

## St John's Church, Kingston Park Sunday Worship, 27<sup>th</sup> June 2021

Welcome to our service this Sunday. Our speaker today is Rev. Ray Richardson, who is the Northern Baptist Association Home Mission Co-Ordinator, and I believe well known to many of you at St John's. But first an opening prayer.

Dear loving God, we thank you for being with us this day and we ask that you will open our hearts and minds to all you have to give us this morning. May we not only be listening to your word but may you give us the grace to act on the promptings from our hearts and minds, that we may be people obedient to you and your word. We ask this in the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

### Psalm 25: 1-10 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup> In you, LORD my God,  
I put my trust.

<sup>2</sup> I trust in you;  
do not let me be put to shame,  
nor let my enemies triumph over me.

<sup>3</sup> No one who hopes in you  
will ever be put to shame,  
but shame will come on those  
who are treacherous without cause.

<sup>4</sup> Show me your ways, LORD,  
teach me your paths.

<sup>5</sup> Guide me in your truth and teach me,  
for you are God my Saviour,  
and my hope is in you all day long.

<sup>6</sup> Remember, LORD, your great mercy and love,  
for they are from of old.

<sup>7</sup> Do not remember the sins of my youth  
and my rebellious ways;  
according to your love remember me,  
for you, LORD, are good.

<sup>8</sup> Good and upright is the LORD;  
therefore he instructs sinners in his ways.

<sup>9</sup> He guides the humble in what is right  
and teaches them his way.

<sup>10</sup> All the ways of the LORD are loving and faithful  
toward those who keep the demands of his covenant.

### Song: Jesus, stand among us.

(This can be found on YouTube here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mC16hj3RoXo> )

Jesus stand among us  
At the meeting of our lives  
Be our sweet agreement  
At the meeting of our eyes

So to You we're gathering  
Out of each and every land  
Christ the love between us  
At the joining of our hands

*O Jesus we love You  
So we gather here  
Join our hearts in unity  
And take away our fear*

(Graham Kendrick)

## Nehemiah 3: 1-6 (NIV)

Eliashib the high priest and his fellow priests went to work and rebuilt the Sheep Gate. They dedicated it and set its doors in place, building as far as the Tower of the Hundred, which they dedicated, and as far as the Tower of Hananel. <sup>2</sup> The men of Jericho built the adjoining section, and Zakkur son of Imri built next to them.

<sup>3</sup> The Fish Gate was rebuilt by the sons of Hassenaah. They laid its beams and put its doors and bolts and bars in place. <sup>4</sup> Meremoth son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz, repaired the next section. Next to him Meshullam son of Berekiah, the son of Meshezabel, made repairs, and next to him Zadok son of Baana also made repairs. <sup>5</sup> The next section was repaired by the men of Tekoa, but their nobles would not put their shoulders to the work under their supervisors.

<sup>6</sup> The Jeshanah Gate was repaired by Joiada son of Paseah and Meshullam son of Besodeiah. They laid its beams and put its doors with their bolts and bars in place.

### Message (Rev. Ray Richardson)

You are famished. You haven't eaten for several days, but you have been invited to a banquet. You arrive and are seated with the other guests as huge platters of delicious smelling food are served. But then you discover that you have a rather serious problem: your arms will not bend at the elbow! You can't get the food from your plate to your mouth! Then you learn that everyone else at the banquet has the same problem!

But then one person gets an idea. He reaches down with his fork and gets a mouthful of food. With his stiff arm, he swings it over into his neighbour's mouth. His neighbour reciprocates and soon everyone is feeding one another and enjoying the banquet.

That's a rough picture of how God's people, His church, should function. We are many members, but one body in Christ. He wants us to learn to work together. God Himself is a Trinity. He is one God consisting of three persons, each of which is fully God. The three persons are in perfect unity of being and harmony in working together. God wants His people to reflect His image by working together in unity and harmony.

