

# The Parish of Wellow

## Nehemiah 1:1-11 Who is God calling us to care about?

### Passage, Talk Notes and Questions

Please feel free to take these talk notes home with you and you may wish to find some time during this week to consider the questions below or join us at **Coffee 'n' Stickies** on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> May 7.30-9.30pm at 51 Under Knoll, PSJ (Call Jennifer Cole 01761 437768 for directions) to discuss the questions further.

### 1. Talk Passage – Nehemiah 1:1-11

1 The words of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah: In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa,<sup>2</sup> Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem.<sup>3</sup> They said to me, "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire."<sup>4</sup> When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.<sup>5</sup> Then I said: "O LORD, God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and obey his commands,<sup>6</sup> let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's house, have committed against you.<sup>7</sup> We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.<sup>8</sup> "Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, <sup>9</sup> but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.'<sup>10</sup> "They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand.<sup>11</sup> O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favour in the presence of this man." I was cupbearer to the king.

### 2. Talk Notes

Jerusalem	1 <sup>st</sup> Return	Artaxerxes	2 <sup>nd</sup> Return	3 <sup>rd</sup> Return
Destroyed	with Zerubbabel	King of Persia	with Ezra	with Nehemiah
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586BC	538	465	458	445

#### 1. Introduction

- Nehemiah was cupbearer (*'was cupbearer to the king.'* verse 11) to King Artaxerxes of Persia. At each meal, he tested the king's wine to make sure it wasn't poisoned.
- This was a position of great responsibility and privilege.
- So why is Nehemiah interested in a struggling remnant of people who lived hundreds of miles away? (*'I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem.'* Verse 2)
- He is interested because God has put Nehemiah's Jewish brothers and sisters left

back in Jerusalem on his heart.

- Who has God put on our hearts? Who is God calling us to care about? Is it a friend at work, at home or at church? Is it a relative? Is it a certain type of ministry? A particular country? A certain group of people?
- In this first Chapter of Nehemiah God puts Nehemiah's Jewish brothers and sisters on his heart and then he calls Nehemiah:

- v. to **ask** (Neh. 1:1-3)
- vi. to **weep, mourn and fast** (Neh. 1:4)
- vii. to **pray** (Neh. 1:5-10)
- viii. to **volunteer** (Neh. 1:11)

#### 2. Nehemiah is called to **ask** (Neh. 1:1-3)

- I am sure that all of all us are very good at keeping up with the things that we really care about: family, promotion, money, relationships, sporting success and so on but are equally good at keeping up with and asking about those people that God has called us to care about?
- Nehemiah asks and find out about the situation in Jerusalem and what it is like for his Jewish brothers and sisters

#### 3. Nehemiah is called to **weep, mourn and fast** (Neh. 1:4)

- Nehemiah is clearly moved by what he hears.
- *'For some days'* Nehemiah mourns and fasts – he waits and listens to God before he speaks to God in prayer verse 5.
- During this time God must have clearly shown Nehemiah that he wanted the walls of Jerusalem to be rebuilt – we get a glimpse of a man in a close relationship with God. Nehemiah waits for God's plan.
- How much time do we spend listening to God and hearing from him and learning what his plan is for the people he has put on our heart?

#### 4. Nehemiah is called to **pray** (Neh. 1:5-10)

- Prayer is vital to Nehemiah. This book begins and end with prayer and this is one of 12 prayers recorded in the Book of Nehemiah.
- Nehemiah opens this prayer with worship (v5), he then moves on to confession (v6-7), he then reminds God of his covenant promise(v8-10), and then concludes with petition (v11).
- At each stage in the prayer Nehemiah uses the would 'we' not 'you' or 'them'.
- Is God calling us to repent for the sins of St Julian's, of Wellow, of our nation?

#### 5. Nehemiah is called to **volunteer** (Neh. 1:11)

- Nehemiah didn't pray for God to send somebody else, nor did he argue that he was ill-equipped for such a difficult task. He simply said, 'Here am I - send me!'
- How will we practically respond to the people God has put on our hearts?

### 3. Coffee 'n' Stickies Questions

- 1) What do we learn about the relationship between God and his people from this passage? What implications does this have for us today?
- 2) What do we learn about fasting from this passage? Do we need to fast today? If so, when and for how long? Does fasting make our prayers more effective?
- 3) Nehemiah's prayer has a clear pattern to it: worship – confession – petition. Should we follow this pattern in our daily prayer life?
- 4) Who is God calling St Julian's to care about? How should we respond to this call? Who is God calling you to care about? How should you respond to this call?

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