

Spiritual Renewal –Offering Yourself for Service

“What Are YOU Called to Do?” - Step Seven

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church

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August 27, 2023

Text: Nehemiah 11:1-31 (only read 1 and 2)

Purpose: Nehemiah began the task of rebuilding the city of Jerusalem. Once the physical buildings were in place, there was a need to secure them with people. Without people in places of service, the city would become a ghost town. Our church needs people to do the work of ministry.

A little girl was sitting on her grandfather's lap as he read her a bedtime story. From time to time, she would take her eyes off the book and reach up to touch his wrinkled cheek. She was alternately stroking her own cheek, then his again. Finally she spoke up, "Grandpa, did God make you?"



"Yes, sweetheart," he answered, "God made me a long time ago."

"Oh," she paused, "Grandpa, did God make me too?"

"Yes, indeed, honey," he said, "God made you just a little while ago."

Feeling their respective faces again, she observed, "God's getting better at it, isn't he?" ¹

Today we come to the seventh step in our series of sermons

on Spiritual Renewal. Sometimes it seems like our lives are dry and lifeless. At times we search for meaning and purpose and we come up empty. The things that drive us and energize us are the things that force us to get out of bed in the morning and head out into the classroom, office building, tobacco field, or shopping mall. But after some time, those things that thrill our soul, become routine, dull, or down right depressing. Some people dig deeper and continue to plow forward. Others quit and head for another dream. While others simply quit from life all together.



Every person in this room has, or will face, a time of crisis in their life. They will stand at the cross roads of life and look back to measure what they have accomplished. They will look to the right and left of them to see who is actually standing with them. They will look forward to see what might be in the future. That is why I am bringing this series of sermons to you. To help you have some tools in your tool box to help you move forward with purpose and passion. We all need a spiritual renewal. We all need a revival of heart. We can be revived IF we listen and take these steps of renewal.

In previous sermons, I have identified several steps we need to take in order to be on the path towards spiritual renewal. The first step in that process is to return to the word of God. We need to go back and open God's book and begin to allow what God is saying there to

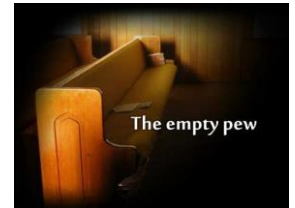


Spiritual Renewal

penetrate our lives. Secondly, we need to become obedient to what we read. If we only read it and don't obey it, then we may as well have never read it! As we read it and become obedient to it, then we will become convicted of our sin. That is our next step in spiritual renewal- confessing our sin to God. The outgrowth of confession is worship. We see who we really are in the sight of God and grab a glimpse of God's grace and mercy. It is only then we are able to worship God for who He is and what He has done for us.



Many individuals have come forward and claimed Christ as their Saviour and followed that decision with baptism. But where are they today? They were like the seeds that had fallen on shallow soil, sprang up, and then quickly withered away. If you are to have a faith that lasts a lifetime, then you need to be accountable to others in this journey of faith. Our fifth step in this journey of Spiritual renewal reminds us we are to share our faith with others and walk together with others in community.



The sixth step in our journey of renewal involves giving financially to support the purposes and ministries of that community of faith. "Nationwide today, Christians only tithe 2.5% of their income."³ For a church our size, the financial support from our members is amazing. I don't know how much each person gives to support our church. I only know how much I give. The members of this church have given faithfully to support the work and ministry we have – and I thank you for your faithfulness.

Today we come to the seventh step in spiritual renewal – offering ourselves in service. Our passage of scripture in Nehemiah 11

outlines those that are to dwell in the city of Jerusalem. Ten percent were to live there, while the remaining 90 percent were to live in the outlying towns and villages.



A few years ago, I remember talking with a man that has been involved in many different business enterprises. This individual's main business is building. He has built commercial buildings, duplexes, single family homes – both large and expensive and small and reasonably priced homes. At the time, I was serving on the town board in Stantonsburg and he asked me if I knew what it took to make a town grow? Curious, I asked him “What?” He told



me simply, “People.” You have to have homes for people to live in, to then shop in local businesses, to then be available to work in factories and offices.

The same was true for Jerusalem in Nehemiah's day. They were granted permission to return to Jerusalem and about 50,000 people returned. Once the city walls, streets, and temple were rebuilt, a portion of the population needed to live within the walls of the city. Today, you might think that would be a good thing, but during Nehemiah's day, living inside a walled city could also mean you were a target for attack from neighboring enemies. Just as Israel has enemies today, they had enemies then as well.



The Process Involved Repopulating Jerusalem²

Nehemiah set about with a plan to repopulate the city of Jerusalem. The towns in Israel were small in size during this period. They may have only been a dozen acres in size. When I was in Israel, the ruins from the towns that I visited only covered a small area. The city of Jerusalem was larger than that, built upon a ridge, with stone walls for defense. Even though the city had been only piles of rubble for almost a hundred years, it was now becoming the capital city once again.