But that's easier said than done. How do we do it? Nehemiah 3 provides us with an illustrative answer. It's an account of the division of labour in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem under Nehemiah's leadership. One well-known Bible teacher suggests that the gates in the chapter, assigning a spiritual meaning to each one. The Sheep Gate refers to Christ, the Good Shepherd, where the Christian life must begin. The Fish Gate refers to Christ's calling us to be fishers of men. The Old Gate means that we should reject all the modern, newfangled ideas and get back to the old paths. Etc.!

However there is a gate called the Dung gate??

Why did God include Nehemiah 3 in Scripture? What does He want us to learn from it? I believe that it's here to show us the importance of working together to accomplish God's purpose.

***To accomplish God's purpose, we need a common vision, dedicated leaders, and willing workers who do their part.***

These three elements are either explicit or implicit are the common vision to rebuild the wall; Nehemiah as the leader who had instilled that vision; and, all the people who got involved.

1. To accomplish God's purpose, we need a common vision for the task.

You can't work together if everyone has a different notion of what you're trying to accomplish. If one man had thought that the purpose was to construct a decorative fence, but the next person visualises a fortress, chaos would have reigned! If they had got very far, it would have looked ridiculous. They needed to agree on a common vision so they could work together harmoniously.

The task was specific and measurable: to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem to provide a defence against their enemies. "We did it!"

But the church's task is not so easily attained. Our task is to see the Great Commission fulfilled by proclaiming the gospel to every people group on earth. But more than just evangelism, that task requires raising up churches in every people group that teach their people to obey all that Jesus commanded (Matt. 28:20). And the supreme goal of God's purpose through His church is that He would be glorified, that His name would be known on earth as it is in heaven.

Our goal is to spread a passion for God's glory among the nations by proclaiming the gospel and by helping all His saints to savour Jesus Christ as their greatest joy and treasure. That's our vision.

Everything we do for the Lord should have that vision in mind, even though it's not as immediately obvious how every task contributes to the vision. For example, if you get an opportunity to talk to someone about Jesus Christ and they respond to the gospel, that is obviously related to the vision!

But what about cleaning up the kitchen after a church social? Helping with that task probably won't directly result in many souls being added to the kingdom. But even so, it is a vital task that contributes to the overall cause. If no one chose to do it, it could seriously hinder the well-being of the church! Or, someone could do it with a grumbling spirit, complaining about how insensitive others are who don't get involved. Or, you can do it with joy in your heart because God has saved you and made you a part of His church. He gets the glory and your life radiates the joy of knowing Jesus Christ.

2. To accomplish God's purpose, we need dedicated leaders who can help everyone work toward the common vision.

God accomplishes His purpose through His people, but people need leaders to motivate and organize them for the cause. The people listed in Nehemiah 3 had been living there for years. But the wall which had been broken and the gates burnt had been walked past for years and years, people had ignored them and they didn't get built until God raised up Nehemiah to lead the cause. It's interesting that Nehemiah is never mentioned in chapter 3 (3:16 refers to a different man), but his labour is behind the whole chapter. He did at least seven things that good leaders do:

#### (1) A LEADER MUST NOT MIND IF THE CREDIT GOES TO OTHERS.

Nehemiah didn't want a huge sign over the main gate or a bronze plaque reading: THE NEHEMIAH MEMORIAL WALL. Rather, Nehemiah was committed to the task. He wanted the wall to be built so that God's name would be exalted in Jerusalem and His people would no longer be a reproach. Nehemiah knew that God would recognize his efforts. He was labouring to hear "well done" from the Lord (13:31).

#### (2) A LEADER MUST MOTIVATE PEOPLE.

The Jews had been back in the land for 90 years, but the wall hadn't been rebuilt. But then Nehemiah came along and got everyone excited about the idea. They went to work and put up the wall in record time, in spite of opposition.

Motivation is a key to productivity. You've experienced this. You've had a project that didn't get done for a long time. You procrastinated because you just were not motivated to do it. Then something inside you changed. Maybe it was a deadline: Clean the house before the relatives arrived for a visit. Maybe you saw the value of getting it done. You thought, "I'm tired of looking at a weed-overgrown back garden. I'm going to landscape it." You got motivated and finished the project rather quickly.

