

ARISE

Building Lives that Build Walls in the
Face of Danger
2.26.2023



THE JOURNEY
CHURCH

SCRIPTURE:

Nehemiah 6-7

SERMON:

Today is a big day. We are concluding our ARISE series through Nehemiah. We have laid out where the Lord is leading us as a church and we've looked at the story of Nehemiah and how it informs us on how to think about these things. It requires faith and courage, perseverance and sacrifice to be a part of a movement of God. I hope if you've been here, you've done more than simply heard about what we're doing, but you've caught the flavor of why we're doing it.

One of the big things that this series has been about, and this initiative is all about, is our desire to build YOU up, not just buildings or a school. **The ultimate goal of "building up" is to mature everyone in the church into Christlikeness.** We want to build you up so you can stay the course in this crazy world.

And we don't want to just "not conform or collapse" from the pressure of culture. We want to look like people who are serious about living out our faith, Coram Deo, before the face of God. Doing this can help us rescue people laying in the ruins of the devastation the culture has wrought on them. Listen to these incredible words from Isaiah 61:

**Isaiah 61:1-4 -- 1 The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor;
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;
2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
3 to grant to those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes,**

*the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit;
that they may be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.*

*4 They shall build up the ancient ruins;
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.*

I'm praying we would be like Isaiah 61's description, people "called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified." I'm also praying we can comfort the mourning, build up the ruins and devastation of the cities and generations coming up.

We want to build Oaks. Why does Scripture use "oaks" as the tree we want to be? In the tree world, oaks are known for strength and endurance. They grow slower than most all other trees, but last longer and withstand all the adverse elements. Maples, Beech trees, Cedars, and other well-known trees grow taller, faster than the Oak. But Oaks are stronger trees, and they stand the test of time.

As believers, we want our lives to be like Oak Trees. We want to be strong and enduring. We want to be built to stand when the storms of life come. We want to keep growing consistently and over time, not just sprout up quickly and then be weak and fade. That's why I say: **we want to build Oaks.** We want to be building lives that build walls in face of danger, opposition, and difficulty.

In Nehemiah 6 & 7, we see the result of this consistent labor by those trusting God with courageous faith.

Scripture Exegesis: Nehemiah 6-7

6 Now when Sanballat and Tobiah and Geshem the Arab and the rest of our enemies heard that I had built the wall and that there was no breach left in it (although up to that time I had not set up the doors in the gates), 2 Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, "Come and let us meet together at Hakkephirim in the plain of Ono." But they intended to do me harm. 3 And I sent messengers to them, saying, "I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?" 4 And they sent to me four times in this way, and I answered

them in the same manner. 5 In the same way Sanballat for the fifth time sent his servant to me with an open letter in his hand. 6 In it was written, "It is reported among the nations, and Geshem also says it, that you and the Jews intend to rebel; that is why you are building the wall. And according to these reports you wish to become their king. 7 And you have also set up prophets to proclaim concerning you in Jerusalem, 'There is a king in Judah.' And now the king will hear of these reports. So now come and let us take counsel together." 8 Then I sent to him, saying, "No such things as you say have been done, for you are inventing them out of your own mind." 9 For they all wanted to frighten us, thinking, "Their hands will drop from the work, and it will not be done." But now, O God, strengthen my hands.

The opposition continues against Nehemiah. They send people to call Nehemiah into meetings, but he refuses. His response, "I'm doing a great work and cannot come down." In other words, listen, there's a mission to accomplish and you're not helping me to do it. I'm not coming off the wall.

They start lying about Nehemiah to try and scare him into the reaction they want. But it didn't work. He's an oak. He stayed faithful and listened to God. He stayed prayerful and diligent, asking the Lord to continue strengthening his hands.

This is one of the effects that opposition and struggles provides: further dependence upon God. We talked a little about this last week, but the constant struggle kept Nehemiah depending on God by faith. He had to keep looking to Him for help. This is a much better place than to be trouble-free and prayerless and self-reliant.

10 Now when I went into the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah, son of Mehetabel, who was confined to his home, he said, "Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple. Let us close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you. They are coming to kill you by night." 11 But I said, "Should such a man as I run away? And what man such as I could go into the temple and live? I will not go in." 12 And I understood and saw that God had not sent him, but he had pronounced the prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. 13 For this purpose he was hired, that I should be afraid and act in this way and sin, and so they could give me a bad name in order to taunt me. 14 Remember Tobiah and Sanballat, O my God, according to these things that they did, and also the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets who wanted to make me afraid.

Tobiah and Sanballat hire someone to try and get Nehemiah to quarantine himself in the Temple for safety. He urged Nehemiah to protect himself at night from attacks. But notice the courage of Nehemiah. He's unwilling to hide. He refuses to live in fear or protect his own neck. But also pay attention to how prominent his dependence upon God is in these passages. He discerned that God had not sent that guy to prophesy, but his enemies had. That took spiritual discernment. But also see that his prayer is that God will bring justice against their enemies. He stays in constant communication with the Lord as he engages in this work.

15 So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty-two days. 16 And when all our enemies heard of it, all the nations around us were afraid and fell greatly in their own esteem, for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God. 17 Moreover, in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters to Tobiah, and Tobiah's letters came to them. 18 For many in Judah were bound by oath to him, because he was the son-in-law of Shecaniah the son of Arah: and his son Jehohanan had taken the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah as his wife. 19 Also they spoke of his good deeds in my presence and reported my words to him. And Tobiah sent letters to make me afraid.

