

WELCOME 1st August 2021 – 10 Pentecost '21 B

Nehemiah 4:1-23

Welcome! It's great to be together. As has become our custom there are Group Study & Discussion resources for you to use *over the course of the week. As God leads you into the fullness of His word/work in your life he will then introduce you to someone who needs to hear the good news from you. Also... somewhere here today you may feel a nudge - tap - tug. Don't ignore it! That's probably the Holy Spirit prompting you some way. Let's talk about that after worship.*

As we move into this week...

Pushback...resistance...it's increasing. States are pushing back against the Federal Government & against each other. Councils & business are pushing back against measures that seem to be wrecking the economy & destroying jobs. More & more experts & folks at the coalface are pushing back against strategies that feel like they hurt more than they help...**Agree** or disagree...it's there...

We shouldn't be surprised. Perceived threats to the status quo...challenges to the usual way of doing business...when change is introduced...bold strategies implemented...when we see our way in dispute, or when you pursue a God-given call...you know pushback, resistance or opposition will not be far behind.

Halfway through rebuilding Jerusalem's wall, opposition came from ^{w/o} & challenges from ^{w/in}. But Nehemiah demonstrates a faith-filled way to **Repel** Opposition that comes when we begin to live God's vision into life-changing reality & lead people on the Road to Recovery.

Nehemiah shows us that while opposition is real & inevitable; God is in control & continues the work of his kingdom through us whatever the challenge. We also discover that we are not alone, but are surrounded by a mighty army of fellow labourers working under the cross that drives out every opponent including death & evil. Nehemiah is not just rebuilding a wall but restoring a people to their God-designed purpose & work in his world.

“But we prayed to our God & guarded the city day & night to protect ourselves.”

We'll experience & share that together. Let's pray...then we'll get stuck into it.

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

Lord Jesus you assured us that we would be attacked & hated in this world simply because we bear your name. You also assured us that you living in us by your Spirit are greater than every adversary the evil one can throw at us. You have already triumphed over the final enemy death & granted us life with you forever.

So today...now...in this moment release that same Spirit that raised you from the grave to raise us not to heaven, but into this city & into the lives of those we know who are not yet trusting you...to push back darkness with the light of your love & drive out the power of death with the word of your life given for all.

Speak again today & call us beyond the rubble of this season, past the complacency to which we accommodate ourselves, through the challenges of the enemy into the fullness of your will & work here...now.

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord...Amen.

Let's be encouraged by some music

FAITH CHAT:

1. When has fear, discouragement, or ridicule gotten the best of you & stopped you from doing what you know God wanted you to do?
2. Is there a particular Scripture you turn to, to defend against fear, discouragement, or ridicule?
3. Do you have someone you know will pray for you on the spot when you call for help?

10 Pentecost – '21 B – ROAD TO RECOVERY: REPEL THE OPPOSITION

Kyle Beshears, in his book “**Apathism**: How we share when they don't care” makes a telling observation about how hard it is to gain a hearing for sharing your faith w/ someone these days. In the 21st C it's tough to get someone to listen...harder in many ways than ever b/4. He says: “**We** don't **want** to care about God. We've developed a (hostility) toward spiritual contemplation because we don't **want** what inevitably follows; a fundamental change in who we are & how we live. To sacrifice autonomy is too high a price...”

His point is simple...At a fundamental place in our hearts/souls humans know we're misdirected/adrift/headed the wrong way...that our goals - devotions - strivings - hopes - claims about truth – pursuit of 'happiness' are all destined for collapse because they are all turned in upon ourselves – it's all about satisfying/gratifying/validating self & no matter how successful we are; there's always a lingering residual hunger... a gnawing **UN**fulfillment that won't go away...@ same time 21st C folks don't **want** anyone like God to touch that empty spot because we know if God gets close enough we're going to have to be different... Tony Campolo – spiritual crisis is almost always preceded by moral one...we know we're adrift but don't want to be brought back

Which is precisely where Nehemiah found Jerusalem...*walls broken down...gates burned w/ fire...great trouble & disgrace* & no one budged to make it different – no one shifted the 1st stone because if you **want** something to change & it's changeable... change it...*NO ONE DID*. Neh found that sort of apathy/complacency/stuck in a rut & ok w/ it right in the heart of God's missionary/light to the nations/chosen people.