The difficult thing about motivating a group of people is that what motivates some turns off others. Even Nehemiah couldn't get the nobles of Tekoa to join the project (3:5). One wise way that Nehemiah motivated the people was to assign many of them to work on the portion of the wall that they had particular interest in. The priests worked on the Sheep Gate (3:1), where the people would bring sacrifices to the temple. Others repaired the wall in front of their own homes (3:10, 23, 28-30). They had a personal incentive to do a good job!

### (3) A LEADER MUST PLAN AND ORGANIZE.

It is obvious from the smooth operation outlined in chapter 3 that Nehemiah had done some extensive planning and organizing. He had figured out in advance how to go about this huge task. He broke the project down into manageable units. He assigned the available workers to the various units and worked to coordinate them so that everything fit together.

And there is nothing wrong with organization, as long as we are flexible enough to adapt to the strengths and weaknesses of the individuals involved. Sometimes people emphasize that the body of Christ is a living organism, not an organization. While that is true and must not be forgotten, we also should remember that every living organism is highly organized. There is nothing wrong and everything right with organization as long as it furthers the efficient functioning of the organism.

### (4) A LEADER MUST DELEGATE.

Nehemiah couldn't possibly have done all this work by himself. He had to entrust it to the workers and give them the authority to get the job done. Sometimes, to be honest, it is easier to do the job myself rather than to delegate it. But as the job grows in size, the necessity of delegation grows.

Some pastors keep their hand in every aspect of the ministry, and they often burn out. God has given gifts to His people and they are competent to carry out His work. I'm available as a resource if there is a problem. But I do not need to have my hand on everything. I couldn't do that and get done what God has given me to do. If God has called you to lead, always ask yourself, "Can someone else do this more effectively than I can?" By delegating, you involve more workers and you get more done.

### (5) A LEADER MUST OVERSEE.

Delegating does not mean dumping or dictating! To dump something on someone and walk away from it is not effective leadership. To dictate every detail is not to delegate with proper freedom. While Nehemiah delegated the work, you can be sure that he went around inspecting the progress, talking to his leaders, helping them keep things moving toward the goal. In 3:20, he notes that Baruch *zealously* repaired a section of the wall. Apparently, Nehemiah knew not only who was doing what, but also *how* they were doing it. Baruch did an exceptional job.

The elders are to give oversight to the flock. That involves the balance between giving guidance and counsel as needed, but also giving the freedom to workers to carry out their ministries in accordance with their own gifts and ideas, in line with Scripture and the overall vision.

### (6) A LEADER MUST GIVE PROPER RECOGNITION.

Apparently Nehemiah wrote down in detail who was doing what on this project (I can't imagine him remembering all these names without writing them down!). Some are mentioned as completing more than one section of the wall (3:4 & 21; 5 & 27). But the important thing was not that *Nehemiah* recognized every worker, but that *God* recognized them by including their names here. I'll be honest that I'm always a little nervous to give recognition by name for fear that I'll forget someone who will get his feelings hurt. But in spite of that, it is proper to give recognition for a job well done. Flowers, Hoover, window cleaner etc.

### (7) A LEADER MUST NOT GET DISTRACTED BY THOSE WHO ARE NOT COOPERATIVE.

Some do not see the vision we have [Nehemiah 3:5](#) mentions in passing the nobles of Tekoa who refused to join the project, perhaps out of petty pride. To the nobles' shame, the people of Tekoa built two sections of the wall, and some nobles from other towns rolled up their sleeves and went to work (3:9, 12). But Nehemiah didn't expend any energy on the nobles of Tekoa. Rather, he worked with the many willing workers. Those who didn't get involved were the losers in the long run.

