

The Parish of Wellow

Nehemiah faces the challenge of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem Passage, Sermon Notes and Questions

Please feel free to take these sermon notes home with you and you may wish to find some time during this week to consider the questions below.

1. Passage

Nehemiah 2:11-20

11 I went to Jerusalem, and after staying there three days

12 I set out during the night with a few men. I had not told anyone what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem. There were no mounts with me except the one I was riding on.

13 By night I went out through the Valley Gate toward the Jackal Well and the Dung Gate, examining the walls of Jerusalem, which had been broken down, and its gates, which had been destroyed by fire.

14 Then I moved on toward the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool, but there was not enough room for my mount to get through;

15 so I went up the valley by night, examining the wall. Finally, I turned back and re-entered through the Valley Gate.

16 The officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, because as yet I had said nothing to the Jews or the priests or nobles or officials or any others who would be doing the work.

17 Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace."

18 I also told them about the gracious hand of my God upon me and what the king had said to me. They replied, "Let us start rebuilding." So they began this good work.

19 But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem the Arab heard about it, they mocked and ridiculed us. "What is this you are doing?" they asked. "Are you rebelling against the king?"

20 I answered them by saying, "The God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding, but as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim or historic right to it."

2. Sermon Notes

2.1 Introduction

- Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem with the third set of exiles in 445BC to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem

586 BC	Jerusalem destroyed - exiles taken to Babylon	522 BC	Darius 1 becomes King in Persia
539 BC	Babylon overthrown by Cyrus of Persia	520 BC	Temple construction resumes
538 BC	First set of exiles return to Jerusalem	516 BC	Temple completed
536 BC	Temple Construction begins	458 BC	Second set of exiles return to Jerusalem
530 BC	Temple work halted	445 BC	Third set of exiles return to Jerusalem

- God has given him the vision for rebuilding the walls.
- Nehemiah prays and plans his trip to Jerusalem carefully and comes with the blessing of the new King of Persia, Artaxerxes.
- Nehemiah arrives in Jerusalem as the new boy but before he puts a brick in the new walls he does two vital things:
 - i. He gets to know the lay of the land.
 - ii. He discusses and shares God's Vision with the people

2.2 Nehemiah gets to know the lay of the land - Nehemiah 2:11-15

- Nehemiah resists the temptation to rush in and start building the walls
- Nehemiah spends time seeing with his own eyes the true extent of the damage to the walls.
- How good are we in situations where we are the new boy or girl? Do we spend time getting to know the lay of the land before rushing in to implement our own ideas and schemes?
- Nehemiah did not survey the broken walls of Jerusalem blindfold so let us be honest with each other.

2.3 Nehemiah discusses and shares God's vision with the people - Nehemiah 2:17-18

- Nehemiah knows that if God's vision is to succeed he will need both the moral and physical support of the people.
- How often in our haste to support our own ideas do we fail to discuss our thoughts with others?
- Nehemiah demonstrates perfectly how to work in a team where all ideas and suggestions are shared and discussed before any are adopted and implemented.
- If the spiritual walls of this church need repairing then we will need to work together as a team to achieve this.

2.4 People react to God's vision and desire for change in two different ways - Nehemiah 2:18-19

- i. Some will grasp God's vision and despite the enormity of the task will step out in faith. They replied, "Let us start rebuilding." So they began this good work. Nehemiah 2:18
- ii. Others will react to God's vision and desire for change with fear by making fun of it and resisting it at all costs: But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem the Arab heard about it, they mocked and ridiculed us. "What is this you are doing?" they asked. Nehemiah 2:19

2.5 The task ahead

- As God reveals to us what he would have us do in this place what will our reaction be? Will we say "Let us start rebuilding," with all the personal costs involved in that decision or will we say "What is this you are doing?" and resist change at all costs?

2.6 Nehemiah responds to his objectors - Nehemiah 2:20

- Nehemiah reminds his objectors that he was on his Majesty's service. 'The God of heaven will give us success.' Nehemiah 2:20
- Let us too not forget that we are in his majesty's service as well and fail to respond to the challenges God has for us in this place.

3. Questions

3.1 How would you honestly describe things in the Parish of Wellow at the moment?

3.2 How would you honestly describe things in the Parish church at the moment?

3.3 As you reflect on the services and events held by the church over the years:

i. What would you say has worked well?

ii. What would say has not worked so well?

3.4 What do you feel needs to be in place for the church to grow?

3.5 What would you like to do to help the church grow?

3.6 What would you like to see your new vicar doing?

Please do feel free to give me your comments on any or some of the above questions, or on any other issue as a way of helping me to get to know the lay of the land here in the Parish of Wellow. Please feel free to call me on 01761 432293 or by mail at The Vicarage, Church Road, Peasedown St John, Bath, BA2 8AA or by email on vicar@ubpw.com.