But what has Neh done? **prayed** fasted repented & grieved b/4 God for 4 mos – which **increased** his burden & clarified the next steps in living his God-given vision into reality – been **granted** an audience & favour from the king (specific answer to his p/f/r/g) - time off from the king's service, permission by the king's authority, timber from the king's forest, & protection by the king's army. He arrives in Jerusalem w/ 0 competency or training in building & no real plan of action. But he has a God-given burden passion call for God's people & the mission they are called to fulfill. Neh is now in the game. He has **embraced** the risk & the cost of the call. He does not know **how** but he knows who because “who” is always you. Then he issues the clarion call to his fellow Israelites: **LET US rebuild the wall of Jerusalem & end this disgrace!** They replied at once, “Yes, let's rebuild the wall!” So they began the good work.....So they did

Chap 3 which I hope you are reading have read or will read records that they get going w/ great enthusiasm & enormous success. But while that sounds awesome & it is...Chap 2:19 has already hinted at what lies ahead: **But when** Sanballat, Tobiah, &

Geshem the Arab heard of our plan, they scoffed contemptuously. “What are you doing? Are you rebelling against the king?” they asked. So when we read today: **Sanballat** was very angry when he learned we were rebuilding the wall. He flew into a rage & mocked the Jews, saying in front of his friends & the Samaritan army officers, “What does this bunch of poor, feeble Jews think they're doing? Do they think they can build the wall in a single day by just offering a few sacrifices? Do they actually think they can make something of stones from a rubbish heap & charred ones at that?” Tobiah the Ammonite, who was standing beside him, remarked, “That stone wall would collapse if a fox walked along the top of it!” We should not be surprised...we know what that is.

The Scriptures assume that when God's people live out God's call on their lives – when God's people pursue the mission in this world God has entrusted into our hands & empowered by the Holy Spirit (bear his image, live his presence, carry out his work in this world) **opposition** is inevitable & *persistent*. What did Jesus say? *Blessed are you WHEN people mock revile persecute...everyone will hate you because you are my followers...when the worlds hates you remember it hated me first. “...everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” – 2 Tim 3:12* Opposition is inevitable & *persistent*. Why would it be otherwise?

When you pursue a God-given call...serve – give generously – pursue <3 you know pushback, resistance or opposition will not be far behind. Sometimes it's obvious. Sanballat & Tobiah are running their mouths like schoolyard bullies...WW2 pilots used to say “If you're taking flak you must be over the target.” But not all opposition resistance or pushback is from out here. **Then** the people of Judah began to complain, “The workers are getting tired, & there is so much rubble to be moved. We will never be able to build the wall by ourselves.” Fatigue fear doubt limited range of vision or success...Sometimes a job gets bigger b/4 it gets smaller.

Then there's this: **We** worked early & late, from sunrise to sunset. Half the men were always on guard. I told everyone living outside the walls to stay in Jerusalem so they & their servants could help with guard duty at night & work during the day. During this time, none of us—not I, nor my relatives, nor my servants, nor the guards who were with me—ever took off our clothes. We carried our weapons with us at all times, even when we went for water. Sometimes it never lets up...early/late sunrise/sunset even when we went to the toilet. They just know Tobiah/Geshem/Sanballat are hanging around looking for a weakness ... **Stay alert!** Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. – 1 Pt 5:8...porn is always only 1 click away - relapse is only 1 drink away - generosity is a choice & self-protection is our default...When you pursue a God-given call...pushback, resistance or opposition will not be far behind. Opposition is inevitable & *persistent*. 1 Pt 4:12 don't be surprised...as if something strange...

