

Everyone's Work

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Date: 27 January 2019

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[0 : 00] Good morning. My name is Matthew Capone and I'm the pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church and it's our joy to have you with us today.

Special welcome if you are new or visiting with us. We are glad you're here. And we're glad you're here not because we are trying to fill seats but because we are following after Jesus together as one community.

And as we follow after Jesus we are convinced that there's no one so good that they don't need God's grace and no one so bad that they can't have it. And so God has something to say to everyone in his word and everyone needs to hear what God has to say to us.

If you've been with us you know that we have recently started the book of Nehemiah and the book of Nehemiah is a book first about a man who's named Nehemiah. It's a man who lived in the 5th century in the Old Testament the time when God's people was known as the nation of Israel.

And as we saw in chapter 1 this man came to a place of great repentance because he saw the ways in which God's people had abandoned God's mission. Nehemiah repented of his involvement in that his failures as well as the failures of the people he led because he saw that the city that God had given to his people the city of Jerusalem which was meant to show the entire world what it was like when God's people lived according to God's ways had instead become broken down in a shame.

[1 : 25] And so in chapter 1 he repented of that. In chapter 2 he began to work and act and pray to return to the mission that God had given him. And so just as we talked about in our confession of faith this morning and repentance it's not just turning away from sin and our failures but turning back to everything that God has called us to.

And so we're going to continue the story of Nehemiah and his turning back to God's calling but we're going to read not so much about Nehemiah this morning as we are about all the different people who are involved in the rebuilding.

And here it's going to be specifically the rebuilding of the wall that's around Jerusalem. There's another book in the Bible called Ezra that deals with the rebuilding of the temple. And this book is going to be part of that greater story the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem.

And as I think about chapter 3 it makes me think about coffee. There was, if you know and have followed you know as we've gone through the last couple decades there's been a shift in the way that people consume and think about coffee.

It used to be that you would just simply go to the store and you would think about and maybe you still think about this way there's actually two generational ways of thinking about coffee.

[2 : 34] If you are an older generation you think about coffee in terms of price per pound. If you are a younger generation your tendency is going to think about coffee in price per cup.

Which means that the way you think about coffee is going to change what you're going to be willing to pay for it. And part of this changing from pound to cup is the involvement of what we all know as the K-cups the Keurig machines or pod coffee.

Where you can not necessarily share one pot that you make with other people but each person gets to pick their own flavor. Whether they want tea or coffee or something else.

And so there was an article recently when I say recently now I guess it's been about five or six years that came out in the New York Times called The High Price of Individualism. And it broke down the price per pound of bagged coffee versus pod coffee.

And so you know if you go to the grocery store and you buy cheaper coffee it might cost you five to six dollars per pound. If you buy slightly better coffee it might be ten to twelve dollars per pound.

[3 : 38] And then this article and this has gone up since then but at the time the very finest coffee that you could buy would be about twenty dollars per pound. And now that's gone up in the last five or six years you can now buy very nice coffee here in Colorado Springs for twenty-five or twenty-six dollars a pound if you want.

But they then after that calculated the price of coffee that came in pods. They figured out how much it was per cup compared to a bag. And you don't have to say out loud but I do want you to think for a second and guess how much does coffee cost per pound if you buy it in pods rather than a bag. Instead of the most expensive bag coffee which was about twenty dollars at the time the calculated price of pod coffee was fifty or fifty-one dollars a pound.

In other words more than twice as much as the finest coffee you could buy per bag. And so the point is is partially this that the title of the article was correct when it said the high price of individualism.

But as we come to this passage and by the way I mean to cast no aspersions or shame for anyone who uses pod coffee I've used pod coffee before that's not my point in bringing all this up.

[4 : 52] But as we come to a list of names and people doing work in Nehemiah chapter three we're going to encounter two types of people. We are going to encounter coffee pot people and we're going to encounter cake up people.

We're going to hear about different types of people from all different kinds of groups and some people are going to be different people that join one mission and then we're going to come across different people with different missions.

We'll see different people with one mission and different people with different missions. In other words we'll have pot people. People who are different in age and generation but they're willing to drink the same brew from the same pot.

And then we'll encounter people who come from different generations and vocations and stages but they're one to insist on their own way. And so as we read this chapter I'm going to just name what's about to happen.

We are going to read a lot of names. And so if you're tempted to shut down and turn off your mind as we read through them my challenge to you is this. See if you can find the cake up people as we read along.

