

Nehemiah 2

Brynmawr Family Church Sermon
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 11th April 2010

Intro-

- Last time looked at Nehemiah's godly response to terrible news where it seemed the purposes of God had come to nothing. We saw how he expressed his grief, but at the same time he committed to prayer and fasting. We saw how he was determined to get God's attention, reminding God of His promises and persevering in prayer. We also saw how he played his part in the answer by truly repenting and seeing his position as cupbearer as a potential opportunity.
- I heard a Christian once say that there exists a place called the 'field of dreams' which is a place where all the unfulfilled dreams and ambitions of Christians lie like fallen soldiers. What are your dreams in this life? What is your potential? (write them down). The thing that enables a dream to become a reality is the willingness to act. This week we will look at 4 ways Nehemiah made the first steps to enable his dream to become a reality.

Read Nehemiah 2

The importance of relationships-v2

- Nehemiah's relationship with the king was the springboard for his ministry. Before Nehemiah could see his dreams of Israel being restored becoming a reality he had a process to go through- the establishing of a faithful, trusting relationship of service to a king who did not know the true God. Sometimes being obedient to the word of the Lord is simply 'do your job and do it well'. My eagerness to be in the ministry and Tony's advice to continue being faithful in secular work first.
- Qualifications for elders in the Bible include a good reputation with outsiders-1Tim 3:7 and in Col 4:5 it says we should 'walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time' (i.e. making the most of the precious time we have with them). Nehemiah did these things and it paid off. Sometimes Christians have a wonderful reputation with other Christians because they seem so spiritual, but a stinking reputation with outsiders because they are in reality 'too spiritually minded to be of any earthly use'. As Christians we should work more faithfully than non-Christians.
- Israel should have been a light to the nations, but messed up and went into exile. Although the exile was bad it had a good aspect- Israel became a light in a dark place- Nehemiah was in fact being a light to Artaxerxes. It took the coming of Jesus for Israel to truly become what God intended for her- the light to the nations. Is 49:6 says that it is too small a thing for the messiah to restore the tribes of Jacob (Israel) but that God would make Him a light to the Gentiles bringing salvation to the ends of the earth. Jesus identifies Himself as the fulfillment of this in John 8:12 (also see Lk 2:32). In Matt 5:14 Jesus applied this to the Church, saying that we are the light of the world. Rev 1:20 says that the churches are as lampstands. Phil 2:15 says that we should live blamelessly shining as lights in the world. Do you see yourself as a light to those around you?
- Often Christians can have many Christian friends and little, if any, non-Christian friends. Phil Playfoot the evangelist encouraged people to invite their non-Christian friends to guest services, but soon realised they didn't know any. Can be worse for Church leaders. Friendship evangelism encourages relationship. We have to relate to people around us in some way if we are to be a light to them. How friendly are you? Do non-Christians think you are friendly? Theodore Roosevelt said, "Nobody cares how much you know, until they know how much you care." In your desire to please God and see the work of the

kingdom done never skimp on building quality relationships with people. Let love motivate you and vision steer you.

Courage to speak-v3

- To fulfill the dream Nehemiah had to have the courage to share spiritual matters with the King, risking his life as Esther had done previously. Sir Thomas Moore did not get off so lightly when he raised spiritual matters with Henry the Eighth: Sir Thomas More (1478-1535) faced death with cheerfulness because he knew he was doing the right thing. Rather than endorse Henry the Eighth's divorce, he quit his post and returned to his home penniless. The King threw him in the Tower of London but he stood firm. He smiled on the scaffold, kissed the executioner, gave him a gold coin, and quipped with a grin, "Don't be afraid, my good man. Take care to do it well, for I have a short neck, and you mustn't ruin your reputation."
- Augustine said 'preach the gospel and if necessary, use words'. The context of this is to live what you preach but many Christians hope that their lifestyle will be enough of a message- it isn't- people need clear communication with words. People need truth- even signs and wonders must be accompanied by the speaking of truth, as Satan counterfeits these.
- The relationship existed on a certain level, but there was a God-moment where it was right to share his heart with the King. We need to not only be sensitive to people, but sensitive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and bold enough to obey by opening our mouths and sharing God's heart. We need to discern the openings about when to share the gospel with those around us.

