

**ENGAGE!**

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January 17, 2016

**Sermon in a sentence:** Find your place in the work of God and fully engage in the task ahead.

**Congregational reading:** Nehemiah 2:11-20

**Scriptures:** Neh. 2:11-20; John 9:4; Eccl. 9:10; Col. 3:23-24

Nehemiah 2:11-20 NKJV So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days. <sup>12</sup> Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me; I told no one what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem; nor was there any animal with me, except the one on which I rode. <sup>13</sup> And I went out by night through the Valley Gate to the Serpent Well and the Refuse Gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were burned with fire. <sup>14</sup> Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool, but *there was* no room for the animal under me to pass. <sup>15</sup> So I went up in the night by the valley, and viewed the wall; then I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned. <sup>16</sup> And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, or the others who did the work. <sup>17</sup> Then I said to them, "**You see the distress that we *are* in, how Jerusalem *lies* waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem,** that we may no longer be a reproach." <sup>18</sup> And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me, and also of the king's words that he had spoken to me. **So they said, "Let us rise up and build."** Then they set their hands to **this good work.** <sup>19</sup> But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard *of it*, they laughed at us and despised us, and said, "What is

this thing that you are doing? Will you rebel against the king?" 20 So I answered them, and said to them, **"The God of heaven Himself will prosper us;** therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem."

There is an extremely powerful force in our world that we can tap into to accomplish great things. It's called teamwork. One of author Stephen Covey's *7 Habits For Highly Effective People* is "interdependence", the tremendous power unleashed in a family, a school, a workplace, a church or a country when individuals join together and engage in accomplishing tasks that they could not possibly have done on their own.

The Great Pyramid of Giza was constructed around 2500 BC and at 480' high (146M), was the tallest structure in the world for 3,800 years! There are widely varying estimates of how many workers were involved in this venture, (4 - 40,000), and the estimated cost to replicate it today is \$5 billion. (That's more than is cost to build the new "Freedom Tower" in Manhattan!) It is listed as one of the Seven Wonders of the World and to this day, people puzzle over how they could possibly have accomplished the task. There is certainly one very obvious answer. Teamwork. Dedicated people who were engaged, committed and united around a common purpose.

The story we read about Nehemiah illustrates the point. He was a man living a very comfortable life in a king's palace. Although he was a slave, he was infinitely better off than his distant relatives in Israel who were living in a defenseless city surrounded by hostile neighbours. When he was apprised of their current situation, he did something that would have seemed crazy to anyone he could have spoken to. He went to see the king, in sorrow.

**It was totally out of order to appear sad before his king (cf. Esther 4:2). All who came into the throne room were to show joy on their face by simply being in the king's presence. Violating that practice could mean instant execution by a vain, capricious king. God spared his life and he cautiously and respectfully asked for permission (and money) to travel to Israel and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.**

**He saw a job that needed to be done and set himself the task of trying to accomplish it in any way possible. He got engaged. He presented the need to others who could help him. He took the time to devise a plan of action. He got the ball rolling and trusted that God would help him all along the way. And God did!**

**The history of the rebuilding project describes all of the ups and downs one can expect to encounter when they set out to accomplish something great, and it describes the tenacity of a man who had the determination to see the job through to the end.**

**After seeing the condition of the wall, Nehemiah brought it to the attention of those around him. This was immediately followed by a call to action (v. 17). He was not just pointing out a problem, as so many of us are prone to do. Seeing the problem spurred him on to action!**

**It has been said that if we see a problem, it is because God wants us to resolve it. If something is bothering us, it is because we should fix it. And if we don't have the skill or ability to do it alone, get help, but get the job done!**

**You may not see yourself as a leader, but you can lead very powerfully by your personal example. Make these strong statements:**

**"I will do what I can. I will present the vision. I will seek like-minded partners to join me. I will seek God's help. I will take whatever risks are necessary. I will fight against the inevitable opposition. I will engage. I will succeed. I will win."**

Let us use Jerusalem as an analogy of our church. And let us use Nehemiah's words and actions as an example for us to follow.

As we read in the opening paragraphs of the book of Nehemiah, we see him making a concerted effort to see what was really going on in his ancestral home. He was not asking questions and seeking information simply out of curiosity but out of love and concern for his family, his people, his nation.

That is the kind of question we need to ask ourselves concerning our feelings about our church. How do we feel about our church family. Yes, even our church building. Nehemiah thought about the wall around Jerusalem that had been burned to the ground and his heart of compassion even went out to a wall! The people of God and the house of God ought to engage our deepest emotions. Then we must engage in making both the people and the house the best place they can possibly be.

So, let's review our main points:

- See what needs to be done
- Speak to others and recruit them to help you if you can't do the work alone
- Be willing to lead through your own personal involvement and example
- Fight off all the attacks that will inevitably come against you

- Understand that God will cause you to prosper in the work you put your hand to do
- Engage today!

**John 9:4 NKJV I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; *the night is coming when no one can work.***

**Eccl. 9:10 NKJV Whatever your hand finds to do, do *it* with your might; for *there is* no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going.**

**Col. 3:23-24 NKJV And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, <sup>24</sup> knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.**