To accomplish God's purpose, we need a common vision and dedicated leaders. Finally,

3. To accomplish God's purpose, we need willing workers who do their part.

The people heard Nehemiah's vision and they responded, "Let's arise and build" (2:18). Working together they accomplished what no one could have accomplished individually. Four things:

### (1) THE WORKERS WERE WILLING TO COOPERATE AND COORDINATE WITH ONE ANOTHER FOR THE OVERALL CAUSE.

While some worked in front of their own homes (as already noted), many others came from outlying cities to help (3:2, 5, 7, 13, 14, 16, 17). After the project was finished, they returned home without any daily personal benefit. Perhaps they could dwell more securely in their villages with a strong capital in Jerusalem. They would have enjoyed knowing that the temple was secure behind the wall, so that they could go there for the annual feasts. But beyond any personal benefits, they were willing to work for the overall cause, that the name of the Lord and His people would no longer be a reproach among the nations.

Also, they coordinated the project so that all the parts fit together. Each person knew what his task was and did it, but he did it in harmony and conjunction with others. It would not have worked if one guy built his section but didn't interlock it with the section of the guy next to him. The guys building the gates had to coordinate with the guys building the walls around the gates. In the church, it is not enough to have a bunch of independent ministries alongside each other. We all should work together in supporting the overall cause of Christ.

### (2) THE WORKERS WERE WILLING TO COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER FOR THE OVERALL CAUSE.

Everyone couldn't do the same job. Some worked on the walls. Others worked on the gates. Hanging a large gate is not an easy task! Some were strong enough to carry heavy stones or bricks. Others had to do lighter work. But each worker was important to the cause. As Paul tells us ([1 Cor. 12:12-30](#)), the body is not one member, but many. The foot dare not think that it is not a vital part of the body because it is not a hand. And the hand would be foolish to despise the foot. Each part has a specific and important function to fulfill. Each part depends on the other parts in order for the whole body to function properly.

### (3) SOME WORKERS WERE WILLING TO WORK OUTSIDE OF THEIR AREAS OF STRENGTH.

The priests (including the high priest) got involved building the Sheep Gate and a portion of the wall (3:1). They didn't learn how to do that in Bible College! Maybe they had to get some pointers on how to build and hang a gate from some of the men who were experienced in that sort of thing. Some of the city officials rolled up their sleeves and joined their people in the work (3:9, 12). They didn't view manual labour as beneath their dignity. Some of the workers were goldsmiths and perfume makers by trade (3:8). They weren't used to this kind of rugged labour. They probably had aches in muscles they never knew that they had before this, but they joined in the work. One man made repairs with his daughters (3:12)! Apparently they did more than made Lunch and Tea or Coffee!

Sometimes people will say, "I'm not going to work on a cleaning crew because that's not my spiritual gift." Your spiritual gift should help you know where to concentrate your efforts, but there are many jobs where we're ALL called to pitch in, whether it's our gift or not. The point of [Nehemiah 3](#) is that *everyone* got involved. Eventhough I am a minister I too got involved in tasks such as painting.

The New Testament is clear that *if you're a Christian, you are in the ministry* (service) and you will give an account of your ministry to the Master someday ([Matt. 25:14-30](#)). The danger is that the "one-talent" Christian will think that his part is insignificant and he won't use it for the Master. But the Master expects every servant to use what He has entrusted to him.

### (4) SOME WORKERS WERE WILLING TO DO THE LESS GLAMOROUS OR DESIRABLE JOBS.

Malchijah (3:14) repaired the Dung Gate. It was at the south of the city, and opened to the Kidron Valley where the people brought all their Rubbish to burn. If he is the same Malchijah mentioned in 3:31, he was a goldsmith by trade, and he also helped out with repairs on another part of the wall. There were probably a lot more volunteers to repair the Fountain Gate than there were for the Dung Gate! But Malchijah realized that the job needed to be done, and he was willing to do it for the cause.

