

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

SEPTEMBER 26TH, 2021 // BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

THE CITY (NEHEMIAH 11:1-36) CITIES ARE GOD'S IDEA

In our day when so many people want to move out of cities, we should remember that cities are a part of God's plan. God loves cities because that's where people are. Chapter 11 records God's work in repopulating Jerusalem, the holy city, a city He loves.

- **Do we show our love for our city and the people who live in it?**

GOD'S CALLING TO LIVE IN THE CITY

Now that the walls had been repaired, God called residents back to Jerusalem to live there. To ensure that there was an adequate and sustainable population in the city, some volunteered to live in the city, while lots were cast for 10% of the population to move from the outskirts of Jerusalem into the city proper.

- **God has a plan for city dwellers.**

WE ARE TO REFRESH AND RESTORE OUR CITIES

During the Babylonian exile in 586 B.C., God told those who were deported to Babylon to "Pursue the well-being of the city I have deported you to. Pray to the Lord on its behalf, for when it thrives, you will thrive (Jeremiah 29:7)." We are to be salt and light in the city.

- **Do we moan and complain about the city, or do we work for its good?**

WE ARE BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING

The work of God in us isn't meant to stop with us but to be shared with our neighbors. We live on a mission for the glory of God and for the good of our city, not for our personal comfort or convenience.

- While we live in troubled times in our cities, we also know **Jesus is preparing a city He's made that we'll enjoy for eternity!**

SUSTAINED (NEHEMIAH 12:1-26) THE WORK OF THE CHURCH

In ch. 12:1-26, Nehemiah lists all the priests and Levites who had served since the original group of exiled Jews came home to Jerusalem around 538 B.C. up until Nehemiah's time. These spiritual leaders helped God's people keep the faith in the midst of turbulent and uncertain times.

- **The church today has that same role.**

THE IMPORTANCE OF REMEMBERING

We can often look at these lists of names and wonder what purpose they play in the Bible:

- They remind us that God is faithful.
- They teach us that God is always working.
- We learn we stand on the shoulders of faithful God-followers who have preceded us.
- **What kind of legacy will we leave?**

DO WE GIVE OUR CITY HOPE?

Jerusalem was meant to be a holy city filled with God's presence in such a way that the people who worshiped Him would give hope to all the nations. God always leaves a faithful remnant who will not bow to the cultural gods that mock Jesus. We are called to be faithful right here and right now for His glory and for the good of this city.

CELEBRATE (NEHEMIAH 12:27-43) TIME TO CELEBRATE!

Nehemiah had come to Jerusalem with one goal in mind: build the wall around the city for the glory of God and for the good of the people, and by God's grace, the goal had been accomplished. Now he called the people to a time of celebration and reflection.

- If we never celebrate what God is doing through us, our work becomes drudgery.

WORSHIP INVOLVES HUMILITY

Vs. 30 says that the priests and Levites "purified themselves, they purified the people, the city gates, and the wall." These acts of purifying would have been a symbolic act of admitting that without God's touch, nothing we are or do can even hint at His perfections and glory.

- **Worship reminds us we need God.**

GOD GAVE US MUSIC TO HELP

Nehemiah gathers the Levites to lead the people in singing songs accompanied by musical accompaniment. The lyrics were most likely from the Psalms.

- Worship, which includes the music, the lyrics, and our hearts, is meant to focus our heart's affection and mind's attention on God for who He is and what He's done.

EVERYONE IS CALLED TO WORSHIP

Yes, the priests and Levites led the worship. But everyone was involved. Leaders, men, women, and children all joined in.

- **Worship isn't a spectator sport.** It's not up to the worship team to entertain us and keep us engaged, and it's not just for the weekend service. Romans 12:1 reminds us that every aspect of our lives is worship.

GOD IS THE FOCUS OF OUR WORSHIP

Two processional groups went up on the wall, one to the right and one to the left. They met at the Temple which was the symbolic location of God's presence. The completion of the wall was important; however, nothing was more important than God.

- God graciously gives us many gifts, **but no gift is greater than Himself!**

NOT DONE YET (NEHEMIAH 12:44-47) THE WORK NEVER ENDS UNTIL JESUS RETURNS.

No matter how many victories our Lord gives us and no matter how many reasons we have to worship and glorify Him, we must still go and make disciples who make disciples if we have breath in our lungs. We must take time to celebrate and reflect, but then we go back to work.

- **The joy of the Lord is our strength.**

EVERYONE BENEFITS WHEN WE WORK FOR GOD

While Nehemiah is making plans for the work of the Temple to go on, he does this knowing that however people worship will affect how they live. A strong, stable society is dependent upon how we live in and serve our society.

- **Even unbelievers benefit when the church does the work God has called us to do.**

DO I COMPLAIN OR CONTRIBUTE?

- Do I love my city in such a way that I roll up my sleeves and go to work in it?
- Do I get involved in the life of my city?
- **Am I more likely to complain about those who live in the city or get to know them so I can love them and influence them for Jesus?**
- Do I live on mission in my city?

HOW DO I VIEW WORSHIP?

- **Do I expect worship to entertain me or engage me?**
- **Do I come to worship expecting it to change others and not change me?**
- **Does worship humble me recognizing I need God more than anyone present?**
- Does my heart desire God's presence more because of my attitude in worship?

DO I LET GOD WORK THROUGH ME?

- Am I loving God, loving people, and sharing the gospel? Do I prioritize God and the gospel in my time, talents, and finances?
- **Do I welcome God's work in growing me to be more like Jesus (sanctification)?**
- **Do I desire that my city grows because it means more people to reach?**