

Nehemiah Sermon #23

Nehemiah 11

We are in the home stretch in the Book of Nehemiah.

Chapter 11 contains another great list which continues into Chapter 12.

I'm going to cover 2 chapters today – leaving us the last chapter next Sunday.

I have entitled today's sermon "The Worship of God."

Nehemiah 11:1

Let us stand for the reading of God's Holy Word.

Nehemiah 11:1-2; 12:27, 31, 36c-38, 43

Let us pray.

You may be seated.

The Worship of God

In these two chapters – I see three principles at work that apply directly to Christians.

First, we must give ourselves to God – Romans 12:1

The Lord wants the sacrifice of our life – living – holy acceptable – which is our reasonable service.

Now that the walls and gates of Jerusalem were restored, it was important that the Jews re-populate their capital city.

The city had everything except the most important ingredient—people.

Do you know what most churches lack? PEOPLE

Why weren't there many people in the city of Jerusalem?

The city had been without a wall for 160 years / No defense / no security.

It was not a desirable place of residence.

No body wants to live in an unsecured environment.

But, there was a security system now – the wall was rebuilt; it now had to be defended.

People were needed to move in to protect the city.

Vs. 1

Nehemiah decided to tithe the people; and 10 percent were chosen by lot to move from the villages into Jerusalem.

They selected one out of every ten persons to live in Jerusalem.

It was just then that certain men stepped forward and willingly offered themselves.

This was a spontaneous, freewill sacrifice of themselves.

They gave themselves to God.

Because of this, the rest of the people were deeply moved (vs. 2)

The willing person is still basic to all true Christian service.

God needed people—live bodies—in the holy city and God needs people today.

God has decided to do His work through people and that is you and me.

Never underestimate the importance of simply being physically present in the place
where God wants you.

The men, women, and children who helped to populate the city of Jerusalem were
serving God, their nation, and future generations by their step of faith.

Notice verse 1 – the rulers already dwelt in Jerusalem.

They are leading by example!

Verse 3

Folks, we have grown accustomed to Nehemiah's practice of listing the names of the
people involved in projects.

In Chapter 3, He gave us a list, chapter 7, 8, 10, and now 11 and 12.

In listing these names, Nehemiah was giving evidence of his sincere appreciation for
each individual who assisted in the work.

God recognizes His workers/labors.

This chapter details for us who dwelt where and for what purpose.

We find here the names of unknown, and unpronounceable, obscure, forgotten
people.

These names may be forgotten or seem inconsequential to us, but not to God!

It took many people, with many skills, to maintain the ministry in Jerusalem.

They volunteered themselves to God.

Group I included *those who willingly moved into the city.*

They pulled up their domestic roots, left their lovely homes, and started over from scratch.

We find the second group mentioned in verse 10.

There were 822 people *who willingly worked within the temple.* That's quite a staff!

There's a third group in verse 15.

"Outside work" didn't just mean lawn and gardens.

Verse 16 refers to those who judged, handled civil affairs, and counseled and ministered to the public.

Not a business today could exist for long without the background people who diligently labor away from the spotlight.

The same is true for a church. Do you know what it takes to prepare for Sunday services? Many people

Another man is revealed in verse 17.

He was the leader in beginning the thanksgiving prayers.

That's what this fellow in verse 17 was known for. He prayed.

God uses many people with different gifts and skills to get His work done in this world.

The important thing is that we give our bodies to the Lord so that He can use us as His tools to accomplish His work.

Each person is important and each task is significant.

Any service done for the Lord will not be forgotten.

Even if others don't recognize or appreciate your ministry, you can be sure that God knows all about it and will reward you accordingly.

We must give ourselves to God.

Matthew 16:24, The Bible says – Jesus speaking –

“If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”

This is what it means to give ourselves to God.

This was not the first time Jesus spoke of the high cost of discipleship.

He who does not take his cross and follow after me is not worthy of Me.

He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it” (Matt. 10:37-39).

Discipleship is on God's terms, just as coming to Him for salvation is on His terms.

The Lord reminds us that the key discipleship principle – you want to be a Christ follower, you want to give yourself to God – involves self-denial, cross-bearing, and loyal obedience.

The first requirement of discipleship is self-denial.

We must give ourselves to God.

