



ENTER God's presence

To the faithful you show yourself to be faithful, to the blameless you show yourself blameless, you save the humble but bring low those whose eyes are haughty. You, Lord, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness to light.
- Psalm 18:25,27-28

Faithful Heavenly Father, great is your faithfulness to all those who call on your name! We ask that you would be present here with us again as we gather around your Word. May it renew in us our faith and trust in all your promises and grow in us a renewed heart of service to you and to others. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.



SHARE life together

- 1. How have you seen Jesus at work in your life this week, in your highs and your lows?**
- 2. Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?**
- 3. What is the most helpful thing someone has ever done for you?**

"Never ask someone to do what you are not prepared to do yourself.' It's a leadership principle that every successful leader learns and which Nehemiah demonstrates repeatedly through the rebuilding of Jerusalem's wall. But the rebuilding of the wall is just the first stage of a much larger and more difficult renewal project that needs to occur; the reformation of people's hearts as they are restored to their God-designed purpose and work in this world. As Israel's hope is renewed, as they start to feel safe, secure and protected again, the people revert back to old habits...living selfishly and for their own agenda. So when Nehemiah discovers a widening economic rift in God's people, he's swift to act, regardless of the risk to his influence as a leader. For just as the walls of the city need to be rebuilt on strong foundations, so do the lives of God's people. Nehemiah brings them back to their spiritual foundations, calling them to renew that covenant and live in their covenantal identity. We too are called to daily renew the covenant of grace that shapes our identity; a covenant sealed in the blood of Christ and poured out as a living sacrifice for the world. It's a powerful step in our journey on the road to recovery.

Week beginning
Sunday 8th August 2021

Worship series: **Road to Recovery**



VERSE for the week

Shouldn't you walk in the fear of our God to avoid the reproach of our Gentile enemies?

Nehemiah 5:9b



REMEMBER this week

Every time you enter a room, look at your hands and say, "I am here to serve". That's covenant living!



LISTEN attentively

Read Nehemiah 5:1-13

- 5. What stands out for you in this text? What questions does it raise for you?**
- 6. This is the first passage of Nehemiah that we have looked at that doesn't mention the rebuilding of the wall. What is the rebuilding that is happening in this passage?**
- 7. How have you seen internal conflict negatively affect the reputation and standing of an organisation or group?**

The book of Nehemiah orbits around the physical project of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, however there are actually two rebuilding projects happening simultaneously. While Nehemiah and the people of Israel get busy rebuilding the walls, God is also at work rebuilding, or re-establishing the people as his chosen covenant people. These people were the descendants of those to whom God had made some big promises and God was not about to give up on those promises.

Whether he realised it initially, or not, Nehemiah was God's project manager for both rebuilding projects. Nehemiah could see that no matter how majestic or impressive the rebuilt Jerusalem might be, unless the people living within it were also reformed and recommitted to living as God's holy people, set apart for Him and his purposes, then all the bricks and mortar in the world would not be enough to redeem them from being subject to all the surrounding nations.

Sometimes we too can be distracted by our own building projects, building a house, building financial security, building a reputation, or building a legacy. God seems to be more interested in building our character and our relationship with him.

- 8. How often do you stop to reflect on the things you have done and the decisions you have made throughout the day?**
- 9. From the list above (or add your own ideas), what do you think is the primary building project of your life at the moment?**

God had given Moses and the Israelites a covenant – a two way agreement – in which He would be their God and they would be his people. Part of that agreement outlined the way they would live together and be identified as his holy people. God was re-establishing his side of the bargain, by delivering them from captivity and exile, back to the land he had promised to their forefathers but the people had not yet recommitted to their side.



GROW deeper

The closest thing we have today to this kind of arrangement between God and the Israelites is the covenant of marriage. In it, two people make a promise and commitment to each other despite what circumstances life might throw their way. Unfortunately, divorce rates also demonstrate how poorly we as humans manage to live up to these kinds of commitments.

Read Leviticus 25:8-17 and Deuteronomy 15:1-18

The problem for the Israelites, and also for us, is our tendency to look out for ourselves first. God's law for the Israelites was about setting guidelines for the care of others. God's people were to be a people committed to each other and to generously share the blessings of God between themselves and other nations.

- 10. In what ways do we as God's people (the church) fail to be open handed with the blessings God gives to us?**
- 11. How does the way we care for each other within the church (including across denominations) communicate to the world beyond our walls what it is to be people of God?**

Jesus is God's ultimate covenant renewal. In his death and resurrection, Jesus established a new covenant. We remember and receive anew the gifts and promises of that covenant when we receive his body and blood given for us in Holy Communion. In this new covenant we are included not by upholding our end of the bargain, but rather, by virtue of Jesus upholding it in our place. Yet even as Jesus met with his disciples on the night before his death and shared the last supper, he also instructed the disciples to serve one another (see John 13:12-17). Jesus asks that our response to his gift of serving us with his life would be to serve others with our own lives.

12. What ways do you use your life to serve others?

13. What role does the Christian community (the church) have in helping you to serve others with your life and all the other blessings which God has given you through his son Jesus?

14. What way does your participation or service within the church encourage or support others to serve those outside of the church?



LIVE purposefully

Jesus said, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." While the specifics are perhaps less prescriptive than the Old Testament laws, the sentiment is still the same. God sent us Jesus to redeem us, but also to show us what redeeming love looks like. While we are saved, only through faith in the redeeming life, death and resurrection of Jesus, others will come to know that same redeeming love as it is lived out in and through us, God's people.

15. Who is one person that you will recommit to showing Christ-like love and service to this week?

16. How might you remember each day to renew and to deepen your relationship with Jesus so that he can continue to serve you and renew in you a heart of service?



PRAY intentionally

- Praise God for his faithful love and grace to us shown through his son Jesus Christ.
- Pray for the church around the world, that we would not be drawn to look inward during these times of global pandemic and periods of isolation but that we would be inspired to serve those who do not yet know the love and grace of Jesus.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a heart of love and service to others.



BLESS one another

You might like to address one person in your group and make the sign of the cross in the air as you say...

[Name], you are a child of God's promise. Amen.