**RRRR IX**

**Nehemiah God’s Leader Builds His House**

Our theme: Repent, Return, Restore, Rebuild.

The situation for Judah and for us:

We had rebelled.

We said to God that what he for us was not enough. We wanted more. We wanted to live our own lives.

We sinned.

We became enslaved to sin.

We ended up in a “far country.”

We were alone, abandoned. We were not God’s people. We were lost.

But God has a solution for Judah in the post-exilic books, Ezra, Haggai, Zechariah, Esther, Nehemiah and Malachi.

If we will repent and return to God. He will restore us to himself and rebuild our spiritual lives in his Kingdom.

Nehemiah fits that theme, especially the idea of restoring and rebuilding.

**Nehemiah: God Uses a Leader to Restore and Rebuild His Kingdom**

Nehemiah: God’s leader. Nehemiah and Joshua are the greatest leaders of God’s people in the Old Testament. (although David and Moses deserve mention)

Ezra: The greatest teacher.

Nehemiah: A great leader.

Q: What are the traits that God’s leader ought to have? This is a very practical book. Not a lot of theology or doctrine.

Of course, this fits the theme of repenting, returning, being restored, and rebuilding. This is exactly what Nehemiah did.

He repented (ch 1)

He returned (ch 2)

He restored and rebuilt (ch 3-6)

Let’s meet Nehemiah.

Nehemiah 1:1-3

The 20th year. The 20th year of Artaxerxes, which is 445 BC. 13 years after Ezra came with the remnant.

Nehemiah is in Susa, the capital of the Persian/Mede empire.

Tragedy. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire.

This is not new information!! What have the Jews been doing the past 70+ years since the temple was completed.

There is no growing church of true disciples in Merced that we know of. The work of saving students at MC and UCM is going poorly if at all.

Who cares about the kingdom of God like Nehemiah?

Do you have concern for the current state of the world and the church?

Will you, like Nehemiah, take action to restore and rebuild?

Nehemiah 1:4-11 (review from two weeks ago)

What is the first thing Nehemiah did? He mourned and prayed!!!! This is the first instinct of all great women and men of God.

Does the fact that so many in Merced county are lost bother you? What will you do?

v. 6 See the boldness! Listen, God! Look, God! v. 8 Remember!

v. 6 See the humility.

v. 6 We have sinned in what we have done.

v. 7 We have also sinned in what we have NOT done.

Most importantly: Nehemiah 1:6, 7 Notice: “We” (even though Nehemiah did none of those things)

Also note Neh 1:9 Nehemiah had been reading Deuteronomy 28-30 If we repent and return, then God will restore and rebuild.

Based on his conviction about sin, and his faith in God’s promises, Nehemiah acted!

Nehemiah, God’s great leader, wept, mourned, fasted and prayed.

Nehemiah 1:11

Nehemiah moves from repentance, humility, prayer and fasting to action!!!

Did Nehemiah have control? No, but God did and he was God’s servant!

Nehemiah was cupbearer to Artaxerxes. This was a big deal. The cupbearer was a close adviser—always by the side of the king.

Nehemiah 2:1-10 Cupbearer to Artaxerxes

As in Ezra, we see God’s providence. He moved Cyrus, He moved Darius, He moved Xerxes (Esther), He moved Artaxerxes for Ezra.

God is working right now to prepare the way for restoration and rebuilding.

v. 2 Having a sad face before the king could lead to execution!!!

v. 3 “Why should my face not look sad when the city where my ancestors are buried lies in ruins and its gates have been destroyed by fire?”

Like Esther, took a huge risk for God.

Maybe God put you where you are “For such a time as this.”

v. 4 What is it you want. Nehemiah says a quick prayer.

Sometimes we need to remember that the Holy Spirit lives in us.

Matthew 10:18-22 Jesus: You will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses… But do not worry about what you will say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for you will not be speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.”

v. 5 Let God use me to rebuild his city.

Note the boldness: Let me go for several years. Give me tons of wood and a bunch of other stuff.

Us to God. Remember the prayer two weeks ago. God, give us a place to meet.

What does God do? He gives us a great place for $50/mo. Remember, I said let’s have an abundance mentality. Amen God!!!!!!

Is God working here to restore and rebuild or what?

Artaxerxes says yes!

But… v. 10 It will not be a cake-walk.

2:10 A foreshadow of things to come. Sanballat and Tobiah are not happy. Do not expect the world to be excited when the church is being rebuilt!!!!