Action Plan

- Vincent Van Gogh (1853-1890) Painter- "The thing has already taken form in my mind before I start it. The first attempts are absolutely unbearable. I say this because I want you to know that if you see something worthwhile in what I am doing, it is not by accident but because of real direction and purpose."
- To fulfill the dream Nehemiah needed a plan of action
- 'Month of Nisan' (March/April) when he spoke to the King was 4 months after Chislev (Nov/Dec) when he got the bad news, so he had time to hear from God and formulate a plan of action. We need the same, both as individuals, and as a Church. It is God's Spirit of Wisdom that will enable us to plan effectively.
- 'What do you request?' -what a great question, a bit like when Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream and had a plan of action also for him, a bit like the question 'brothers, what should we do?' in reply to Peter's sermon in Acts 2:37 on the day of Pentecost and also the response of the Philippian jailer in Acts 16:30 'what must I do to be saved?'. Are we ready to answer these questions? We should be. 1Pet 3:15 says 'Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.' Sometimes we don't even hear the questions people are asking because we are not looking out for it- Nehemiah was. 'Have you always gone along to Church?', 'have you always been religious?' are leading questions often concealing a desire to know more.
- An action plan breaks a God-given vision down into faith sized action steps, taking into account practicalities, but also taking into account the hand of God. Nehemiah had a plan, but it was a grace-of-God-dependant plan. If God did not move it was useless. In the same way that Zerubbabel and Joshua before him had the revelation through the prophet Zechariah it had to be "not by might, not by power, but by My Spirit" says the Lord'. How much does your planning rely on the grace of God?
- Our vision as Brynmawr Family Church is to Build Followers of Christ in response to the great commission from our king in Matt 28:18-20. Our plan is to establish a healthy Church here in Brynmawr and then to plant into the surrounding areas. Our focus is on the areas of worship, evangelism, discipleship, ministry, fellowship, prayer, mercy and the presence of God. This is on the front and back of each newsheet. Nehemiah went to the people with the vision and they worked. This is our vision- are you prepared to work for it? Have you owned it yet? Look on the website there are scriptures regarding it- do background study for

yourself concerning each of the areas. It is a spiritual checklist as to how we are doing individually and as the Church.

Deal with the taunts of the enemy

- Like Nehemiah, we need to deal with the Sanballat, the Tobiahs, and the Geshems of this world in order to fulfill the dream.
- We deal with them through the authority we have from the king. King Artaxerxes wrote letters for Nehemiah to back up what he was doing. In the same way Jesus has given His authority to us to fulfill the dream and make disciples. When a messenger of Satan tries to block our way we use that authority to silence them. Demons tried to do it to Jesus and He silenced them and commanded them to come out of the people.
- Also the king sent a military escort with Nehemiah should there be any problems. We are not alone- we have an escort- God's angelic host. Jesus is the Lord of hosts and He is with us on the mission, as are His angelic host. Vision someone had of a huge angel standing with us until we were established.
- What would the Sanballats and Tobiahs say about Brynmawr Family Church? How do we deal with them when they raise reasons why not, even perhaps in our own minds? We go back to the mandate from the King, just as Nehemiah did. We go back to Matt 28:18-20- 'All authority has been given to me.. therefore go'. No matter who is against us in our mission we have the King of Heaven behind us. We have a commission to fulfil from a great King and it is a great commission suited very particularly to our abilities in God. We have been crafted by the master for this day and purpose- we are that people- let's rise to the challenge! When D. L. Moody was conducting evangelistic meetings across the country, he frequently faced hecklers. One day, an usher handed the famed evangelist a note as he entered the auditorium. Supposing it to be an announcement, Moody quieted the large audience and prepared to read the notice. He opened it to find a single word: "Fool!" The colorful preacher was equal to the occasion. Said he, "This is most unusual. I have just been handed a message which consists of but one word, the word 'fool.' I repeat, this is most unusual. I have often heard of those who have written letters and forgotten to sign their names, but this is the first time I have ever heard of anyone who signed his name and forgot to write the letter!" And, taking advantage of the situation, Moody promptly changed his sermon to the text: "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." --Moody Monthly

Summary

- Nehemiah had a dream from God to fulfill. We do too. He worked from a foundation of strong relationship. He was courageous enough to bring up God's agenda in conversation. He had a plan of action and was able to silence the taunts of the enemy by referring back to his commission by the king.

Ministry: Ownership: Write down on paper: What sort of Church do you want to be part of? What part are you willing to play to see the dream become a reality?

Song- *Reign in me*