They finish the wall in 52 days! The word spreads and the enemies of Nehemiah and the surrounding nations took a blow to their pride. Like in the days of old, when God's fame spread through the rescue of the Israelites out of Egypt or victory through Joshua against the people of Canaan or through David against the surrounding peoples. As God gave victory, the fear of God spread. God gets the glory through great feats. The fame of God's name spreads when the people endure the great work and see it through.

Chapter 7

1 Now when the wall had been built and I had set up the doors, and the gatekeepers, the singers, and the Levites had been appointed, 2 I gave my brother Hanani and Hananiah the governor of the castle charge over Jerusalem, for he was a more faithful and God-fearing man than many. 3 And I said to them, "Let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun is hot. And while they are still standing guard, let them shut and bar the doors. Appoint guards from among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, some at their guard posts and some in front of their own homes." 4 The city was wide and large, but the people within it were few, and no houses had been rebuilt. 5 Then my God put it into my heart to assemble the nobles and the officials and the people to be enrolled by genealogy. And I found the book of the genealogy of those who came up at the first, and I found written in it:

Leaders are appointed in different roles based on gifts and skills. Character and godliness were still central in this (vs 2). Then God led Nehemiah to record the people. He opened it and found written those who came up first. This goes back to how the work of previous generations builds on the work of the present generation. And the work we do now paves the way for who comes next.

Verses 6-65 records the names and families.

66 The whole assembly together was 42,360, 67 besides their male and female servants, of whom there were 7,337. And they had 245 singers, male and female. 68 Their horses were 736, their mules 245, 69 their camels 435, and their donkeys 6,720. 70 Now some of the heads of fathers' houses gave to the work. The governor gave to the treasury 1,000 darics of gold, 50 basins, 30 priests' garments and 500 minas of silver. 71 And some of the heads of fathers' houses gave into the treasury of the work 20,000 darics of gold and 2,200 minas of silver. 72 And what the rest of the people gave was 20,000 darics of gold, 2,000 minas of silver, and 67 priests' garments. 73 So the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, some of the people, the temple servants, and all Israel, lived in their towns.

And when the seventh month had come, the people of Israel were in their towns. Over 42K people assembled. This was a great number of people. And the work was recorded, and the gifts were recorded. It's a reminder that these records are eternally stored, not just in the books of man, but in the halls of Heaven. The work gets done through the generosity of the people. Through the work of the people. Through the prayers and faith of the people. And ultimately, through the power of God working in all those things.

We read this earlier in the series, but what follows these passages is the gathering to hear the Word read. They worship and hear the Word so they can obey it. The work is ultimately about forming them into a people who live under the worship and rule of God. The city goes from chaos and ruins to orderly and worshipful. This is what godly leadership, adhering to the Scriptures, brings. This axiom holds true at all times in all places: it's either Christ or Chaos.

- Today we are numbering ourselves and recording the gifts we intend to give to see the "work of the wall" accomplished.

- The names were recorded. If you call TJC home, I'm calling you to join us in recording your name in the work. This work, like the work of Nehemiah and those listed, will live far beyond us. But the record will record us. And it will be a reflection of our faith, good or bad.
- As shovels go in the ground, as more people come to faith and grow in their walk with him, you'll be a part of that fruit. As a school begins, and as children have a biblical worldview anchored to their souls, you'll be a part of that fruit. As churches get planted and revitalized, and missionaries share Christ with the unreached, you'll be a part of that fruit.
- Let's ARISE and build. The work is too great for us to come down off the wall. Let's call upon our God for His favor on this work. And let's demonstrate our trust in Him, as we personally commit to the work ourselves.

REVIEW:

- ❖ Why did Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem keep requesting for Nehemiah to meet with them? How did Nehemiah respond?
- ❖ What happened when the other nations heard that the wall was finished?
- ❖ What did Nehemiah and the people do when the wall was complete?

REFLECT:

- ❖ What lessons do we learn from these verses about how the enemy will tempt us with distractions and fear?
- ❖ What can we learn from the way Nehemiah responded from the attempts to distract him and intimidate him?

RESPOND:

- ❖ What are some steps you can take to prevent yourself from being distracted (Proverbs 4:25-27, 1 Corinthians 10:13, Psalm 46:10) or intimidated (Deuteronomy 31:6, Romans 8:31, Proverbs 30:5) by culture?
- ❖ Who can you Build Up (disciple) and strengthen to stand against the culture?

MEDITATE:

- ❖ Nehemiah 7:1-2 - *1 Now when the wall had been built and I had set up the doors, and the gatekeepers, the singers, and the Levites had been appointed, 2 I have my brother Hanani and Hananiah the governor of the castle charge over Jerusalem, for he was a more faithful and God-fearing man than many.*

MEMORIZE:

- ❖ Ephesians 6:13 - *Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.*

PRAYER FOCUS:

- ❖ Pastor - **Shawn Casto**

- ❖ Ministries - Life Groups, MDWK, Relengage
- ❖ Pray that Arise will reach far beyond the walls of TJC and make an impact for generations as we Build Up and Send Out.
- ❖ NAMB Church Planter - **Juan Carlos Hernández Geleas** - Phoenix, AZ - Grace Pointe Espanol
- ❖ Unreached People Group (UPG): **Brahmin in India**
- ❖ Population: 34,711,000
- ❖ Christian: 0.0%
- ❖ Evangelical: 0.0%
- ❖ Primary Religion: Hinduism
- ❖ Primary Language: Hindi
- ❖ Status: **Unreached**