bolts and bars in place. Meremoth son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz, repaired the next section. Next to him Meshullam son of Berekiah, the son of Meshezabel, made repairs, and next to him Zadok son of Baana also made repairs. The next section was repaired by the men of Tekoa, but their nobles would not put their shoulders to the work under their supervisors. Nehemiah 3:1-5 (NIV)*

If we read the rest of the chapter, we see more and more difficult to pronounce names. What Nehemiah does share with us is that family after family came together to do their part in rebuilding the wall. Nehemiah was very calculated in mapping out 41 sections of the wall that needed to be repaired around Jerusalem, along with the ten gates. Each of these gates and sections were important to the people of Jerusalem.

## 10 Gates

1. The Sheep Gate (v. 1)
2. The Fish Gate (v. 3)
3. The Old Gate (v.6)
4. The Valley Gate (v. 13)
5. The Dung Gate (v. 14)
6. The Fountain Gate (v. 15)
7. The Water Gate (v. 26)
8. The Horse Gate (v. 28)
9. The East Gate (v. 29)
10. The Inspection Gate (v.31)

Nehemiah had the families work close to where they lived and worked. There was great motivation for the families to rebuild the walls and gates.

I know what some of you are wondering. Why is Chapter 3 so important in our study today? Why is a list of names that many of us cannot pronounce so important? But before I answer that question, I'd like to share with you a story.

I know many of you may remember the "Andy Griffith Show." There is a classic episode that I want to share with you. Andy Taylor, the sheriff of Mayberry, is out of town. His deputy, Barney Fife, is in charge. He had deputized Gomer, the local mechanic. The two deputies are walking down the street one evening when they notice that someone is robbing the town's bank. The two deputies hide behind a car, scared out of their wits, and they don't know what to do. Finally, Gomer looks at Barney and says excitedly, "Shazam! We need to call the police." Barney shoots back: "We are the police." I tell you that story because sometimes we can forget who we are. The Jewish people forgot who they were. They had a God who loved them and cared about them. They needed to go back to him.

I think we can forget who we are as well. We are part of something bigger than ourselves. I believe sometimes we must remind ourselves that we are the church. We are part of God's church. I really believe that God wants to do something through us as a church. It has to start with each of you and me. All of us feel defeated. We want to go back to the way things were in the past. We miss people, the activities we used to do as a church, the excitement level, the energy. We miss these things through brought us joy. I cannot speak for you, but for many of us, these past few months have been very difficult. COVOD-19 has changed everything: our world, our workplace, our schools, as well as how we shop, go out to eat, and worship.

Here is what we cannot lose sight of: in spite of challenges, we are still the church. Everyone gathering today in the sanctuary and everyone watching online: we are the still the church.

### **What we need to remember is: Our hope is in Jesus Christ.**

Now more than ever, our community needs the hope and love of Jesus Christ. Our community needs people who can show love and compassion. Our community needs relationships. I really believe our community needs to know that our church is still here. We are still operating, and we are still moving forward. God wants to use his church to reach more and more people for Him. When I look at this passage that we read in Nehemiah, there are few things that I take from this passage:

### 1) It takes everyone to move the church forward.

Nehemiah takes great pride in naming every individual and every family group that helped. He highlighted what was done and who was doing it. Nehemiah needed everyone on board to complete the project of rebuilding the walls and fixing the gates.

We see that Nehemiah used the priest, Levites, rulers, common people, gatekeeper, guards, farmers, perfume makers, goldsmiths, pharmacists, merchants, temple servants, and women. There were over 42 groups of people that were identified. It took everyone to rebuild the walls and gates around Jerusalem. Why did Nehemiah mention all those difficult names in this chapter? He wanted to give credit to everyone who worked hard. It took everyone coming together to complete the wall. We learned also in Chapter 3 that some families did double the work to make sure everything was completed. Also, did you notice that Nehemiah did not give himself credit? There was no mention of him working on the wall. He gives credit to everyone else.

### 2.) Nehemiah called attention to the families that did not work on the wall.

Can you image people reading your family's name as one that did not participate in rebuilding the wall? I'm not sure I'd want to be known for that. If we want our church to move forward, we need everyone to make a difference and be involved.