A person who is not willing to **deny himself** cannot claim to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

To deny self is to “make no provision for the flesh” (Rom. 13:14) and to “put no confidence in [it]” (Phil. 3:3). . . . utter rejection of self-will and self-sufficiency.

The second requirement for a disciple is to take up His Cross.

To the people of Jesus' day the **cross** was a very concrete and vivid reality.

It was the instrument of execution reserved for Rome's worst enemies.

When the disciples and the crowd heard Jesus speak of taking up the **cross**, there was nothing mystical to them about the idea.

They immediately had a mental picture of this.

A man who took **up his cross** began his death march, carrying the very beam on which he would hang.

For a disciple of Christ to **take up his cross** is for him to be willing to start on a death march.

To be a disciple of Jesus Christ is to be willing, in His service, to do whatever and suffer whatever for the cause of Christ.

Christ does not call disciples to Himself to make their lives easy and prosperous, but to make them holy and productive.

Willingness to **take up his cross** is the mark of the true disciple.

The third requirement of discipleship is loyal obedience to Jesus.

Only after a person denies himself and takes up his cross, Jesus said, is he prepared to **follow Me**.

True discipleship is submission to the lordship of Christ that becomes a pattern of life. There is work to be done for the Lord today.

Moreover, for that work – gifts have been given to each believer – gifts that are to be used for the benefit of the whole body of Christ – for the whole church.

The striking thing about the gifts of the Spirit is their great diversity. Secondly, the single, all-embracing purpose lying behind those gifts

The great purpose for the Church – see people saved and baptized, to disciple them, to reproduce ourselves, and to church plant.

The great purpose for the Christian – that through you – people may see God and glorify Him.

This places enormous responsibility on each of us who are the Lord's.

If God had an active/inactive list, which side would you be on?

Which column would you be in?

★First we must give ourselves to God. You want to worship God – give yourself. ★

Secondly - We must give our praise to God (Neh. 12:27-42)

Who deserves our praise?

The people just finished an unbelievable, impossible, building project.

The people have gathered to dedicate the recently completed wall – Chapter 12, verse

27

The wall was finished: broad, stable, strong, well constructed, and well-engineered.

They built it, but the glory and praise and honor goes to God and they give it to God.

The wall was the main attraction.

So, they conducted “what we would call” a dedication service.

New baby, new home, new job

The dedication consisted of more than just celebration – notice something very

important in verse 30

Before there was one moment of celebration, purification occurred – cleansing,

sanctifying, purging out.

The Bible tells us, if man purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor,
sanctified and fit for the Master's use and prepared unto every good work
(II Timothy 2:21)

In order to carry on the celebration of the wall, their hearts had to be pure.

This is the correct order.

For what good are dedicated walls without dedicated people?

Holiness precedes happiness.

If we are going to give praise to God – we must be holy. ★

We must give praise to God.

Now, the order for the dedication service was unique (vs. 31)

The leaders and singers were divided into two groups, with Ezra leading one group and
Nehemiah (following the choir) directing the second group.

And up they came by the dozens onto this great, broad wall that went around
Jerusalem.

Nehemiah's wall was nearly nine feet wide.

The processions started probably from the Valley Gate on the west wall, marching in
opposite directions.

Ezra's company (12:31-37) went south (counter-clockwise direction) on the walls to the
Dung Gate, then to the Fountain Gate and the Water Gate on the east wall of the
city.

Nehemiah's company went north (clockwise) past the Old Gate, the Ephraim Gate, the
Fish Gate, the Sheep Gate, and the Muster Gate ("gate of the guard").

As these groups started out – they started singing

The worship followed a definite plan; it was not in any way disorganized.

Eventually, the two companies met just opposite the house of God (the temple), and there sacrifices were offered to the Lord.

Before the Temple, the combined choirs sang their praises, and at the same time the priests, offered the sacrifices.

Not only did the singers sing, but they sang loud (v. 42e).

Do you know what that means in the Hebrew? It means to sing out.

And even the sacrifices that were offered were said to have been great sacrifices (v. 43).

These people were wholehearted in their worship.

They gave praise to God. They were involved in praising God.

It was not only the “professional musicians” who expressed praise to God, but the women and children also joined in the singing (Neh. 12:43).

Too many Christians become spectators instead of participants; and spectators miss most of the blessing.