So what's our response today, we attend services week by week but you are not serving in any part of the cause, it is good that you attend worship sharing in fellowship whether online or in person and maybe we will meet much more in the near future. Maybe your taking a rest and that is good also. But

if you know Jesus Christ you are a VITAL part of the body and at some point the Lord wants you to get involved in His cause

Here's how 1 Peter 4:10-11 puts it:

“As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

So let us get working together for the Kingdom of GOD. Amen

### **Prayers (Nina Lloyd-Hirst)**

Living Lord, thank you for all the blessings that you give us each day: for the beauty of the created world, for times and seasons, for families and friends, for work and leisure, for health and soundness of mind and for the fellowship we enjoy here at St. John's. Give us thankful hearts so that we may live our lives in humility and gratitude, joyfully praising you each day.

Lord we come to you:

**You can make us whole**

Living Lord, you created a wonderful world and men and women in your image. Forgive us that the world which we have created is flawed and broken. We pray for those parts of the world in particular need at this time. We remember the homeless, refugees and all stateless persons. We remember those who are wrongly held in prison. We remember victims of violence and those who are exploited. We remember those situations throughout the world where there is conflict and unrest. We pray for all those who work for peace, remembering especially the United Nations and peace keeping forces. We pray for our government and for world leaders that they may work together for the good of all. Thank you for the freedoms that we enjoy in this country. Help us to be good citizens, both in this world and in your heavenly kingdom.

Lord we come to you:

**You can make us whole**

Living Lord, thank you for the freedom we enjoy to worship you here in this place. Thank you for all those who seek to bring the good news of your saving grace both here and throughout the world. We pray for Christians who live in areas where it is difficult to be a Christian and for those who face persecution. Strengthen all your church in the service of Christ, that those who confess your name may be united in your truth, live together in your love and reveal your glory in the world.

Lord we come to you:

**You can make us whole**

Living Lord, thank you for friendship, thank you especially for those who have been a strength and a joy to us personally in times of need. We pray that you will guide all who teach and influence others. We pray for our children, for schools and colleges, remembering especially those young people who will soon be leaving home to further their education. Living Lord, let us know your presence in our homes and with our loved ones.

Lord we come to you:

**You can make us whole**

Living Lord, thank you for all those people who work to bring healing and comfort to those who are sick or in any kind of need and for those who seek to find solutions to the problems of disease. We pray for those throughout the world whose lives have been affected by the pandemic. We pray for all those who are sick in body, mind or spirit and for those who mourn. We lift them to you now into the light of your healing presence. Living Lord, as we lift before you these whom we have named in the silence of our hearts, we pray that your healing love may bring them to wholeness of body, mind and spirit. Give them courage and hope in their troubles and restore in them the joy of your salvation. Living Lord, whose power is revealed in our weakness, and whose grace meets our every need, thank for your healing and for your love.

Lord we come to you:

**You can make us whole**

'Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, now and for ever. Amen'

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen**

**Song: Oh how good it is.**

This can be found on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7i3rNM6k9Y0> .

Oh how good it is  
When the family of God  
Dwells together in spirit  
In faith and unity  
Where the bonds of peace  
Of acceptance and love  
Are the fruit of His presence  
Here among us

Oh how good it is  
On this journey we share  
To rejoice with the happy  
And weep with those who mourn  
For the weak find strength  
The afflicted find grace  
When we offer the blessing  
Of belonging

*So with one voice we'll sing to the Lord  
And with one heart we'll live out His word  
Till the whole earth sees  
The Redeemer has come  
For He dwells in the presence of His people*

Oh how good it is  
To embrace His command  
To prefer one another  
Forgive as He forgives  
When we live as one  
We all share in the love  
Of the Son with the Father  
And the Spirit

(Keith & Kristyn Getty, Ross Holmes, Stuart Townend)

## **Blessing**

The Lord of light and love, the giver of life eternal, fill your hearts with his grace and goodness, and the blessings of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you and all you love today and always. Amen

May we go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**In the name of Christ. Amen.**

*Worship prepared by Revd. Annie Gray. Message by Rev. Ray Richardson. Prayers by Nina Lloyd-Hirst.  
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