BUT... **But we** prayed to our God & guarded the city day & night to protect ourselves. Neh reminds us although there are 1000 ways to derail the work of God's people; **God** is in charge & we have work to do. Neh prayed for 4 mos ^{b/4} he got to talk to the king about his burden & he has not stopped praying & he always pointed to God as the prime mover behind his efforts & the prime defender of the people BUT every day the people get on w/ their work. God's in charge. We have work to do. It's that simple... Sanballat Tobiah & the others persist, but not as doggedly as the people who know they are the "who" God has called as workers in his kingdom to accomplish his will in this place at this time. God's will will be done.

And the exciting part of that... **No** one does it all but everyone does something. Look @ Chap 3 & you see most folks just pick a spot near their home & start. Then they join their piece of the wall to their neighbour's piece & then those guys hook into the gate section or the tower & they get more done faster than they thought they could & are able to accomplish more than anyone assumed they would. No one does it all but everyone does something. Even those who might have thought the whole idea was crazy to begin w/ or who had never built anything in their lives.

That's how LW functions... No one does it all but everyone does something. If it's been a long time since you "did something," talk to me. End of this month you're going to see a budget for next year... I don't want any one of you to write a check for the whole thing... I do however also not want to get to this time next year & see that in most months of 2022 that we have under-given to what we said we would support No one does it all but everyone does something & they do more than anyone thought they could. *"Don't be afraid of the enemy! Remember the Lord, who is great & glorious, & fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, & your homes!" vs 14*

And can you see the incredible strength we as God's people enjoy in that... **When** our enemies heard we knew of their plans & God had frustrated them, we all returned to our work on the wall. But from then on, only half my men worked while the other half stood guard with spears, shields, bows, & coats of mail... The labourers carried on their work with one hand supporting their load & one hand holding a weapon. All the builders had a sword belted to their side. The trumpeter stayed with me to sound the alarm. I explained to the nobles, officials & people, "The work is very spread out, & we are widely separated from each other along the wall. When you hear the blast of the trumpet, rush to wherever it is sounding. Then our God will fight for us!"

No matter what happens: **the** family of God has your back... The command is simple... run to the sound of battle... The tragedy in so much of life is that when something bad happens... lose your job lose your health lose a relationship... folks around you often act like what happened to you is contagious. The command

throughout the NT goes something like this: Gal 6:1 - If someone sins restore them gently. If someone's hurt run to help someone in need get up of the sofa & make something happen... We've looked at the "one anothers" of the NT church ^{b/4}... ^{b/t} 50-60 specific commands about how we should treat each other... They establish the framework for Christian community & have a direct impact on our witness to the world: **Your** love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples. - Jn 13:35 Neh makes it clear **God** will fight for them **as they are** fighting for each other.

If you're struggling & don't tell anyone who's gonna pray for you? Who's gonna fight the devil w/ you if you don't tell us you're in a hair-pulling eye-gouging fight for your life? If that same sin/fear/struggle/worry/habit keeps grabbing you by the neck you might never break its grip until 2-3 of us lay hands on you & pray for it to get back to the pit of hell where it came from. James says bring your pile to the table where we can pray for you & I'll do the same. Where are you being attacked? If I don't hear your trumpet I can't come help... the family of God has your back

God has called Living Water Fellowship
to be a vibrant Christian community
that glorifies God
by inviting all people to become disciples of Jesus
who grow in his grace and
go in his power
to show his love to the world.

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Take it home...

Who is someone that you see that is tired, discouraged or in danger of giving up and needs you to remind them to "remember the Lord" & that you have their back?

30 secs... **Go**... I'll pray for us to close...

The whole aim of practical politics is to keep the populace alarmed (and hence clamorous to be led to safety) by menacing it with an endless series of hobgoblins: all of them imaginary. —H.L. Mencken, 1921