[6 : 02] Now I'll tell you I'll let it out of the bag a little bit. Most of the people in this chapter are coffee pot people. The cake up people show up in one half of one verse. So it's not a hard needle to find but it is a needle.

So my challenge to you is as we read along to see if you can pick out who the cake up people are. Again no shame if you use cake cups that's not the point. Right?

But it's different people on one mission versus different people with different missions. And so with that we're in Nehemiah chapter 3. As we come to chapter 3 remember that this is God's word. And God tells us that his word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.

In other words God has not left us alone to stumble in the dark but instead he's given us his word to show us how we should go. And so we're in Nehemiah chapter 3 starting at verse 1.

Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brothers the priests and they built the sheep gate. They consecrated and set its doors. They consecrated it as far as the tower of the hundred.

[7 : 05] As far as the tower of Hananel. And next to him the men of Jericho built. And next to them Zachar the son of Emri built. The sons of Hassanah built the fish gate.

They laid its beams and set its doors its bolts and its bars. And next to them Meremoth the son of Uriah son of Hackah is repaired. And next to them Meshulam the son of Berechiah son of Meshuzabel repaired.

And next to them Zadok the son of Banna repaired. Verse 5. And next to them the Tekoach repaired. But their nobles would not stoop to serve their lord. Verse 6.

Joyada the son of Passiah and Meshulam the son of Besodiah repaired the gate of Yeshanah.

They laid its beams and set its doors its bolts and its bars. And next to them repaired Melatiah the Gibeonite and Jaden the Maranaphite the men of Gibeon and of Mizpah the seat of the governor of the province beyond the river.

Verse 8. Next to them Uzziel the son of Harhiah goldsmiths repaired. Next to him Hananiah one of the perfumers repaired and they restored Jerusalem as far as the broad wall.

[8 : 10] Next to them Rephiah the son of Hur ruler of half the district of Jerusalem repaired. Next to them Jediah the son of Haramath repaired opposite his house. And next to him Hattish the son of Heshabnea repaired.

Malkijah the son of Haram and Hashib the son of Pahath Moab repaired another section in the tower of the ovens. Next to him Shalom the son of Halahesh ruler of half the district of Jerusalem repaired.

He and his daughters. Hanan and the inhabitants of Zenoa repaired the valley gate. They rebuilt it and set its doors its bolts and its bars and repaired a thousand cubits of the wall as far as the dung gate.

Verse 14. Malkijah the son of Rechab ruler of the district of Beth Hecarim repaired the dung gate. He rebuilt it and set its doors its bolts and its bars. And Shalom the son of Kolhose ruler of the district of Mizpah repaired the fountain gate.

He rebuilt it and covered it and set its doors its bolts and its bars. And he built the wall of the pool of Shelah of the king's garden as far as the stairs that go down from the city of David. After him Nehemiah the son of Azbek ruler of half the district of Beth Zer repaired to a point opposite the tombs of David as far as the artificial pool and as far as the house of the mighty men.

[9 : 23] After him the Levites repaired. Rehim the son of Bani. Next to him Hashabiah ruler of half the district of Calah repaired for his district. After him their brothers repaired.

Babi the son of Hinnadad ruler of half the district of Calah. Next to him Ezra the son of Jeshua ruler of Mizpah repaired another section opposite the ascent to the armory at the buttress. After him Baruch the son of Zabbiah repaired another section from the buttress to the door of the house of Eliashib the high priest.

Verse 21 After him Meremoth the son of Uriah son of Hachaz repaired another section from the door of the house of Eliashib to the end of the house of Eliashib. After him the priests the men of the surrounding area repaired.

After them Benjamin and Hashab repaired opposite their house. After them Azariah the son of Maseah son of Ananiah repaired beside his own house. After him Benui the son of Hinnadad repaired another section from the house of Azariah to the buttress into the corner.

Paliel the son of Uzziab repaired opposite the buttress and the tower projecting from the upper house of the king at the court of the guard. After him Padaiah the son of Peresh and the temple servants living on Ophel repaired to a point opposite the water gate on the east and the projecting tower.

[10 : 37] After him the Techoites repaired another section opposite the great projecting tower as far as the wall of Ophel. Above the horse gate the priests repaired each one opposite his own house.

Verse 29 After them Zadok the son of Emmer repaired opposite his own house. After him Shemaiah the son of Shekariah the keeper of the east gate repaired. After him Hananiah the son of Shelemiah and Hanan the sixth son of Zalaph repaired another section.