When I think of everyone, two people came to my mind right away. One of the youngest volunteers is only 12 years old. His name is Charlie Kautz. Charlie helps out in the Tech Booth a couple of times a month. He helps run the camera and lighting, a very important job, especially, if you are watching online since he's responsible for what you see on your screen. The second person is Elizabeth Covell. She is in her 90's. She comes in every week on Friday to stuff the bulletins. Does anybody here enjoy receiving the bulletin this morning? I know I do. That's another important way someone can serve. Here at Brewster Baptist Church, we have people serving from 12 years old, all the way up to their mid-90's. Let me repeat, "It takes everyone to move the church forward."

D.L. Moody, a pastor once said, ***"If everybody would sweep the area in front of their home, then the whole street would be clean. No one person can do everything, but every person can do something."***

If we're going to build God's Kingdom and move the church forward, then it takes everyone. It takes everyone in this room and watching at home to make a difference if we want to reach our community for Jesus.

### 3.) Every person has a different role to play in the church!

There are many great things about God. One of the great things, is that he has made everyone unique. Each of us have different skills, different abilities, and different passions. We are so very different from one another. Which is great!

In the same way, we all have a different role to play in the church. I like what Pat Lindquist read to us earlier.... *1 Peter 4:10-11: Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as*

*faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. <sup>11</sup> If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.*

God has given each person different spiritual gifts, different passions to grow the church. There are many ways that you can serve in the church. One of the classes that I enjoy teaching is the Spiritual Gift Class. I really enjoy helping people learn more about how God made them and how they can serve in the church. When you take the class, there is a questionnaire to help you identify your spiritual gifts and passions. From this test, you learn what you may or may not enjoy doing. What I tell people is that you must try things out to see what you like and what you don't like. You just have to be willing to try. The more you try new things, the better chance you will find out what you enjoy doing.

**God has made each of us with different spiritual gifts and passions. God wants us to use those gifts to serve others.**

Let me ask you a question? Do you know what your gifts and passions are? Are you serving in those areas? I believe God wants you to serve.

Sometimes it's easier to ask another question: do you know what you're not gifted in? I am not gifted in singing or leading worship. Being part of the worship team would not be a good fit for me. I am not gifted in working with my hands or fixing things that break down, so I shouldn't join our Building & Grounds Team. Sometimes when you eliminate what you are not good at, it frees you to look at things that you may be interested in.

Somebody may be thinking, that is me. I enjoy fixing things, painting, and doing landscaping. You would be a great candidate for our Building & Grounds Team here at church. Some of you may enjoy working with children or students. Then you will want to serve in our children or student ministries. Do you enjoy praying? We have a group that meets and prays for our church, people of our church, and the needs of our people, our Prayer Warriors. We have people who love hospitality. They enjoy making people feel connected over coffee and food. We have people who enjoy visiting people who are shut ins. We have people who enjoy helping with office work, and they volunteer when we need them. We have people in our church that have a gift of being generous, and they use their gifts to fund our ministries, our missionaries, and building. That is a very important gift too. We need people to be generous. Some of us have the gift of "help." You are willing to help in whatever needs to be done. There is no job too small that you are not willing to help with. I believe having the gifts of helps, is so important in the church. We need people who are willing to help in whatever needs to be done.

Once last D.L. Moddy quote: ***"A great many people have got a false idea about the church. They have got an idea that the church is a place to rest in, to get into a nicely cushioned pew, and to contribute to the charities, listen the minister, and do their share to keep the church out of bankruptcy, is all they want. The idea of work and serve – never enters their mind."***

**Remember point #3 – Every person has a different role to play in the church.**

This past September, I started my 25<sup>th</sup> year in ministry. I know what you are thinking. There is no way. I know that I look like I am 29. Sadly, I am very close to 50. What I realize in my 25 years of ministry is very simple:

- 1) God wants to use you!
- 2) God has given each person a different role to play in the church.
- 3) It takes everyone to move the church forward.

Let us pray.