

# *The Parish of Wellow*

## Nehemiah faces opposition to the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem

### Nehemiah 4:1-23

#### 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 the next few weeks to consider the questions below.

#### 1. Sermon Passage - Nehemiah 4:1-23

1 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-- if even a fox climbed up on it, he would break down their wall of stones!"

4 Hear us, O 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 men 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 brothers, 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 his 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 Judah

17 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.

19 Then I said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "The work is extensive and spread out, and we are widely separated from each other along the wall.

20 Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there. Our God will fight for us!"

21 So we continued the work with half the men holding spears, from the first light of dawn till the stars came out.

22 At that time I also said to the people, "Have every man and his helper stay inside Jerusalem at night, so they can serve us as guards by night and workmen by day."

23 Neither I nor my brothers nor my men nor the guards with me took off our clothes; each had his weapon, even when he went for water.

## 2. Sermon Notes

### 2.1 How do we face opposition?

- How do we deal with people who
  - a) Disagree with us?
  - b) Ridicule our beliefs?
  - c) Block us getting on?
  - d) Never see the positive in our ideas?
  - e) Always seem against us?
- How do we cope with
  - a) New Tasks?
  - b) New ways of doing things?
  - c) Difficult or frightening situations?
- Nehemiah is faced with 2 external forms of opposition and 2 internal
  - 2 External: a) Ridicule (vv1-6) b) Threats (vv7-9)
  - 2 Internal: a) Dissent (vv10) b) Panic (vv11-23)

### 2.2 Nehemiah and the Jews rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem face ridicule (vv1-6)

- Sanballat ridiculed the workers by calling them "feeble Jews": "Will they restore the wall?" "Will they offer sacrifices?" "Will they finish in a day?" As far as Sanballat was concerned the Jews had no visible resources to commit to the rebuilding of the walls.
- What Sanballat and his friends could not see was the Jews great spiritual resources. The world glories in its wealth and power, but God's people glory in their poverty and weakness. When we are weak, then we are strong
- Nehemiah ignores the temptation to respond to the ridicule and prays instead.

### 2.3 Nehemiah and the Jews rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem receive threats (vv7-9)

- As the enemy sees the work progressing, they became angry and decide to plan a secret attack against Jerusalem.
- Nehemiah suspects that his enemies will launch such an attack, so he posts guards and encourages the people to pray. The workers hold both tools and weapons verse 17 and were prepared to fight when the signal was given.
- "Watch and pray" combines faith and works and is a good example for us to follow even today some 2500 years later.

### 2.4 Nehemiah and the Jews rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem suffer dissent in the ranks (vv10)

- The reason for the dissent in the ranks becomes clear in chapter 6 vv17-19.
- Marriage ties and a love of money has caused some of the Jews to be compromised from the task in hand.

### 2.5 Nehemiah and the Jews rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem panic (vv11-23)

- Threats of further surprise attacks begin to panic the workers on the wall
- Nehemiah counters the threat by placing guards at strategic points around the wall
- He encourages the workers to have faith in God and to remember who he was and what he had done.
- To boost confidence Nehemiah inspects the walls nightly and encourages the workers daily.

### 2.6 Nehemiah and the Jews rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem succeed in overcoming the opposition through

- a) Prayer
- b) Faith in God, who he is and what he has done
- c) A single minded focus on the task in hand, namely rebuilding the walls.

## 3. Questions to consider back at home

3.1 What lessons about leadership do we learn from Nehemiah in this chapter that we can apply in our lives today?

3.2 What do we learn about 'opposition' from this chapter?

3.3 In a discussion one day with a group of people one member of the group disagrees very strongly with your views. What advice would Nehemiah give on how you should react? What do you feel you should do?

3.4 Nehemiah was excellent at reminding the Jews what the primary task was and focussing them on it? What would you say is the primary task here at St Julian's at the moment and do you feel the church family is focussed on it?

If you would like to discuss these questions further please feel free to call me on 01761 437724