After him Meshulam the son of Berechiah repaired opposite his chamber. After him Malkijah one of the goldsmiths repaired as far as the house of the temple servants and of the merchants opposite the muster gate and to the upper chamber of the corner.

And between the upper chamber of the corner and the sheep gate the goldsmiths and the merchants repaired. Please pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word.

Dear Father in heaven we thank you that you've given us your word. That you speak to us. You don't leave us alone to figure things out on our own. And so we ask that you would do that now.

[11 : 44] That you would use this part of your word to shape us and form us into the people you want us to be. We ask all these things in the name of your son.

Amen. If you remember from last week the very end of chapter 2 Nehemiah tells everyone in verse 18 to rise up and build.

And so that same phrase is repeated here at the beginning of chapter 3 just as he told them in chapter 2 to rise up and build then we hear in verse 1 the high priest rose up with his brothers the priests. They rose up.

And so we begin to see people doing exactly what Nehemiah had asked them to do and as we see it there's all kinds of different groups and individuals. We have the priests in verse 1. And so we have people that have a specific calling working together to rebuild the wall.

Then we have tradesmen. We see different guilds in verse 8 with the goldsmiths and the perfumers. They're working together as a group. People who are bound together by a trade and a vocation. [12:48] There's also individuals. We see later on in verse 23 and other parts that the people who are building walls close to the houses are individuals. And one man if you caught it in verse 12 I should have actually made you watch for this one as well.

One man comes out with all his daughters to rebuild. And so this is someone presumably who did not have any sons to help him but he still he and his family wanted to take part in the work. Not only are there different people but there's all kinds of different abilities. If you were listening carefully you know that there were parts where we heard about another section. For example in verse 4 we met Merrimoth the son of Uriah.

And I know that you all were keeping extremely close track of all these names. And so all of you noticed in verse 21 when Merrimoth the son of Uriah showed up again. Not telling you anything you didn't see already.

You notice in verse 21 it says Merrimoth the son of Uriah repaired another section. And so we have people of different groups and backgrounds coming together but also people of different abilities.

[13:50] Some people are able to build more sections than other people. There's different interests. The priests repair the sheep gate which is how we started in the beginning and ended in this chapter.

Now why would the priests repair the sheep gate? That's going to be the place where the sacrifices are brought in for their work. We don't know for sure but some scholars believe that the section that the tradesmen are repaying are sections that were close to their shops.

And we know that the sections that the individuals repaired are close to their houses. And so in this building not everyone is expected to be the same. There are different groups working together.

And yet they're working together towards the same goal. And so not every person is the same. Not every group is the same but their mission is. Not every person is the same.

Not every group is the same but their mission is. They are all different kinds of people from different places and different backgrounds and yet they choose to drink from the same pot.

[14:59] And so what's true of God's people in the Old Testament of these folks in Jerusalem rebuilding the wall around their city is true of us as well. We have different groups in our church. We have military service members.

We have widows. We have young families and we have retirees. We have families who homeschool and families that do not. And so just like every church or group we have different kinds of people.

We have people with different interests different abilities. People who come from different backgrounds who if we were in Jerusalem we might live in different parts of the city. And that's not the part that's surprising, right?

Any group that you find there's going to be people with different interests and what is surprising here is not that there are groups. That's not unusual. What's unusual is that these are groups that are working together.

And so while the people are different the mission is the same. While the people are different the mission is the same. We can imagine that there were probably disagreements going on about how things should be done and who should repair what.

[16:06] And what we find in this chapter is all of these people not hearing about their disagreements except for our K-cup people which we'll get to in a minute. Not hearing about their disagreements but hearing about all the ways that they lifted their hands and work.

They did what Nehemiah called them to do in chapter 2 to rise up and build. And throughout this whole chapter that's what we see people rising up to build. And so they don't stop being part of their groups.

Nehemiah doesn't tell the priests that they have to join with the perfumers. He doesn't tell the individuals that they need to join the goldsmiths. He lets each group work together for their interests.

All he asks here all that we see that's required is that they're working together for the common goal. And so this is similar to what we saw in Philippians. In Philippians we talked about looking out not for our own interests but for the interests of others.

Being question people rather than answer people looking to understand what it is other groups of people in the church need. And here it's similar but slightly different. Instead of looking to others' interests ahead of our own we see these groups looking to the interests of the mission ahead of their own.