Nehemiah 2:11-18 Nehemiah examines the walls of the city. God’s leader comes up with a plan to rebuild God’s kingdom.

v. 17 You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and the gates have been burned with fire. Nehemiah explains what he has observed. He gets real about the depth of the problem.

v. 18 I also told them about the gracious hand of God on me and what the king had said to me. Nehemiah explains that this is God’s mission for them. He shares his faith with them, literally!!!

v. 18 Come, let us rise up and rebuild the wall!!!!! Nehemiah, the leader, calls the people to action.

All here: Let us rise up and build the wall in Merced!!!

God’s leader develops a vision and then calls the people to join him in doing the work.

Nehemiah 2:19-20 Sanballat and Tobiah. When we get busy building the kingdom, enemies will come out of nowhere. Satan does not sleep. He tries to intimidate us. There is no way you can do this. The university does not allow this… You cannot afford to pay full-time interns.

Neh 2:20 If God is for us, no one can be against us. Romans 8:31

Psalm 18:29 David. Another great leader. With your help I can advance against a troop. With my God I can scale a wall!

With my God, I can help to build a campus ministry of 30, 50, 80!

Ch 3:1-5… The builders get building.

When God’s leader creates a true, godly vision, the people will get behind him/her.

v. 1 The priests went to work…. In this chapter the priests and Levites are leading the work. These are the Bible talk leaders…

Perfume makers, merchants, district rulers, gold-workers. Rich, poor, white collar, blue collar, every gift is needed.

v. 20 Baruch zealously repaired another section. Are you zealously working on the wall?

Nehemiah 4:1-5. Again, when we get busy and zealous building God’s kingdom, opposition will arise. Count on it!!

4:2 Sanballat ridiculed them…

v. 3 Tobiah… even a fox climbing on it would break down the wall.

You cannot build a church here of 200, 400. No one has ever built a campus ministry of 100 in such a small town. Your plan to help foster youth is a joke.

v. 4 What does Nehemiah do? He prays.

Nehemiah 4:6-9 Halfway done.

Sanballat and Tobiah are now getting concerned. They form an alliance to oppose the building.

v. 9 They prayed.

Nehemiah 4:10-15 Real, valid causes for concern arise. Reasons to be discouraged or worried.

Let’s take a time out. Let’s stop building for a time. We have to take care of our problems. Illustration: The singles in San Diego. We don’t want to be in an evangelistic Bible Talk. We need to take care of ourselves first.

Thursday: It’s HOOOTTTTT. I have a toothache. I have a terrible backache.

Nehemiah:

No!!!! Perhaps we need to step back and slow down in order to deal with the problems, but I REFUSE to come down from working on the wall!!!!!

v. 13 “Therefore I stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places.

v. 14 Nehemiah: “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.

They did not back down (but they did not ignore the threat—they responded to it)

Nehemiah 4:16-20 Half worked and half held spears, shields, bows and armour.

v. 17 Those who carried materials did their work with one hand, and held a weapon in the other. (Our weapon is the Bible)

v. 20 Our God will fight for us. Do you believe this?????

Ch 5 (just tell the story) More problems.

Drought, famine, heavy taxes—from fellow Jews! Division.

Nehemiah takes out the time from his busy work rebuilding to confront the sin and to call the weak and uncommitted to repent.

Nehemiah confronted the selfish Jews (who were, by the way, violating Deuteronomy 23 by charging interest). Nehemiah demands social justice among God’s people.

Nehemiah 6:1-2 Sanballat and Tobiah try another tactic. Let’s have a conference. Let’s come to an agreement to compromise our religious conviction. Let’s go to Ono to come to a compromise.

Nehemiah said Oh no! to Ono.

Nehemiah 6:15 So the wall was completed on the 25th day of Elul, in 52 days!!!

Judges 5:2 When the princes of Israel take the lead, when the people willingly offer themselves—praise the Lord.

We need leaders like Nehemiah, and followers/members like those in Jerusalem.

Ch 7-13 The church has been planted, but the work of growing God’s kingdom has just started.

Ch 12 Nehemiah puts on a celebration. We need to have fun together and to celebrate our victories!!!

Neh 12:27-28 They celebrated joyfully. Choirs, musicians. Great fun!!!

This is October 1st for us, with our “inaugural service.” This will be a great celebration for us!

Nehemiah: God uses a leader to build his kingdom.

Nehemiah had deep convictions about rebuilding God’s kingdom.

Nehemiah prayed boldly to God.

Nehemiah took action. He developed a plan, he was real with the people about the situation, but he gave them a powerful vision

He assured them that God was with them.

He called them to rise up and build.

He called them to keep at the work despite all problems and opposition.

Nehemiah repented and returned

God used him to restore and rebuild Jerusalem.

All the people rejoiced.