

Sermon Discussion Guide- Week of Sept 29, 2019

Building For The Future: The Sword and the Trowel

Pastor Temple (8, 10:30 Selah), Pastor Hall (9:15, 10:30 Trad)

Getting Started- Life Updates, Prayer Requests & Opening Question (15 min)

- Anything to share about personal events since you last met or about applying last week's message on Building For The Future: What Youth Can Do?
- Are there any joys or concerns that you would like to share with the group for the closing prayer time or for group members to hold in prayer during the week? (please note them below for later)

Opener Question: When considering a project that you are not sure you can do are you inclined to : A. abandon the idea altogether, B. pray on it, C. seek the counsel of others, D. Go for it and just see what happens, or E. it depends?

How does knowing it is a mission of God project change your approach?

Review the Sermon (15 min)

Please read aloud the sermon scripture, Nehemiah 4:1-18. Know that it is ok to skip some questions below in order to manage the time for discussions in each section.

When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews,² and in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria, he said, "What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble—burned as they are?"³ Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, "What they are building—even a fox climbing up on it would break down their wall of stones!"⁴ Hear us, our God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads. Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity.⁵ Do not cover up their guilt or blot out their sins from your sight, for they have thrown insults in the face of the builders.⁶ So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart.⁷ But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the people of Ashdod heard that the repairs to Jerusalem's walls had gone ahead and that the gaps were being closed, they were very angry.⁸ They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it.⁹ But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.¹⁰ Meanwhile, the people in Judah said,

"The strength of the laborers is giving out, and there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall."¹¹ Also our enemies said, "Before they know it or see us, we will be right there among them and will kill them and put an end to the work."¹² Then the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times over, "Wherever you turn, they will attack us."¹³ Therefore I stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places, posting them by families, with their swords, spears and bows.¹⁴ After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes."¹⁵ When our enemies heard that we were aware of their plot and that God had frustrated it, we all returned to the wall, each to our own work.¹⁶ From that day on, half of my men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and armor. The officers posted themselves behind all the people of Judah¹⁷ who were building the wall. Those who carried materials did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other,¹⁸ and each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked. But the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me.

- If you had to give a one-minute summary of the sermon message this week, what would you say?
- In Nehemiah 1:1-4, Nehemiah heard a negative report about the state of Judah and Jerusalem and the Jewish survivors there that it made him weep (broken down walls, burned city gates, people in trouble). Nehemiah sought the Lord in prayer, and gained permission from his boss the king to do something about it. He visited Jerusalem to inspect the walls and set the families in Jerusalem to rebuilding the gates (chapters 2-3). What would have been the easiest thing for Nehemiah to do? How does Nehemiah's example confront human tendencies toward apathy or laziness?
- Sanballat and Tobiah, governors of Samaria and Ammon, and other inhabitants of their former city (a mix of Jews and non-Jews) were hostile to them rebuilding the city walls. Why the hostility (4:1-3, 7-8)?
- How did Nehemiah and his friends respond to the teasing, taunting and resistance (verses 4-6)?
- In verses 8-12, a threat to them and their work is learned of and shared among the Jews about the opposition. Whether warranted or not, how does fear work to stop the work of God? Which is the greater force fear or taunting/embarrassment?
- How did they respond in verses 13-18?
- The difficulty of this mission culminates in its description in verse 17 where a nearly impossible project is met with absurd working conditions. How is absurdity sometimes the best backdrop for the glory of God to be made known?
- How do you think the naysayers, detractors, and attackers felt after the wall was completed in 52 days?

Other Related Readings (10 min)

- Would a volunteer please read out loud 1 Corinthians 12:4-11.
- What is the common ground among those who have very different gifts and ability in the body of Christ (verses 4-5)?
- What is the cost of glorifying the gifts more than the giver of the gifts (verses 6-7)?
- What are some of the examples of different spiritual gifts that God gives to people (verses 8-10)?
- What determines what potential gifts each person has (verse 11)?
- What determines to what extent those gifts are developed?

Personalizing and Applying The Message (10 min)

- As you reflect upon the sermon and the additional readings above, what are points of encouragement or challenge for you personally?
- Do you think if you were alive in Jerusalem at the time of Nehemiah, that you would have joined him in rebuilding the wall with whatever skill or giftedness you had at the time?
- What kind of work do you believe you are well suited for according to how God has gifted you and blessed you?
- To what would you attribute the greatest enemy of your participating in the mission of God today?
- What is the tipping point for you in moving from awareness of a need to taking action about it?
- This week, how shall we best work toward, give to or defend the mission of God where God has placed us?

Witness & Closing Prayer (5-10 min)

- This week, how shall others around us know of our God because of what we are working on or how we respond to criticism?
- The group leader or another volunteer who took notes on the prayer requests shared earlier in the meeting, may now lead the group in closing prayer