Why did Ezra and Nehemiah organize this kind of a dedication service?

To begin with, it was the walls and gates that were being dedicated and it was only right that the people see and touch them.

But there is another reason for this unique service:

The people were bearing witness to the watching world that God had done the work, and He alone should be glorified.

The enemy had said that the walls would be so weak that a fox could knock them down (4:3), but here were the people *marching on the walls!*

What a testimony to the unbelieving Gentiles of the power of God and the reality of faith. . . . “this work was wrought by our God” (6:16).

Every time we hold services in this dying town of Medora – it’s a testimony for God.

Verse 43e, was heard afar off.

Every detail of the dedication service seemed to echo the words of the Psalmist, “*Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Your name give glory.*” (Psa. 115:1)

Too often, a church dedication service marks the *end* and not the beginning of ministry as the congregation breathes a sigh of relief and settles down to business as usual.

Church people think the completion of a new building is a milestone, but it often becomes a millstone.

The most important thing about this dedication service was not the march around the walls.

It was the expression of joyful praise that came from the choirs and the people.

Hebrews 13:15, “*By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name.*”

Psalm 69:30-31, “*I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify Him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the LORD.*”

The people offered their praise thankfully.

One overriding feature of the occasion was the emphasis placed upon thanksgiving.

The dedication itself was kept with gladness, both with thanksgivings, and with singing (v. 27).

Note that the emphasis was on *joyful praise*.

Singing is mentioned eight times in this chapter, *thanksgiving* six times, *rejoicing* seven times, and *musical instruments* three times.

One of the most exuberant expressions of a happy heart in Jesus, is a singing mouth – singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.

★I'm impressed with the fact that Nehemiah 12:43 does not say the song was heard from afar. It says, "the *joy* was heard from afar."★

This must have been an impressive celebration.

Special celebrations are a help to the believers and a testimony to the unbelievers.

We, too, must see ourselves as part of God's continuing plan – 50th Anniversary – not a millstone but a milestone.

First, we must give ourselves to God

Second, we must give our praise to God.

3. We must give our gifts to God (Neh. 12:44-47)

12:47

The result of a ministry that aimed to please God and to be faithful to His Word was that "all Israel contributed the daily portions" (v. 47).

The people had covenanted with God to support the temple ministry (10:32-39), and they kept their promises.

They said, we are going to take care of the House of God and the ministers of God.

Keep in mind that these tithes and offerings represented the support of the temple workers so that they could serve the Lord.

The people brought their tithes and offerings, not only because it was the commandment of God, but also because they were “pleased with the ministering priests and Levites” (12:44).

The ministers at the temple were exemplary both in their personal purity and in their obedience to God’s Word (vv. 30, 45).

They conducted the worship, not according to their own ideas, but in obedience to the directions given by God.

When believers have a Godly ministry that exalts the Lord and obeys the Word, they are more than glad to bring their tithes and offerings to support it.

The people gave “not grudgingly” but cheerfully (II Cor. 9:7).

★J. Hudson Taylor used to say, “When God’s work is done in God’s way for God’s glory, it will not lack God’s support.”★

Our material gifts are really spiritual sacrifices to the Lord, if they are given in the right spirit.

The Apostle Paul called the gifts from the Philippian church “an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God” (Phil 4:18).

But before we can bring our material gifts to the Lord, we must first give ourselves to Him.

Paul commended the churches of Macedonia because they “first gave themselves to the Lord” (II Cor. 8:5)

★Our gifts cannot be a substitute for ourselves.★

It was a high and holy day in Jerusalem, a happy day because the work had been completed and God had been glorified in a wonderful way.

Did the blessing last? No, it didn't; and we will find out why next Sunday.

Let us stand for closing invitation

Our final rewards will be determined on the basis of faithfulness—not public applause.

The public may never know of your ministry, praise gifts, but that will have nothing to do with final rewards.

God never overlooks anything.

Here am I, Lord – use me.

God – with my body – I will yield myself to your cause.

Deny myself – take up my Cross and follow thee.

God – I'm not singing, I'm not praising, I'm not thanking.

Help me by faith to see you and glorify you. Restore the joy of my salvation.

God – help me to give as you lead me.

The Worship of God – myself, my voice, my gifts

You cannot do any of these things and find any favor with God unless you have trusted Christ as your Savior