

Nehemiah 1-2—Holy Ambition: What the World Needs

- **Intro:**
 - Examples of brokenness:
 - 687 Children in Wake County Foster Care
 - 11% of people in Wake County below poverty line
 - 30K abortions in Wake County in 2016
 - Nehemiah, like Christ, is sent to restore the (true/faithful) people of Israel who are in ruin; he evaluates their derision and puts the plan in motion by giving the people a purpose/mission.
 - Nehemiah hears of the news of brokenness and weeps from afar, heads to Jerusalem and then calls the people of Israel to join him in rebuilding
 - Luke 19—Jesus sees the brokenness and lostness of Jerusalem and weeps over the city. He then goes to the cross, dies and rises again and then appears to the disciples with the Great Commission—a call to join him in building the kingdom to the ends of the earth!
- **Huge Pastoral Burden:**
 - For ALL of us to be INSIDE the redemptive work of God going on INSIDE of us and ALL AROUND us.
 - We too are meant to experience God's redemptive power personally and long for his redemption/restoration of all things through the gospel passionately!
 - **WE LIVE ONCE AND THEN WE ARE LITERALLY DONE—WHAT IS THERE TO LOSE?**
 - LIKE AN ATHLETE IN THE LAST GAME OF THE SEASON—THERE IS NOTHING TO SAVE UP FOR!
 - Imagine a group of people truly broken over the brokenness. A group of people humble and grace-minded that are seeking restoration and redemption in the gospel! This is VALUABLE to a city! This HOLY AMBITION, ultimately, is what our city and our world desperately needs!
- **We Are Broken over Brokenness (1:1-4)**
 - v.4—The remnant...is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire.
 - The BEGINNING of our work is the recognition that things are BROKEN—not as intended.
 - Interesting response—Nehemiah is in a life of luxury in a palace in Persia drinking the finest wine on earth. He hears this news and weeps, mourns and fasts for days!
 - As God paints a picture of restoration and human flourishing, he calls his people to be OUTWARD focused rather than INWARD—to love, serve and sacrifice for OTHERS!
 - Colossians 3:12—put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness and patience.
 - Brokenness among our faith family
 - Brokenness in the world around us
 - Brokenness INSIDE of us!
- **We Pursue Intimacy with God (v.5-11)**
 - Adoration—Nehemiah responds to his brokenness with adoration of God for his character, promises and works.
 - v.5-7—Nehemiah is intimately acquainted with God and his ways and he is working his way through the character and acts of God in response to the brokenness he is considering!
 - Confession (v.6-7)—Nehemiah reminds us that confession and repentance PRECEDES rebuilding and restoration
 - May we not pray for the Kingdom to come OUT THERE unless we are willing to pray that it comes IN HERE!

- **Thanksgiving (v.8-10)**—Thanking God that he graciously kept and is keeping his covenant to redeem and save! Nehemiah is THANKING God that he is so faithful and good!
- **Petition—We Ask for the Kingdom to Come (v.11)**
 - **v.11**—in a kernel form, Nehemiah is asking for the Kingdom to come! He is asking for grace and mercy.
 - Informed by real, deep theological truth, Nehemiah is now pouring his heart out in confession, repentance and movement toward and into this dark brokenness!
- **We are hopeful for God's restoration (Chapter 2)**
 - **2:1-5**—what began as empathy and brokenness has now translated into ACTION
 - Nehemiah models how RIGHT theology LEADS to right practice!
 - Danger—having a lot of theological knowledge that is VOID of personal experience and joy in it! We can know a lot about God and how he works but have little to NO real experience of it working its way through US and the brokenness around us!
 - **2:8**—our hopefulness arises out of our confidence in God's sovereign hand on us!
 - **2:11**—Nehemiah is doing realtime recon in the city to determine the actual state of affairs and the course of action that lies ahead.
 - Nehemiah is seeing the brokenness with a heart that has been turned compassionately toward them and is now strategically determined the means by which he will engage!
 - This is our call in wake county and to the ends of the earth! May God raise up a band of people with hearts broken over brokenness who will look out on that brokenness and strategize God-sized plans to engage!
 - **2:17-18**—restoration is not an MVP campaign but a community project! God's people, engaging the brokenness in God's world with God's gospel TOGETHER!
 - **2:19-20**—The opposition asks, "what are YOU doing?" Nehemiah responds by reminding them that it isn't HIM that is ultimately working but GOD and because of that, the work WILL PROSPER!
 - **Matthew 16—I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH AND THE GATES OF HELL WILL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST IT!**
 - We, the servants of God, will arise and build regardless of who arises us against us, regardless of how weak and normal we are, regardless of how many resources we appear not to have!
 - **Colossians 1:17-20—And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fulness of god was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.**
 - If Nehemiah doesn't really believe that God is going to save this remnant and bring restoration to all the nations through his people and their Messiah, then all of this is a waste of time. Nehemiah's faith is all over this. He believes with all his being that this story is true and it is why he would risk his life for it!
 - **His faith in God's saving, restoring work has LAUNCHED HIM INTO THE REDEMPTIVE current!**
- **Conclusion:**
 - Are you **CONNECTED** to a local church where you can enter the brokenness of the lives of your brothers and sisters in Christ and actually bear their burdens?
 - Are you **PARTICIPATING** in God's redemptive purposes to redeem, restore and save? Are actively participating in this work among the people and places around you?
 - Are you **DESPERATE** today for God's restoring work on the broken walls and gates of your own heart and life?