They Cast Lots

Chapter eleven opens with the people casting lots to determine who was going to become residents of the city and who would live in the outlying cities, towns, and villages. Even today, some like to live in the city, while others long for country living. They actually conducted a lottery to determine who could live in the city.



In several instances in the Bible, the casting of lots was used.

- When a great storm came up on a ship, the sailors cast lots and found that it was Jonah that was the cause of the turbulent winds. (Johan 1:7)
- When the Priest needed to determine which goat was to be set free and which one was sacrificed, he cast lots. (Lev. 16:8)
- When Jesus' clothes were to be distributed, the soldiers cast lots.
- When the replacement for Judas was to be decided, they cast lots.

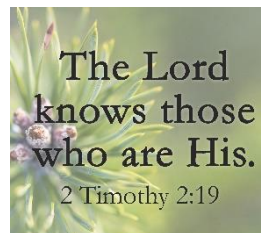
They Asked for Volunteers

In addition to those that were chosen in this manner, the leaders also asked for volunteers. Verse 2 says, “And the people blessed all the men who willingly offered themselves to dwell in Jerusalem.” Apparently, some people caught the vision for the city of Jerusalem and willingly entered the city to make it a reality. They may have always been country folks, but they became city folks in order to make Jerusalem important once again.



In the remaining verses of chapter eleven is one of those long lists of names we dread to read. Apparently in God’s plan and desire, He wanted these names recorded for all of history to read. This may have been the only time they were listed in the Bible, but it was important enough to list at least once. Those listed were from the tribe of Benjamin and Judah. They included priests, Levites, and even gatekeepers. These were real people, with real hopes and dreams, who were involved in an important time in Israel’s history. Maybe every person that moved back into the city was not listed, but God knows every person and family that came and made Jerusalem God’s city once again.

Can I pause long enough to say, that today, ***God knows those who serve Him.*** He knows the work you do in our church community. He sees how much you are devoted, or not devoted, to the mission and ministry of Spilman.



The People Involved in Repopulating Jerusalem

In Nehemiah eleven, there are several groups of individuals that are listed here. Each group had a task or purpose. Nehemiah identifies five groups.

The Groups

The first group was those that were selected by lots and those that volunteered to live in the city.

The second group was those that did the work in the temple. It says there were 822 priests and other servants who carried out the tasks of sacrifice and worship in the temple.



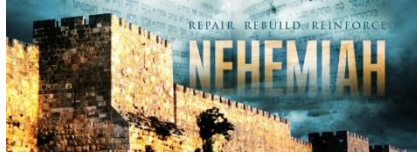
The third group took care of the civic affairs of the city. They took care of the details needed to make the rest of the city function properly. During Nehemiah’s day, both political and religious affairs were united in function and purpose. Nehemiah was creating a government to get the city going after everything was demolished years ago by the Babylonians.

In verse 17, we are introduced to an individual by the name of Mattaniah, who was “*the leader who began the thanksgiving with prayer.*” He represented the fourth group.

The last group mentioned in verse 22 was Uzzi who was “*the overseer of the Levites of Jerusalem.*”

Words Ascribed to Each Group

The first group was described as the Occupiers. They were the ones that physically moved their homes and businesses into Jerusalem.



The second group was noted for their dedication. They focused only on the activity in and around the temple. Their focus was on God.

Our third group focused upon delegation. They focused upon all the other activity outside the temple. They were the city managers. They were responsible for all the other areas in the town.

The fourth group was concerned with consecrating their lives with praise to God. They led the people to praise God. They facilitated the worship of God and encouraged others to “bring the sacrifice of praise.”



The last group, the leader of the Levites, led Israel to celebrate the life they now have in the presence of the Lord. They were to lead the people into truth, worship, and celebration.

Relating that to the Church Today

Even in our church today, we have groups of people that serve in many different areas.



- The occupiers are the ones that faithfully vote with their feet, showing up whenever and however there is work to be done. They come to business meetings, bible study meetings, and special services throughout the year.
- The dedicated ones are the ones that take their talents seriously and allow them to be used here in this church and in our community.
- The delegators are the ones that serve in administrative and leadership capacities to help make our community of faith function and work together smoothly.
- The consecrated individuals are those that intercede and pray for the work and ministry of our church. They are attuned to the suffering around us. They are attuned to the spiritual warfare that is occurring and pray for the pastor and others as they lead in our church.
- The celebrators are the ones that inspire us and encourage us to praise God and to worship God.

Servants in Our Church

Have you thought about where you might fit on this list? As I was preparing this message for today, I was reminded of all those that have agreed to serve in our church on various committees.