[17 : 15] If you remember last week I defined God's mission as the part of the Lord's Prayer where we ask that God's kingdom would come on earth just as it is in heaven. And so these groups are not looking to put the interests necessarily of another group above their own like we talked about in Philippians but they're looking to put the interests of God's mission ahead of their own.

They're looking to in this case put the interests of Jerusalem. Jerusalem being a city that could actually show God's goodness and his love and his justice to the world. It's the mission that they're pursuing that gives them joy.

It's the mission that allows them to work together as different types and kinds of people. It's the mission that allows them to put aside their interests and perhaps even their abilities.

My guess is that the priests were not great wall builders and the perfumers may not have been either. Maybe the goldsmiths had some advantages.

But that wasn't what mattered. It wasn't their backgrounds that mattered their abilities. What mattered was coming together for one mission. They put aside their own preferences, their own happiness.

[18 : 30] These are people who have chosen to drink from the coffee pot even if what they would prefer at that moment would be herbal tea or some hot cocoa. And so that's what brings them and joins them all together.

There was an article a few years ago in Forbes magazine about working with employees as a business and the article was titled Why Employee Happiness is the Wrong Goal.

And the point of the article was that many companies are trying to do everything to meet the preferences of their employees to satisfy and cater to little things that they want or need and yet in doing that they're pursuing the wrong thing.

Instead they should be pointing people together towards one mission and so the author of this article a woman named Liz Ryan says this let's imagine a person completely immersed in his or her work.

We'll use the greatest violin maker in the world as our example. I don't know who makes the greatest violins in the world but we'll imagine that it's an Italian violin maker named Franco and that Franco has a studio where 15 or 20 apprentice and journeyman violin makers work alongside Franco making the most exquisite violins in the world.

[19 : 42] Is Franco happy? He is alternately ecstatic frustrated transported confused exhausted and lost in the zone.

He and his work are inextricable from one another. No one would say about Franco or his employees they are happy. Instead people in Franco's town would say those guys live and breathe violins and people around the world rejoice.

when we as a church embrace bringing God's kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven it will not necessarily make us happy.

It will not necessarily meet all our preferences and priorities. We will be alternately ecstatic frustrated transported confused exhausted and lost in the zone.

And our hope is that people here in southwest Colorado Springs would say that church lives and breathes God's kingdom so that people around the world can rejoice.

[20 : 53] We can be different people with one mission or different people with different missions. But only when we are different people with one mission will people around the world rejoice.

now I asked you to look for the K-cup people I would be really impressed if you found them because they are hidden in one half of one verse Susie has it she is giving me the sign it is verse 5 the Techoites are going to go down as infamous in the book of Nehemiah for this one verse chapter 3 verse 5 Now lord here is in the singular you may have a note in your Bible saying it could also be the plural lords what most likely is being referred to is either Nehemiah as a person here or just supervisors in general and this language here of stooping to serve is language of these group of nobles being too proud to take part in building the wall I mentioned earlier that probably not everyone agreed about everything we don't know why exactly these nobles were upset it could be that they had a different plan for building the wall maybe they wanted to mix the groups up we don't

know maybe they were upset that they had been living in Jerusalem for a while and this upstart Nehemiah and his friends came in to tell them how to rebuild someone who'd been living in the Persian empire of all places as a cupbearer maybe it's that they thought that building a wall was beneath them but for whatever the reason these nobles decided they were not going to take part and it wasn't because they weren't part of God's people clearly these were part of the remnant that God had preserved from the exile they'd returned to Jerusalem they understood God's mission and the importance of Jerusalem and yet for whatever reason their pride got in the way what was being served up here was a pot of coffee and these nobles wanted to drink something different they didn't want to take part in the mission and so what they did is they let their own preferences and their pride get in the way of God and his kingdom as we can imagine with any endeavor that's worth anything there's lots of ideas and opinions about what should be done lots of people working together

