

WELCOME 25th July 2021 – 9 Pentecost '21 B

Nehemiah 2:1-20

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...

The hard-to-purchase hot items during 18 mos of lockdowns/stay-at-home orders?

1. toilet paper
2. hand sanitizer/mask/wipes
3. baking goods
4. personal fitness items
5. personal tech gear
6. the humble jigsaw puzzle

Jigsaw puzzle? Absolutely! From 10 – 1000 pieces there's structure, there's order, & it's an activity that builds community (by-standers always join in). A jigsaw puzzle **inspires** you toward a specific result, (it's on the box) **engages** you & others in the activity & the **impact** is always a sense of fulfilment & joy. You can see what you're working toward & work toward it.

Vision works the same way. Individual seemingly random unrelated circumstances – often what looks like chaos – are brought together & connected to form a beautiful masterpiece that is life-transforming, eternity shaping & creates delight for all who take part in it.

That's what we see today. Nehemiah RE-CASTS THE VISION **not just** of a wall REBUILT **but of a people** RESTORED to their God-designed purpose & work in his world; **AND** he invites others to join him in living toward a future that's more glorious than they could ever imagine. The Road to Recovery leads us not just to repent of the rubbish... to take stock of & turn away from complacency & comfort & convenience But to Re-cast the Vision of who we are & what God calls us to be & do here & now.

“Let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem & end this disgrace!”

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

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

Father...you called

Abraham to leave his home

Moses to enact your desire for your peoples' freedom from slavery

Joshua to conquer a land

David to slay a giant & lead a nation

Prophets to hold kings & your people accountable to your word

Mary to bear your Son

Your church – each of us – to bear your promise of life in Christ to the world

Speak again today & call us beyond the rubble of this day, 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. How have you experienced God's perfect timing in your life?
2. How might God be positioning you to play a significant role in his vision for Living Water & the city of Wagga Wagga?

9 Pentecost – '21 B – ROAD TO RECOVERY: RE-CAST THE VISION

Rick Warren: "You were made **by** God & **for** God, & until you understand that, life will never make sense." I go back to that every now & then to remind myself of the larger picture of my life...the larger vision I inhabit that is so far outside of me & my capacity to fulfill it that I am in constant dependence on God. **Nothing** about me is mine...or ultimately about me or for me. ALL. OF. ME. is for God's delight God's design & God's destiny. What God has in mind will on the last day come to pass & I can either be part of seeing that to completion or see myself apart from it. There are no other alternatives...I hope you understand that's true 4 you too...every soul on earth

No one understands that better than Nehemiah. Born in captivity distant from his ancestral homeland he is nonetheless steeped in the promises God has made to his people...saturated in the faith that called Abraham to leave the land of his birth & the gods of his ancestors for the promise of a land that would belong to his descendants forever & into a relationship w/ God who would act for & through Abe & his generations to accomplish God's will here on earth. Neh is immersed in the call of God to the Israelites to be his people - representatives - *light to the nations* that reveal God's grace/unfailing love to the world -Faithful to his Word & sovereign over all things

We saw last week that Neh is crushed heartbroken struck to tears to hear that having been released from captivity & sent back to Jerusalem, those returnees are languishing...complacent in their faith amid the ruins of their city & Temple...going through the motions of worship but living far beneath God's call for their lives. They're unconcerned about their placid disobedience. They're not upset that they're a disgrace

It is now ≈ 4 months since Neh heard the terrible news from Jerusalem. Subsistence living mere survival captivity mindset is *NOT* their call from God & Neh has been praying fasting repenting & grieving for 4 months...I know folks who pray once & if it seems nothing happens they get mad @ God & quit...Neh prays 12X ...2 things from last week... **the** burden you have **outside of yourself** just might be God's call for you...if your burden's only for you it's on you...If you're doing it right, **prayer** will **increase** your burden for that call & **clarify** your vision of what needs to be done. Prayer keeps the burden alive. Prayer doesn't force God to act, but it keeps us looking for God's intervention because we start expecting it. As Ch 1 closes, Neh prayed for 2 things: "**Please** grant me success today by making the king favorable to me. Put it into his heart to be kind to me." Opportunity & favour. Neh wanted an opportunity to share his burden w/ the king **AND** for the king to be on-board w/ Neh's burden. But given that...

Neh does not **yet** know all the details of pursuing & accomplishing God's call, but he knows **THIS**...**Nehemiah himself** will have to get in the game... He cannot address his call in Jerusalem from Susa. **He** has got to accept the risk & the cost of the call... put some skin in the game. Which is where we find Neh in chap 2.

I was serving the king his wine. I had never before appeared sad in his presence. So the king asked me, "Why are you looking so sad? You don't look sick to me. You must be deeply troubled." As canary in the coal mine/poison preventer, Neh better **not** be sad & deeply troubled...But under the shadow of implied accusation, Neh's prayer is 'bout to get answered. **Then** I was terrified, but I replied, "Long live the king! How can I not be sad? For the city where my ancestors are buried is in ruins, & the gates have been destroyed by fire." The king asked, "Well, how can I help you?" Don't know if you noticed...