Church Leadership

Church Moderator
Church Historian
Deacons

Church Clerk
Trustees
Leadership Team

Sunday School Ministry

Sunday School Teachers

Music Worship Ministry

Organist

Choir

Pianist

Ushers

Ministry Teams Include:

Benevolent Ministry

Bereavement Ministry

Multimedia Sound System

Personal Care Team

Spilman on Mission

Kitchen

Support Teams including:

Personnel

Nomination

Tellers

Property

Finance

I just want to thank each of you for your willingness to help all the functions of our church work smoothly. Each person on that list is an individual but they come together as one for different purposes and functions. We are working together as one body for the purpose of glorifying God.

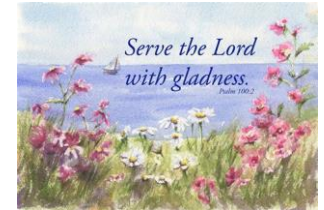
Each of us are gifted differently, but we can work for the common good of all. Each of these committees are important and those that are serving on them need to function and accomplish its intended purpose. If one person or committee refuses to function, the body suffers.

- If nominating doesn't select individuals to meet the needs in our church, then the body suffers.

- If the bereavement committee didn't provide a meal for a bereaved family, they would feel neglected and hurt.
- If the members of the church don't volunteer, and serve where they are gifted, then the work of the church will gradually cease. The pastor cannot do all the work himself.

God has chosen to use us as His living stones to build up the body of Christ. God has chosen to use each individual that belongs to Him to accomplish certain things and to mature that individual in the process. As you serve, you grow in your maturity.

When God presents you with an opportunity to serve, you need to be willing to embrace the challenge and see what God can do through you in that place of service. If we don't accept the challenges that God puts in front of us, then one day, we may look back regretting our missed opportunity.



That is why I am here today. God grew me up through Sunday school. He allowed me to serve as a Sunday school teacher and deacon at First Baptist Church here in Kinston. He has put me in places to see the greatness of God in Moscow. He had given me opportunities to minister through the deaf ministry at First Baptist and later at Tanglewood. My next opportunity came when I enrolled in the Divinity School. I didn't know where God would lead me. Later the Lord led me to serve as the Pastor at Fremont Missionary Baptist Church for 16 years.

Today, the Lord has led me here to serve the people of Spilman for almost five years. As Dr. Michael Cogdill has said many times at Campbell University Divinity School, “It is worth a life, to serve and minister to God’s people.”

We together are the Family of God. He has called us together in unity for His glory and His purpose.



Three Principles that Emerge

There are three principles that emerge out of this passage in Nehemiah if we are to accomplish God’s work.

Necessity, not Notoriety, is the rule of the Body

Each of the jobs in the church is necessary. It doesn’t matter if you are a famous person or an ordinary person. We are called to do the least tasks just as often as we are called to be the out-front leader. Do you know why you have been saved? The scripture says that you were saved, “*for good works ... that we should walk in them.*” (Eph. 2:10) You are needed not because of how much money you have, how good looking you are, not because of how famous you are, but instead, how important the task is to the body of Christ. The works you do are necessary.



Performance, not Preeminence, is the basis of Reward

Secondly, our doing of certain tasks, or the performance of certain tasks is the



basis of our reward. It is not how preeminent the job is, or how preeminent we are that matters. What matters is, “Did you do it to the best of your ability?” Those names listed in chapter eleven mattered to God. They may not have done anything else except pray, or secure the doors, or carry water in the temple, or clean up afterwards. God rewards us in the same manner. God will not give you a larger task or larger position of responsibility in the body of Christ, until you are faithful in what He has already given you.

Hebrews 6:10 reminds us, “*For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown towards His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.*” God does not forget the work we do no matter how small or large it is.

It’s a Privilege to be Drafted; It’s Even More Precious to Volunteer



The third point I notice is what a privilege it is to be asked to serve. It is even more precious if we volunteer. Draftees and volunteers are needed to do the work of God.

Maybe God is speaking to you this morning about a task or ministry you want to be a part of. Maybe God is nudging you to get involved. If you are not involved in a ministry in this church, and you want to serve speak to me, or another member of this church, and we will find a place of service for you. It is a blessing to serve.

In Isaiah chapter six, the Lord asked Isaiah a question.

“Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?”



Isaiah’s response was this, *“Here am I! Send me.”*

Is God calling you to say, “Here am I, send me!” When I answered the call, I simply trusted God and He has blessed me beyond any plans I may have made.

“It is worth a life, to serve and minister to others.”

LET US PRAY

Notes:

¹Mikey’s Funnies – Sept. 17, 2018

²Outline taken from David Jeremiah’s book on Nehemiah

³ <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2020/august-web-only/most-generous-not-who-you-expect-vertical-generosity.html> (Article dated 8/13/2020 - accessed 8/21/2023)