I imagine there's probably lots of struggles that we don't hear about in this chapter maybe the perfumers and the goldsmiths borrowed tools from each other and then didn't give them back maybe someone built a little short and didn't go as far as they were supposed to and they left someone else to pick up the slack there'd be all kinds of reasons to not stoop to serve the mission and so the Techoites here serve for us their nobles serve as a negative example while we have different groups coming together for one mission we have one group that decided to put their pride and their preferences above everything that God had for them in his holy city and so this chapter is both an encouragement to us and a warning it's an encouragement that we would come together as people who are very very different and we would pursue one mission together but it's also a warning that if we put our own pride and our preferences ahead of God's mission not only will we impede it but we will lose out on everything that God has for us because it's in this mission it's in this work that God brings his joy to his people it's no fun to live in a city with broken down walls but it's in the rebuilding of Jerusalem that God has given his people an opportunity to come back from all the reasons that they were sent into exile to return to him and his purposes and to find his mission and their purpose as they work together side by side the other thing we see here is that Nehemiah does not rebuild the wall on his own as we come together with different groups on one mission it means that different groups are coming together the book is named after Nehemiah because he leads and yet Nehemiah's name only appears once in this chapter and it's unclear whether it's even the same Nehemiah while Nehemiah is the one who has led the people in repentance and has done the research it's with the efforts of the entire people that the wall is rebuilt and so as we are one different people with one mission the same is true of us it's not just that everyone is working together but that everyone is working we read verses from the New Testament earlier in our service this morning about the many different gifts that God gives to his people and the fact that we need everyone pushing forward for us to do the work that God has given us here our limitation here as a church is not primarily financial our limitations are ones of us being willing to come together all as one group one church to push forward everything that God has for us it's true of the things that we need inside the church and outside the church inside the church we have many places in the wall that need to be built we have nursery workers that we need to come alongside and help us as we disciple our children we are always looking for more people to help us with our sound in the back we are always in need of people to help disciple our children but the point of building

Jerusalem is not just so that it would be a place for God's people and their comfort but remember that the purpose was always that it would be something that would show God to the entire world and so our need to build and work together towards one mission is not just that we would be a good community here inside the church but that we would reach people outside the church as well and so we need help and people we are not without many opportunities to reach Fort Carson in fact there's so many opportunities to reach them that we could not do all of it as one church and yet as we come together and work together that's going to be the way that we're able to reach soldiers with the good news of the gospel we need all kinds of different groups coming together to invite our neighbors here to join us I only have a limited number of neighbors but you have neighbors as well and if the goldsmiths and the perfumers and the priests all exert their influence their areas of influence to invite people not just into a relationship with God but a relationship to his people that is when God's kingdom is going to come more and more on earth here at

[28 : 21] Cheyenne Mountain our thanksgiving baskets this past year went better than they have ever gone because we had so many different people with so many different gifts coming alongside

we had people who were gifted in welcoming and greeting who made people who visited our church feel at home we had people with gifts of service who were willing to drive around and drop off baskets to people whose cars were broken down and they weren't able to come pick them up we had people whose gifts were in administration and were able to organize and make sure the details were set right we heard from Autumn last Sunday about all the opportunities that we have to serve with Life Network and help women and men who are in crisis and so God's mission is before us he has given us tremendous opportunities to serve him to bring his kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven and so that's where we find our unity as a people that's where we come together not the same as people with many different gifts many different abilities but we come together with one heart one goal one desire and the desire is not that this would be a place where everything that we want happens but where everything that God wants we pursue it's not a place where everything we want happens but it's a place where everything that God wants we pursue we find our unity in our mission and we find it there because that is where

God has found his unity first God God God had a unified mission within the Trinity to this world before he ever called us to do anything with him and for him God sent his son as part of his mission and they were united in that Jesus tells us in John chapter 10 that he and the father are one and yet they have different roles in the way they accomplish it God the father sent his son Jesus the son died and he died for our sins he died to redeem people who had rebelled against him but he didn't just redeem us from sin he redeemed us to all the work that he has for us everything that he has to redeem and bring back what's been ruined and broken by sin and so Jesus has a mission as well he says in Luke chapter 19 that he came to seek and save the lost and so Jesus' mission to us is the mission that enables us to also join with him he came to seek and save us so that we could be part of his mission here on earth so we follow him in doing what he's already done to bring his kingdom on earth just as it is in heaven it's a mission that Jesus started and it's a mission that he gives to us as well and so the question is not whether we are different because we are the question is whether we will join together in our differences because Jesus has already joined together with us and so we're going to sing about that now we're going to sing about the church arising and doing the work that God's given us because of the work that he has already done for us and so please pray with me as we come to that portion of our service dear father in heaven we thank you for your mission to us we thank you for sending your son so that he could bear the weight of your full and complete justice so that we would not have to thank you for redeeming us from sin so that you could redeem us to righteousness to work together as one community as one church following after you together we ask that you'd send your spirit and you'd help us to do that now we ask all these things in the name of your son amen