Right now Artaxerxes is looking at the jigsaw puzzle...What had Neh asked of God? Opportunity & favour...to share his burden w/ the king **AND** for the king to be on-board w/ his burden. Don't think it's strange for pagans to get on board w/ God's plans. WW city zoning prohibits "regular public worship" in city-owned facilities key word "regular." We've been here 8 years. **With** a prayer to the God of heaven, I replied, "If it please the king, & you are pleased with me, your servant, send me to Judah to rebuild the city where my ancestors are buried." The vision is simple: Send me to Jerusalem to rebuild the city. **If you can't name it, you can't claim it.** Notice I did **NOT** say all you have to do is name it to claim it...that's the lie TV preachers tell. But if you can't put into words what you are called to accomplish...you will not carry out that call. Send me to Jerusalem to rebuild the city Why is that so important?

So God's people can start living the lives they've been sent there to live...to be his people - representatives - *light to the nations* that reveal God's grace/unfailing love to the world – to demonstrate that God is faithful to his Word & sovereign over all things - to reveal the depth of his grace & restoring forgiveness...in restored lives in the land he promised would be theirs & living in ruin is not that. Send me to rebuild the city...MEANS...Send me to lead God's people into being who God has called them to be...

**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.**

If you genuinely believe that is you...are you accepting risk/cost/skin in the game? If you can't define it, you can't do it...does that call come out as easily as your phone #?

Now...2 words **How?**

Who?

Neh does not yet know “how.” But he asks for the king’s help because he has asked God to provide, & once that prayer began to be answered he knew the rest was on the way. **How** is God’s province. **How** is always in God’s hands. If you’ve been given a burden beyond yourself & it’s turning into a call from God & you’ve been praying/weeping/fasting/repenting for a few months/weeks/years & you’re finally starting to see clearly **what** it is you are called to do some chucklehead is sure to try & “How” you right out of your vision. How are you going to do that? How are you going to pay for that? How are you going to get anyone to go along with that?

But Neh asks for 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. Neh does not yet know How...but he knows Who...because who is always you. How is God. Who is you. There’s no one else to carry out the call God gives his church but you. There is no one else to engage in the call God puts on your heart but you. Others may come on board – walk along side – support encourage...Who is always you. NB...Neh is not an architect, priest, royal...waiter. Zero position competency or training in building stuff – no white card. But he has this burden passion call... Who is always you.

When Neh reaches Jerusalem he tells no one his desire to rebuild the wall. In fact he takes a long weekend to get over the trip & only then goes out at night to see the scope of what he has ahead of himself. What he sees simply confirms what his brother Hanani told him earlier: *“Things are not going well for those who returned to the province of Judah. They are in great trouble & disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem has been torn down, & the gates have been destroyed by fire.”* In fact in some spots it’s awful because he has to get off his donkey to complete his inspection circuit. But I love what he says the next day... *“You know very well what trouble we are in. Jerusalem lies in ruins, & its gates have been destroyed by fire. **LET US rebuild the wall of Jerusalem & end this disgrace!**”* Then I told them about how the gracious hand of God had been on me, & about my conversation with the king.

The vision never alters...Rebuild the wall & break out of complacency & captivity mindset. Rebuild the wall & be who we are meant to be. Rebuild the wall & begin living up to the high calling of being God’s people. But the assurance is the crucial piece... *Then I told them about how the gracious hand of God had been on me...5X in 20 vss* Neh points to God who has planted that burden in his heart & who is working all around him to bring it to fullness. This is not for Neh’s glory but God’s. Not Neh’s legacy but the destiny God intends for his people. Not to make much of Neh but to exalt God.

God has called Living Water Fellowship...

REMEMBER: the gospel is how God in Jesus Christ brings all things to himself over the objection & interference of sin death & the devil. The gospel is how God comes to us personally to rescue & recreate all things through the life/death/rez of Jesus. The gospel is that *God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself not holding our sins over our heads... God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, & through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven & on earth by means of Christ’s blood on the cross.* all things made **by** God & **for** God

But the world will never believe - never be captured by - never abandon itself to the full joy of that love that freedom that forgiveness & restoration until they see it AND hear it from you & me. Until the Spirit empowers the church (we’re who) to live the reality of that new kingdom right in front of & in the midst of the old kingdom of this world that is dying in flames & taking far too many people along for the ride. Until we give our last dollar, serve til our final breath & love to the last beat of our hearts AND point to Jesus as the motivation for all we are & all we do...The emptiness & pointless striving & lifeless fear-driven living of the world around us goes untouched.

The Road to Recovery leads us not just to repent of the rubbish... to take stock of & turn away from complacency & comfort & convenience BUT TO RE-CAST THE VISION of who we are & what God calls us to be & do here & now. We have the power of the resurrection planted ^{w/in} us & we can live in Christ (by his strength in his presence) right here – light can shine – good works can be seen – we can take his name on our lips so that those we’ve prayed for grieved for wept for hoped for can know just what it is God holds for them too.

Take it home...How will you live the vision of Living Water this week?

vibrant inviting growing going showing

30 secs... **Go...**!’ll pray for us to close...