



August Message Series: Rebuilding the Wall

Message #3 - The Crucial Things for Our Future

Pre-Sermon Video: Vision Defined

Getting the Nod

Welcome to the Father's House! Man, I agree with the Psalmist, "I was glad when they said to me, let us go to the house of the Lord!!" I like it because when we come into the Father's House... we can leave all our burdens at the door and just worship God. **In fact, what is it that keeps so many people from Church?**

Illustration of what keeps us from church: A young woman in China had been invited to a church and had gone just to please her friend. While she was there, she received Jesus Christ and began attending regularly. She did that because she found pure joy in her soul while she was at church. That was the one place in her life she could actually worship in the Lord's very presence. And since she loved being close to Jesus that much, she wanted her mother to know the same feeling. There were two problems, though. Her mother was an invalid and unable to walk, and they lived 18 miles from church. The daughter wanted to go to church so badly; she was willing to overcome these obstacles. She purchased a basket big enough to put on her back, and she carried her mother all the way to church. They would leave the night before and walk most of the night -- just to attend God's house of prayer and worship... **did you hear that? ...just to attend God's house of prayer and worship.** Then they would spend the entire rest of the day walking back home.

That story inspires me! And with what the coronavirus has done to our routines and lives... many of you watching by livestream would do any number of things to get to come back to church and once again sense the closeness of the Holy Spirit and to see your church family again!!!

Church is a big deal!!! We have made been the hope of the world for centuries!!! God's people have never been called to stick their heads in the sand. In fact, "Church" and "apathy" do not belong in the same sentence. Our Methodist ancestors understood this.

- They fought to end slavery.
- They championed temperance.
- They worked to improve prison conditions.
- They built clinics, schools and orphanages.
- They helped abolish child labor.

Illustration of John Wesley and His love for London: Even past the age of 80, he spent five consecutive days in the middle of winter walking the streets of London, raising money "to clothe those that needed it the most." After Wesley's funeral, at his request, the draperies used in the service were taken down, sewn into dresses, and distributed to needy women in London.

Transition: That's the kind of people that have made up the church for centuries!!! It's the same kind of people that lead the ministries around here!

- We're handing our boxes of food while walking from car to car praying with broken people!
- Providing clothes to those who have nothing.
- Meals for the hungry and companionship with the lonely.
- God's Word to the spiritually starving... and worship for those who need a purpose to live for.
- A family to belong to... and a small group to walk with.
- Man, the church is such a valuable source of hope and plays a powerful role for the future!!!

God's Take on Nehemiah's Story

Nehemiah knew the value of the temple and the value of Jerusalem! And with this being VISION SUNDAY, let's look past the chaos and darkness for a moment... and dream!

In the story of Nehemiah, we find five crucial things to remember when we talk about what God has for us and for our future... and here they are...

Five Crucial Things for Our Future:

1. Humbling Ourselves Before God.

(Nehemiah 1:1-11)

- **Nehemiah was humbled to tears with this calamity of the temple and the wall!!** With this being the Father's House, let's remember who is really in charge. It's not our church... it's His church! Whatever happens here is a reflection on Him and we should be humbled by that!
- NLT | Jas 4:6 **And he gives grace generously. As the Scriptures say, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."**
- NLT | Jas 4:10 **Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honor.**
- **If we want to improve our attendance, we must improve our dependence!!**

2. Reaching Out to Those Impacted.

(Nehemiah 1,2 and 3)

- Nehemiah reached out to God in prayer; reached out to the king for permission and resources; then Nehemiah reached out to those near Jerusalem to help him build this wall!
- If we are to take our church to the next level of impact and effectiveness... we need to do the same. Spend more time in prayer; get the leadership on the same page; and come to you about going beyond where we're at and get to where God wants us to be!!
- Our children are worth investing in and the families connected to them will connect to Christ!!
- NLT | Dt 6:6-8 **And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. 7 Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up. 8 Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders.**

3. Clearing the Rubble.

(Nehemiah 4:10)

- NLT | Ne 4:10 **Then the people of Judah began to complain, "The workers are getting tired, and there is so much rubble to be moved. We will never be able to build the wall by ourselves."**
- There were things in the way of being able to finish the work of the wall. They had to clear that rubble to keep from tripping over it! So, they had to stop the work to get this rubble issue taken care of.
- What's holding us back from reaching new levels? Being married to our traditions? Is it an obedience problem? Is it something that needs to be reconciled with God?
- Life is full of rubble! It happens in faith. It happens in marriage. It happens in making the big decisions. And it happens in going the next mile. **It's time to clear it!!**

4. Challenging the Opposition.

(Nehemiah 2, 4 and 6)

- Nehemiah and his worker families were ridiculed the whole period they labored! They were harassed and their characters were attacked. Their personhood was mocked! There was anger that arose and intimidation.

- NLT | Ne 4:7-8 **But when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs, Ammonites, and Ashdodites heard that the work was going ahead and that the gaps in the wall of Jerusalem were being repaired, they were furious. 8 They all made plans to come and fight against Jerusalem and throw us into confusion.**
- There will always be opposition to the process and fulfillment to vision. We just need to trust the Lord... think and pray reasonably... and then follow the lead of the Spirit.

5. **Finishing Strong.**

(Nehemiah 6:15-16)

- NLT | Ne 6:15-16 **So on October 2 the wall was finished—just fifty-two days after we had begun. 16 When our enemies and the surrounding nations heard about it, they were frightened and humiliated. They realized this work had been done with the help of our God.**
- May it be said of us, that when we have drawn our last breath and have finish our journey, “The great work we were able to accomplish was because of the help of the Lord.”
- I want to finish strong... and I know you do too!

Transition: Let me close with this...

Closing

Illustration: In 2 Tim 4:7 Paul said that death was like finishing the race. Like crossing the finish line. That all of life is really about one thing – finishing well. Accomplishing the dreams and goals that God has for your life.

I never ran cross country in high school... but it intrigues me. They go out to these golf courses and really rather desolate places and run a couple of miles sometimes across creeks and through wooded areas. If the course is not well marked and if you got far behind from the other runners, there was a chance of getting off the course and never really getting to the finish line.

Some people get distracted running the race of life. They start off following the goals and path that God has for them, but something leads them astray. Others seem to give up the race too soon. They throw in the towel when the race isn't over yet.

I want to encourage each of you to also not be a quitter in your faith. God has each of you here for a reason. You're in your job for a reason. You're in your school for a reason. You're in your family for a reason. God put you here and He's given you a race to run. So, run it well!!!

The same goes for churches. Churches start with momentum and energy and passion... and they grow with gusto. All they can think about is the lost people around them and they celebrate every time someone repents. They have a simplified purpose and goal. Reaching people for Jesus.

But then, after a while they start slowing down and joy is replaced with programs; following rules replaces seeking righteousness; and souls fall farther down the totem pole of religion.

God wants His people excited about the future!! Leaving a legacy of passion and purpose behind for those coming up soon. God give us all a vision of what can be... not just what is.